History of the Upper Snake River Area to 1840

Louis J. Clements
Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd

Part of the Mormon Studies Commons, and the United States History Commons

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
Clements, Louis J., "History of the Upper Snake River Area to 1840" (1968). All Theses and Dissertations. 4607.
https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/4607

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
HISTORY OF THE UPPER SNAKE RIVER AREA TO 1840

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of History
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Louis J. Clements
May, 1968
Sincere appreciation is expressed to all those who assisted with this work. The research incentive was supplied by Dr. LeRoy R. Hafen and the Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society. Special thanks should go to the members of my committee, Dr. LeRoy R. Hafen, Dr. Milton V. Backman, and Dr. Eugene E. Campbell for their suggestions and encouragement in the research of this study. Appreciation goes to Ricks College Library staff for their kindness in allowing me the use of their collections of material especially useful in work in Idaho History. The residents of the Upper Snake River Valley have been quite helpful in supplying information on events and dates. Special thanks and gratitude are expressed to my wife, Diane Clements, for typing this thesis and for giving me the moral support to help me complete this work.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLUSTRATION.</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAP</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.  PHYSICAL SETTING.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. INDIANS OF THE UPPER SNAKE RIVER AREA</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. EARLY EXPLORATIONS OF THE WEST AND THEIR INFLUENCE.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. EXPLORERS AND FUR TRADERS</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. ANDREW HENRY AND FORT HENRY</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. OVERLAND AND RETURNING ASTORIANS</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY VERSUS AMERICAN TRAPPERS</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. EAST AND WEST OF THE TETON RANGE</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. A BUSINESS VENTURE.</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. THE DECLINING YEARS OF THE FUR TRADE</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII. CONCLUSION.</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY.</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

PHYSICAL SETTING

The Upper Snake River, as far as this study is concerned, covers from the eastern borders of the state of Idaho west to a line that would divide the state in two nearly equal parts and includes that part of the state of Wyoming known as Jackson's Hole. The counties of Fremont, Teton, Bonneville, Caribou, Bear Lake, Franklin, Oneida, Power, Bannock, Bingham, Butte, Jefferson, Madison, Clark, Lemhi, and Custer in Idaho, and the county of Teton in Wyoming are within this area.

Starting from the east at the foot of the Teton Peaks, is a large area called Jackson's Hole. It is surrounded by the Teton, the Snake, and the Gros Ventre ranges of mountains, with the Continental Divide of the Rockies forming the eastern edge. On the west side of the Tetons is Pierre's Hole. While standing in this basin and gazing eastward, Father DeSmet said, "This valley is situated at the foot of the three Tetons, sharp-peaked mountains of a prodigious height, rising almost perpendicularly more than 10,000 feet, and covered with perpetual snow. There are five of them, but only three can be seen at any great distance."¹

From these mountains one would descend to a broad, flat valley. Through the middle of this valley flows the Snake River. It divides the land into two completely different types of growth. Fertile farm

land produces right down to the eastern side of the river, but there is a
drastic change on the western side. Here sagebrush grows in abundance and
lava flows make up the scenery. Nathaniel Wyeth, in 1834, while traveling
through Eastern Idaho, described the lava areas by saying, "... the
country through which we have traveled for these two days past has a strong
volcanic appearance the streams occupy what appear to be but the cra[c]ks
of an over heated surface the rocks are blown up in blubbers like a smiths
cinders some rocks ten feet through are but a shell being hollow. A sub-
stance abounds like bottle glass of about the same weight not so trans-
parent about as brittle the fracture is smooth and glossy with the excep-
tion of the cracks as above . . ."²

Several large buttes stand out of the surrounding area to present
themselves for landmarks. Rising out of the desert floor of the western
part of this area are the Sawtooth and the Salmon River Mountains.

The valley has presented different views to the many people who
traveled through it. Father DeSmet in describing the area from Fort Hall
northeastward up to Henry's Fork of the Snake said, "This is unquestion-
ably the most barren of all the mountain deserts. It abounds in absinthe,
cactus, and all such plants and herbs as are chiefly found on arid lands.
We had to resort to fishing for the support of life, and our beasts of
burden were compelled to fast and pine; for scarcely a mouthful of grass
could be found during the eight days which it took us to traverse this
wilderness."³

As contrast to this somewhat harsh look at the valley comes the

²F. G. Young (ed.), "The Correspondence and Journals of Captain
³Chittenden, p. 306
view of Captain Bonneville as given through Washington Irving's pen. This view was on the Snake River Plain as viewed from west to east in the wintertime. Bonneville said, "Far away over the vast plains, and up the steep sides of the lofty mountains the snow lay spread in dazzling whiteness; and whenever the sun emerged in the morning above the giant peaks, or burst forth from among clouds in his mid-day course, mountain and dell, glazed rock and frosted tree, glowed and sparkled with surpassing lustre. The tall pines seemed sprinkled with a silver dust, and the willows, studded with minute icicles reflecting the prismatic rays, brought to mind the fairy trees conjured up by the caliph's story-teller, to adorn his vale of diamonds." 4

Charles Preuss, who was traveling with John C. Fremont in 1843, described the area west of Fort Hall by saying, "A wild country! How old man Vulcan has played havoc here . . ." 5

The United States is structured geographically into seventeen specific areas with most states lying only in one of the areas. However, the Upper Snake River country is covered by four of these areas: (1) The Great Basin, (2) The Middle Rockies, (3) The Northern Rockies, and (4) The Snake River Plain. 6 Each of these four regions stretch beyond the borders of Idaho, but they do come together within the area.

There are several rivers that traverse the Upper Snake River area of which the Snake is the largest and most important. As a power

---


river the Snake ranks with the greatest in the world. Its vast volume
of water has a total fall, from source to mouth, of more than one mile.
It is a very rapid stream varying from one hundred to two hundred yards
wide. Its bed is gravel and the banks, for the most part, are of the
same material. Occasionally a thin soil covers this, but it is only a
partial covering even in the slower areas.

The Snake River was first known as the Lewis River, with the
southern fork taking on the name of the Mad River and the northern fork
taking the name of Henry. Later Wilson Price Hunt was known to refer to
the river as Canoe River, as this was where he made his trip by water. 7
The exact date when the river became known as the Snake is not known,
but it is generally accepted that it came from the large numbers of Snake
Indians that frequented the area around the river.

The Snake Indians were really Shoshonis, but their actions caused
the white man to call them by a different name. Father DeSmet said,
"They are called Snakes because in their poverty they are reduced like
reptiles to the condition of digging in the ground and seeking nourish-
ment from roots." 8 However, Alexander Ross said, "It arose from the
characteristics of these Indians in quickly concealing themselves when
once discovered. They seem to glide away in the grass, sagebrush and
rocks and disappear with all the subtlety of a serpent." 9 The Snake
River's name coming from these Indians could probably have as many
different versions of its origin as there were early travelers in the area.

7Phillip Ashton Rollins (ed.), The Discovery of the Oregon Trail--
8Miles Cannon, "The Snake River in History," The Quarterly of Oregon
Historical Society, XX (March 1919), p. 3.
9Ibid.
The source of the North (Henry's) Fork of the Snake River is some 7,000 feet above sea level in the mountains west of Yellowstone Park. It descends rapidly through Island Park's forest to enter a wide valley near the present-day city of Ashton. Here it winds in a south-westerly direction nearly to the borders of Oregon. Then the river turns northward to continue its journey out of the state. The North Fork is about seventy miles in length from its head until it joins the South Fork just north of Rigby, Idaho. The main rivers that make up the drainage of the North Fork are the Buffalo, Warm River, Fall River, and the two forks of the Teton River.

The source of the South Fork of the Snake River is in the Grand Teton and Yellowstone Parks of Wyoming. The river flows southward through the Jackson's Hole country for several miles and then turns westward into Idaho. The river here is practically impassable and caused many a traveler to choose another route. The distance traveled by the river from its head until the two forks meet is nearly one hundred and fifty miles. Its main tributaries are the Hoback and Grey Rivers. The Snake River as a whole covers a distance of 1,000 miles and drains 109,000 miles.\(^\text{10}\)

The larger tributaries of the Snake rise out of the Rockies and descend rapidly to the main valley. Most of them have a general east to west flow. A contrast appears on the western side of the valley. Here the rivers flow in an easterly direction and generally sink in the lava desert rather than forming tributaries of the Snake.

The main flowers are the syringa, columbine, Western buttercup, bitterroots, prickly pear, mountain phlox, white dog, larkspur, mountain daisy, wild hollyhock, fawn lily and white lily, snapdragon, violet.

\(^{10}\) Fisher, p. 60.
golden rod, yarrow, sunflower, English harebell, supine, sweet pea, sweet William, bluebell, Indian paintbrush, and various ferns.\textsuperscript{11}

Due to the semi-arid east to the land, there is a large group of shrubs and bushes that struggle for existence. Some of these are the hawthorn berry, chokecherry, huckleberry, elderberry, and serviceberry. Other shrubs would include the greasewood, rabbitbrush, and several varieties of sage.\textsuperscript{12}

There is a great variety of trees in the mountains, valleys, and desert areas of Eastern Idaho and Jackson's Hole. In the mountain areas are the evergreens, with fir, cedar, spruce, and larch. Descent to lower areas brings a variety of willows and trees such as the cottonwood, box elder, and aspen.\textsuperscript{13}

Donald Mackenzie gives a good description of the animal life of the Upper Snake River area in 1818. He said, "Woods and valleys, rocks and plains, rivers and ravines alternately met us; but altogether it is a delightful country. There animals of every class rove about undisturbed. Wherever there was a little plain, the red deer were seen grazing in herds about the rivers, and where there was a sapling the ingenious and industrious beaver was at work. Otters sported in the eddies; the wolf and the fox were seen sauntering in quest of prey; on the spreading branches of stunted pines sat the raccoon secure. The badger sat quickly looking from his mound; and in the numberless ravines, among bushes laden with fruit, the black, brown, and grizzly bear was seen. The mountain sheep and goat, white as snow, browsed on the rocks and

\textsuperscript{11}Merrill D. Beal, \textit{A History of Southeastern Idaho} (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd. 1942), p. 31.

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 32-33. \textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 33.
ridges, and the bighorn species ran among the lofty cliffs. Eagles and vultures flew above the rivers. Hordes of wild horses were likewise seen.\textsuperscript{14}

Other animals of the area include the moose, lion, bobcat, cougar, coyote, lynx, marten, weasel, mink, skunk, civet, squirrel, chipmunk, and rats. Birds found there are the condor, wean, gull, raven, crow, owl, hawk, woodpecker, grebe, meadow lark, magpie, blackbird, flicker, cowbird, robin, bluebird, plower, curlew, sparrow, lewis, snowbird, weallow limnet, crane, mudhen, pelican, hummingbird, snipe, and fisher.\textsuperscript{15}

The climate of the area varies considerably, with winters of wind and snow and mild summers as is typical of mountain areas. In general the winters are mild, as there is an encircling protection of mountains which keep the blizzards of Canada out. With a precipitation level of about eighteen inches and a short growing season, there is a battle between the different flora for survival.

Peter Skene Ogden sums up the Snake River Country in a letter written at Fort Vancouver on the 10th of August, 1826, directed to his superiors at the Hudson's Bay Headquarters.

\textbf{Snake Country Report 1825/26}

1st The Snake Country is bounded on the North by the Columbia Waters. On the South by the Missouri. On West by the Spanish Territories and the East by the Saskatchewan Tribes.

2nd The Principle Stream is the South Branch of the Columbia three miles above Fort Nez Perces Establishment and 380 miles from Cape Disappointment, its length may be calculated at about 500 miles, breadth an 1/8 of a mile; it can be navigated with Boats or Smaller Craft, but from its winding course too great a loss of

\textsuperscript{14}Cecil W. Mackenzie, Donald Mackenzie—King of the Northwest (Los Angeles: Ivan Deach, Jr., 1937), p. 118.

\textsuperscript{15}Beal, p. 32-3.
time would be sustained. On the North side 7 minor streams discharge into it, and on the South 11 — Total 19. See Chart. [This chart has not been traced.]

3rd The Country mountainous with barren plains. The Soil in general greyish Sand, its vegetable productions on the lower parts of the South Branch three different kinds of Roots are abundant.

4th Animals fur-bearing, Beaver, Otters, Weales & Muskraa, of any other kind none and the latter scarce.

5th Climate variable, In the mountains cold with perpetual Snows, in the lower Country heat in the Summer Season great. Winter at some seasons cold

6th Posts none .... 16

---

THE UPPER SNAKE RIVER AREA
CHAPTER II

INDIANS OF THE UPPER SNAKE RIVER AREA

Tribes of Occupancy

There were four tribes of Indians that made Eastern Idaho their home during the fur trade era. These tribes were the Bannacks, Snakes, Tukarikas, and Lemhis. There were some general characteristics that were common to all of the tribes. They had a real pride in themselves and looked down on the white man because he did things that were considered by the Indians to be work fit for squaws only. From childhood upwards the men were taught to fight, and it was considered an event of great pride to be viewed as a warrior who was looked upon with envy by the others. Weakness was not tolerated in the white man or in the Indians themselves.

The tribe was organized on a family basis in which the only one who was allowed more than one wife was the chief. A class situation was observed in which the Indian knew his position and dressed accordingly. Women were treated as slaves and taught to be subservient to their husband and brothers.

Meat was the mainstay of the Indian's life, although he would supplement his diet with berries and roots in the summertime. He was taught early how to fight and to hunt. The buffalo were plentiful, and even though Indian weapons were primitive the red men devised means of driving the animals towards mass slaughter in natural canyons,
or they killed with their arrows and spears. Rabbits, elk, goats, squirrels, deer, antelope, bear, beaver, and any animal that they could catch or kill made up their diet.

The Indians' religion was built around superstition. If anything bad occurred it was because of the evil spirits and conversely if something good happened. Dances were performed to evoke the good spirits for events such as war, the hunt, or a marriage. A religious type of ritual was followed by all children as they approached adolescence to prepare them for adult life. An elaborate marriage ceremony was performed to ensure a happy and successful union, and a death ceremony that would guarantee the departed a rapid and happy entrance to his heavenly world.

With these general characteristics in mind, it may be good now to take the individual tribes and discuss their differences and actual areas of influence.

Bannack

The name "Bannack" is of Shoshoni origin; "bamp" meaning "hair" and "nack" meaning "a backward motion." The word "Bannock" is sometimes used to denote this tribe, but the previous form is preferred. The Bannacks were feared by the neighboring tribes. They were heartless, cruel, and bloodthirsty. The men were among the best looking of Indians, while their women were noted as being the ugliest of the western tribes.

The Bannacks claimed the area between the Portneuf Mountains and Raft River. Peter Skene Ogden in 1826 reported some 1500 men with four chiefs in the Portneuf River country. He described them as noted

---

horse thieves. The "Baniques" were said by him to live in constant fear of the Saskatchewan Tribes. These Indians made annual trips to Taos (Spanish) to trade and steal horses. Osborne Russell in the fall of 1834 reported 250 lodges of Bannacks wintering near Fort Hall. By 1860 the figures reported were 1,000 Bannacks in position on the Oregon and California trails to cause trouble to the travelers.

Snake

The derivation of the Snake name has been discussed in the first chapter with regard to its usage as a river name. The main camping ground of the Snake Indians was near the junction of the Snake River and Henry's Fork. They roamed at will through most of the Snake River Plain.

In the fall of 1834, Osborn Russell notes that there was a village of Snakes camped on Blackfoot Creek some twenty-five miles northeast of Fort Hall. There were sixty lodges in this village. James Douglas, while at Fort Hall, sent a letter to George Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company describing the life of the Indian. Douglas said, "Panaks, Shoshones, and Shoshokos living with each other on terms of amity. A poor and oppressed race but after obtaining fire arms have risen to occupy respectable position among others. Equestrian and exceedingly eratic people." By 1848 it was reported that the

2Rich, p. 263.
4Beal, p. 48. 5Russell, p. 13.
Snake Indians were a very treacherous tribe. People passing through the area had to keep a close watch on them and see that a guard was posted each evening to keep watch. It was soon after this that the two principle chiefs of the Snakes died of some unknown disease. Immediately after their deaths the tribe scattered over the country in small villages. No new leader arose who was strong enough to get them together, and they rapidly fell into degradation.

Tukarikas

The name Tukuarikas comes from "Tukur" meaning "mountain sheep" and "arika" meaning "eat." The common name of "Sheepeaters" came from this. These Indians were driven to the mountains by the Blackfeet, so they existed mainly by eating the big-horn. They lived in the rocks and caves of the higher areas dressing in the furs and skins of the mountain sheep. Their home at one time was in the Yellowstone National Park, but they moved and were mostly known to reside in the Salmon River Mountains.

Lemhis

These Indians received their name from the Book of Mormon. It was given to them by the Mormon Indian Missionaries in 1855. At the time Lewis and Clark came to the Lemhi country in 1805 there were about five hundred Shoshonis occupying the land. Later bands of Shoshonis, Tukuarikas, and Bannacks gathered in the area east of the Salmon River. Here they all came under the care of Chief Tendoy. So extensively did

---


8Russell, p. 146. 9Rees, p. 116.
they intermarry that in 1900 there were no full-bloods of the original tribes left.

Tribes of Migration

Blackfeet

"Siksika" is the Indians' name for the Blackfoot. "Sissi" means "black" and "kah" means "foot." They made a habit of burning the country to help in their hunting of game and to cover their tracks. Their feet became black from walking through the ashes, and thus, they came up with the Blackfoot connotation. They were hostile to white men and other Indians and wandered extensively throughout the northwest. Their camping grounds were in the Marias River Valley in Montana, and from here they made their raids into Wyoming and Idaho. They were the most feared of all the Indian tribes by the trappers. Other Indians knew they were in for a fight when the Blackfeet arrived on the scene. There will be many references made to the actions of the Blackfeet throughout this thesis.

Crow

The Crow Indians inhabited the area of the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming and north to the Yellowstone River. They were proud, treacherous, insolent, and brave when they possessed a superior advantage; but when placed in the opposite situation they were equally humble, submissive, and cowardly. They were always prey to the raiding Blackfeet and at times would readily join the trappers in expeditions against their common foe. They often came to the eastern valleys of Idaho to hunt and were a common sight at the trappers' rendezvous.

10 Ibid., p. 56.
CHAPTER III.

EARLY EXPLORATIONS OF THE WEST AND THEIR INFLUENCE

Early Explorations

The early explorers of the West can be divided into four nationalities. Francis Drake,\(^1\) sailing under the English flag in 1579, plundered the Spanish of Mexico. Drake, his ship laden with loot, felt a route around the northern part of America would suit his purpose better than trying to dodge the Spanish to the South. He explored and named the coast above San Francisco, giving the British one of their claims to what later became the states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

In 1602, Sebastian Vizcaino,\(^2\) sailing for the Spanish, made his way along the lower California coast. A strong storm made him take refuge in a protective bay. One of his ships became separated and went on up the coast landing somewhere in Oregon. This gave the Spanish their first real claim to the area.

In 1724 the Russians began their explorations in Alaska and southward. One of Peter the Great's last acts was to call out of retirement a naval officer named Vitus Bering. Bering was sent across the continent of Russia, told to build a ship, and commanded to find whether or not a land passage linked Asia to North America. In two


separate voyages he made his way along the coast of Asia and then
North America. Although he did not see the Columbia River, he did go
far south along the American coast. There may have been others who
preceded Bering to the Strait that bears his name, but he is given the
official recognition for discovering it.

The Spanish were alarmed at the Russian advance and the presence
of British ships in growing numbers in the Pacific areas. Their
reaction to this pressure was to push the settlement of California.
Missions were started and by 1776 there was a mission at San Francisco.
In 1774 Juan Perez sailed north and stopped at what he named San Lorenzo
on Vancouver Island. This settlement was later called Nootka. In 1775
Bruno Heceta commanded an expedition of two ships to the north. At the
conclusion of this trip a formal declaration of possession of the North-
west was made by Spain. One ship of this expedition got as far north
as the southern tip of Alaska.

The English were on the scene again in 1778. Captain James
Cook was delegated to examine the northwest coast of the Americas. He
anchored and named Nootka Sound and island. John Ledyard was with
Cook here and being an American was to give some claim to his country
later. Ledyard published a journal of the trip that gave a lot of
popularity to the area and caused many to become interested in obtaining
it. Cook on this trip continued around the world.

By 1785 interest was growing in the uses of the Northwest.
James Hanna felt that a trade could be established between the North-
west and the riches of China. The next year John Meares, an Englishman,
had established himself as a trader at Nootka Sound. The best American

---

3Lavender, p. 8.
claim came in 1792 when Robert Grey made his way into the mouth of the Columbia River and named the stream. Soon there were ships of many nations traveling up and down the Pacific Coast.

Influence on the Upper Snake River Area

In the British colonies of eastern America the period from 1600-1700 was a period of intense struggle for survival. The knowledge that land existed in the Northwest so far away could hardly have caused any excitement. The 1700's brought in a race by many of the countries to find new lands to claim. Since transportation of any distance was only undertaken by water, there was little chance that anybody would explore the West by land. Each of the early explorers of the Pacific Coast brought back a new tale of the Northwest and what could be obtained there. As soon as the countries realized that no new land areas like Mexico and Peru, rich with gold, were to be found, they began to look at the other assets of the land. The use of harbors to trade with China became an important consideration. The need of the lumber of the northern areas was essential to the Spanish building in California. Then the rich fur areas began to be developed.

The first overland explorations were a result of the knowledge of the riches of the Northwest. Alexander Mackenzie reached the Pacific overland in 1793. A faster and more efficient system of getting to these riches helped to hurry others on. It is conceivable that if the first explorers by water had not come, the exploration and development of the Northwest could possibly have been delayed by fifty years.
CHAPTER IV.

EXPLORERS AND FUR TRADERS

Lewis and Clark

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were commissioned by Thomas Jefferson to explore the Louisiana Territory. He explained to them, "... The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri river, & such principal stream of it, as, by it's course & communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean, may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across this continent, for the purposes of commerce."¹ Lewis and Clark assembled boats and men by May of 1804. Clark left St. Louis on May 13, 1804, and Lewis caught up with him the next day.² They continued up the Missouri River until they arrived at the Three Forks of the River in Montana.

At the Three Forks (in Montana) the following is recorded in Lewis's Journal, "... the S. E. fork of the Missouri which we called Gallitin's river in honor of Albert Gallitin Secretary of the Treasury ... the Middle fork we called Maddison's river in honor of James Maddison the Secretary of State, and the S. W. fork we called Jefferson's River in honor [of] that illustrious personage Thomas Jefferson President of the United States."³ They pushed on from here because

²Ibid., I, p. 16. ³Ibid., II, p. 280.
Sacajawea was beginning to recognize the area and knew that they were about to cross the mountains and be able to gaze upon the waters of the Columbia.

Lewis, working in an advance party, made his way up the mountains until on August 12, 1805, he was, from his position on the Lemhi pass, able to see the waters that would lead them to the Pacific. For his first impression of Idaho Lewis states

Thus far I had accomplished one of those great objects on which my mind has been unalterably fixed for many years, judge then of the pleasure I felt in allaying my thirst with this pure and ice-cold water which issues from the base of a low mountain or hill of gentle ascent for ½ a mile. the mountains are high on either hand (but) leave this gap at the head of this rivulet through which the road passes. here I halted a few minutes and rested myself . . . after refreshing ourselves, we proceeded on to the top of the dividing ridge from which I discovered immense ranges of high mountains still to the West of us with their tops partially covered with snow. I now decended the mountain about 3/4 of a mile which I found much steeper than on the opposite side, to a handsome bold running Creek of cold Clear water. here I first tasted the water of the great Columbia river.\(^4\)

In a short time they were able to find the main band of Sacajawea's people, and a group was persuaded to go back into Montana to help Clark and the main part of the explorers to come over the pass.

Clark now set out to explore the possibilities of making canoes to go down the Salmon River. After talking to the Indians and gazing upon the turbulence of the river himself, he came to the decision to take a Nez Perce route over the Lolo trail. This meant traveling one hundred and forty miles by pack. They endured much hardship in leaving Idaho as there were early snows and the mountains were extremely high.

The expedition made its way over the mountains and with the help of the Nez Perce Indians were able to make canoes. Then they proceeded down the Clearwater River, down a small portion of the Snake River, and

\[^4\textit{Ibid.}, II, p. 339-343.\]
down the Columbia until on November 7, 1805, they sighted the Pacific. After taking their time to explore the area around the mouth of the Columbia and to make friendly overtures to the Indians there, they set out for home in March of 1806. They retraced their steps for most of the way and found that the return trip through the mountains on Lolo trail was easier than the previous fall. They left Idaho on June 29, 1806, but their influence was felt longer in the friendly relations with the Indians and the information of the fur trade that they took back.

The rest of their trip was downstream on the Missouri and was almost uneventful. The one unfortunate happening was the killing of a Blackfoot Indian on the 27th of July. The Blackfoot was attempting to steal guns from the Lewis party and he was shot. This incident is blamed for the hostility of the Blackfeet from then on to trappers or any whites who came up the Missouri.

On March 3, 1807, Congress granted Lewis and Clark 1,600 acres of land each and 320 acres to each of their men. The men were each given double pay for their efforts. Some of the men were still in the wilderness and had a hard time collecting. One of these men was John Colter.

John Colter

Thomas James describes John Colter at the age of thirty-five as being five foot ten with an open, ingenious, and pleasing countenance of the Daniel Boone stamp. He was a member of the Lewis and Clark


expedition. On the return journey Colter decided he was not ready to join the calm and easy life of proper civilization. In William Clark's journal of August 15, 1806, the following is recorded:

Colter one of our men expressed a desire to join some trappers who offered to become shearsers with [him] and furnish traps &c. The offer [was] a very advantageous one, to him, his services could be dispenced with from this down and as we were disposed to be of service to any one of our party who had performed their duty as well as Colter had done, we agreed to allow him the priviledge provided no one of the party would ask or expect a Similar permission...9

Colter left the expedition to become one of the most talked about explorers of the Yellowstone and surrounding areas. There is no exact record of the country that he explored, but from the descriptions he gave it is felt that he spent most of the time in the area that came to be known as "Colter's Hell." It is thought by some that the area he discovered was a region of thermal disturbance near the forks of the Shoshone River.10

Colter probably spent some time in the Island Park area of Idaho as it borders on the Yellowstone country. It is known that on his way down the Missouri in 1810 he was met by Andrew Henry and convinced to return to guide their party to the Three Forks country of Montana. This he did and almost lost his life in a run from the Blackfeet Indians. His companion was killed and Colter was given a chance to race for his life. He was able to hide from the Indians and survived. He had to sue to get his pay from Meriwether Lewis and received $377.6011 and his

9Thwaites, V, p. 341.


11Jackson, p. 567.
land for the expedition of 1804.

David Thompson

David Thompson was one of the most brilliant of all the fur traders. He was born in London and spent seven years at a charity school there. He then came to Canada and was apprenticed to the Hudson's Bay Company. Thompson felt that he was being held back by the Hudson's Bay Company, and as soon as his term with them ran out he joined the North West Fur Company.

He was officially designated as the astronomer of the North West Fur Company. Thompson was a careful scientist and a close observer. Through his efforts as an explorer and geographer he influenced the later expansion of the Hudson's Bay Company into the Oregon Country.

Thompson is described as being entirely different from the ordinary fur trader. He was tall and fine looking, of a sandy complexion. He had large features, deep-set studious eyes, high forehead and broad shoulders. It was said that the intellectual was well set upon the physical.

There was a lot of talk in British government circles about beating the Americans to the mouth of the Columbia. The following appeal was given by the North West Fur Company to the British Government

---

12T. C. Elliot, "David Thompson and the Columbia River," The Quarterly of Oregon Historical Society, XII (1911), 201.


for financial help in getting to the Columbia before the Americans.

... The Americans seem to aim at Establishments in trade beyond the Rocky Mountains, and on the River Columbia to which they have no pretensions by Discovery either by Water or Land, the right in both cases clearly belonging to Great Britian by the discoveries of Cook, Vancouver, and Mackenzie. No establishment of the states on that River or on the Coast of the Pacific should therefore be sanctioned. ... 16

Thompson was given the job of getting to the Pacific before anyone could follow up on Lewis and Clark's exploration. He spent a lot of time studying the land and the Indians and as a result arrived at the mouth of the Columbia after Fort Astoria had been built. By failing to make the Columbia the main object of his activities and by going away from the best route, and by working at the fur trade as he progressed, Thompson failed to beat the Americans to his destination. 17

The impact of this failure of the British effort to establish early contact can be transferred to the area of the upper Snake River. There would have been a real possibility that this area could have been a part of Canada if these early efforts had been a success. The Hudson's Bay Company still came into the area and trapped, but the influx of Americans forced them out. If Thompson had been the first to the mouth of the Columbia there might have been an influx of North West men into the country to make it British.

16 Tyrrell, p. 304-6. 17 Ibid., p. 288.
CHAPTER V.

ANDREW HENRY AND FORT HENRY

St. Louis Missouri Fur Company 1808-1810

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the recognized leader in the business of trading in St. Louis was Manuel Lisa. He was born in New Orleans and was of Spanish descent. He began his trading career while he was in his teens, and through his management was able to get the upper hand in the fur trade going through St. Louis. His Spanish background enabled him to get Government approval for a monopoly of the trade with the Indians of the lower Missouri.

When the Americans took over St. Louis in 1803, Lisa was still in control because of the way he was able to trade and make friends with the Indians. Competition was becoming keen in fur trading, and with British advancements the small fur trader was on the way out. To combat the larger fur companies coming down from the north, Lisa organized the leading traders of St. Louis into a company. They incorporated under the name of the St. Louis Missouri Fur Company. The members in order of their appearance on the Articles of Agreement were: Benjamin Wilkinson, Pierre Chouteau, Sr., Manuel Lisa, Aguste Chouteau, Jr., Reuben Lewis, William Clark, Sylvester Labadie, all of St. Louis; Pierre Menard and William Morison, of Kaskaskia, Illinois; Andrew Henry, of

1Andrew Henry was born in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, between the years 1773 to 1778. His parents, George Henry and Margaret Young,
Louisiana, Missouri; and Dennis Fitzhugh, of Louisville, Kentucky.  

Lisa and Wilkinson were designated as the factors to trade with the Indians, and Clark was to be the company agent in St. Louis. No member could trade on his own account. The company fixed the term for staying in Indian country at three years. As associate could return earlier if it was necessary.  

After the company was organized, the next item on the agenda was an expedition. Henry was chosen to be the field captain, with Menard as the company manager. A well-equipped and well-mounted force of three to four hundred men set out from St. Louis. On their way up were industrious farmers of the county. Andrew was brought up with a very high regard for honesty, which many commented about. He was tall and slender and had a commanding personality. His dark hair and almost blue eyes gave him a handsome appearance. He was fond of reading and could play the violin well. Although he was brought up as a Christian, Andrew never became a member of a church. He wrote little and was a man of action rather than words. There is nothing of his written work to be found other than his signature on the Articles of Incorporation of the Missouri Fur Company and a letter which he wrote to Francis Valle. 

Henry moved from Pennsylvania, bought land in Washington County, Upper Louisiana, and there became a public-minded citizen. On December 11, 1804, he was called to serve on the grand jury for the Court of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions of St. Genevieve District. Henry married in 1805 but was divorced two years later. The great amount of civic and business duties kept Andrew away from home a great deal and, perhaps, contributed to his divorce. 

In 1806 Henry made his debut in mining. Francis Azor Breton had discovered in 1782 a rich lead mine near the present town of Potose, Missouri. He assigned his grant (the mineral rights of the mine) to Walter Fenwick and Andrew Henry in 1806. Henry was thus assured of an income for the rest of his life. 

The St. Genevieve Academy was organized in 1808, with twenty-one trustees composed of the leading citizens of the town. Andrew was one of these trustees. Thus, we can see that Henry was important in civic affairs and was to be considered an important man in the community. 


the Missouri they met John Colter\(^4\) coming down and convinced him that it would be to his profit to turn around and guide them to the rich fur-bearing streams of the Three Forks country.

Shortly before the expedition reached the Three Forks country it was caught in a snow storm and the men suffered from snow blindness. They made camp and were blind for two days. A band of Snake Indians rode through their camp, and seeing their condition could have wiped them out. The Indians, however, took pity on them and did the party no harm.\(^5\)

The party arrived at the Three Forks in April, 1810, and immediately set about to build a fort. They chose a site between the Jefferson and Madison rivers.\(^6\) They were not sure that the Blackfeet would trade with them, so Henry and Menard had brought along enough traps for the men to use. This was a new style and method for the obtaining of furs. They flew a flag over their fort, but when they found the Indians to be hostile and very unfriendly they took the flag down and hoisted an Indian scalp in its place.\(^7\) The region was rich with beaver and there were expectations of trapping three hundred packs of beaver in a single season.

Their happiness was short lived. On the 12th of April, as the men set out to examine their traps, they were set upon by the Blackfeet, \footnote{ Mention has been made in the previous chapter explaining Colter's presence at this time up the river. }

\footnote{ Oglesby, Manuel Lisa, p. 93. }

\footnote{ The three forks of the headwaters of the Missouri were named the Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin. Thus, it was between the former two of these rivers that Henry and Menard made their camp. }

\footnote{ James, p. 44. }
and five men were killed outright. They lost seven horses along with a lot of guns, ammunition, traps, and furs. Very disheartening to the trappers was the fact that only two Indians were found to be dead.\(^8\) It was soon felt that the Blackfeet had manifested so determined a hatred and jealousy of their presence that they could in no way hope to be successful in the prosecution of the fur business.

A suggestion was made that if the trappers would join with the Snake Indians to raid the Blackfeet they could obtain a prisoner. With the prisoner they would try to communicate with the Blackfeet to see if they could arrange to trade with them. Word of this plan was sent to St. Louis to receive approval of the superiors in the company. Two days after the messenger left, the Blackfeet attacked again and more casualties were suffered. Menard was so discouraged that he left for St. Louis leaving Henry in complete charge of the expedition.\(^9\)

A new defense was adopted in order to protect the trappers and the men at the fort. They divided into four groups, two of which were to remain at the fort while the other two trapped together and protected each other. This plan proved quite effective for protection but was very ineffectual in getting any trapping done.

As days went by the Indians seemed to have forgotten them. The trappers began to get careless and go about in twos and threes. George Drouillard, one of the more important trappers, left the fort with some of his men against the warning of the others that Indians were near. Less than two miles from the fort they were attacked and Drouillard and two companions were killed. A hasty defense was attempted but proved futile. There was a raging wind at the time, and the trappers at the

\(^8\)Oglesby, p. 91.  \(^9\)Chittenden, I, p. 142.
fort could not hear the sounds of the battle being fought so close by, and consequently, did not go to their aid.\textsuperscript{10}

This third attack was the straw that broke the camel's back for Henry. He was discouraged with the constant attacks of the Blackfeet, the attacks of grizzly bears on the trappers, and the shortage of their supplies. He wrote a letter to Francis Valle\textsuperscript{11} telling him of the conditions at the Three Forks fort:

\begin{quote}
Since you left the fort I was told by Charles Davis that some days past you expressed some regret at going down. If that is the case & you have any wish to stay, you shall have the same bargain which Manuel gave you last fall & better should you desire it.

on the other hand. [sic] if you have really a wish to decend [sic] I will by no means advise you to stay, but would rather advice you to go home to your family who I know will be extremely glad to see you, altho the pleasure of your company for a year in this wild country would be to me inestimable.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

In the summer of 1810, Henry divided the remaining trappers into two groups. The smaller group he sent on their way to St. Louis with the furs that they had been able to gather, while he led the larger party up the Madison River to seek out new and safer lands to trap. They took with them everything that was needed for the extended hunt. When they left the fort the only thing left was an anvil that was to act as a landmark in the years to come. It was still there when people moved into the country to settle, but has since been removed.\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{10}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 142-143.
\textsuperscript{11}Francis Valle was one of the original party which went to the Three Forks area. He had escaped the first battle with the Blackfeet near the fort and had then decided to go back down the river to where the Indians were more civilized. It appears that he and Henry were good friends.
\textsuperscript{12}Oglesby, pp. 96-97.
\textsuperscript{13}"Bradley Manuscript - Book II," Montana Historical Society, VIII (1917), 135.
\end{flushright}
From this time on until he showed up near the Mandan Indian villages on the Missouri the following year, the whereabouts of Henry and his party was a topic of discussion among the Rocky Mountain Indian tribes, as well as the fur traders in St. Louis. Lisa had been informed that Mr. Henry was in a distressed situation over the Rocky Mountains and there was concern for his safety.14 When he finally returned in 1811, the stories he told caused a slump in the fur business as far as the upper Missouri was concerned, and caused the trappers to concentrate on the eastern slopes of the Rockies and into the Southwest.15

Fort Henry Established

Henry made his way up the Madison River, thinking that he had left all of his Indian problems behind him. He had barely left the Blackfeet lands when they met a group of Crows. These Indians, true to their infamous ways, stole some of the trappers' horses. This was a double blow, as the horses were not only used for packs, but were considered food in times of need.16 Henry continued on up the river until he sighted a low divide to the south. He crossed this pass into Idaho and discovered the lake that bears his name today.17 At the

---

16 Oglesby, p. 116.
17 To the northwest of Henry's Lake in Idaho today is a low pass which is the only one in the vicinity that fits the description mentioned above. It bears the name of Reynolds pass, and there is a highway going over this pass to connect Idaho and Montana. Henry's Lake is formed in a natural basin and shares in being the headwaters of the Henry's Fork of the Snake River, with large springs located to the east of the lake. Thus, the country today bears the name of the early explorer in many places.
southeastern end of the lake they found a river that wound its way through the mountains for some fifty miles until it entered a wide valley. The trappers scouted the region on their way down the river and found many streams that were abounding in beaver. Headquarters were decided upon and several buildings were erected on the south side of the river, about five miles downstream from the present town of St. Anthony. Thus, in July of 1810 the first American fur post west of the Rocky Mountains was established.

Present with Henry at his fort were John Hoback, Edward Robinson, Jacob Reznor, P. McBride, B. Jackson, L. Cather, and several other experienced mountain men. These men spent the winter trapping in the various streams surrounding the fort and trying to find enough food to exist. They were not troubled with Indians, as there were none around the area in the winter time. Fifty miles downstream from Henry's Fort was the wintering headquarters of the Bannack and Snake Indians. If Henry had established himself farther downstream, the fort may have been able to continue in existence. Heavy snows and no source of food caused the trappers to resort to the eating of their horses to stay alive. The report being circulated in St. Louis was that Henry was wintering in a delightful country on a beautiful and navigable stream. To top things off for Henry, the St. Louis Missouri Fur Company failed, and support for the party dropped off completely.

---

18 The actual site of the fort is in disagreement among prominent western historians. Some have placed it on the north bank of the river at the present site of Egin, Idaho, when it is actually on the south bank and upstream from Egin.

19 Rollins, p. 11.

20 Brackenridge, p. 96.
The spring of 1811 brought the decision to go back to St. Louis. Tempers were short and the trappers were dissatisfied at their lack of success. Henry divided the men into three groups. One party went south to try to make their way out of the mountains and into the Spanish settlements. This is the group that is sometimes thought to have been the first that may have traveled over South Pass. The second group went eastward and through the Jackson's Hole and Teton Mountains area. It is thought that Henry made his way northeast and down the Yellowstone River to deliver his forty packs of furs to Manuel Lisa near the Mandan Indian villages.  

21 Henry made one significant stop on his way down the river, at Cedar Island. There he and his men kept a promise that Lisa had made to the Sioux Indians the previous year by rebuilding the post which had burned down the year before.  

22 It was Henry's opinion that loaded horses, or even wagons, might in its present state, go in the course of six or eight days, from a navigable point on the Columbia, to one on the waters of the Missouri.  

Henry, tired of the excitement of trapping and fighting Indians, quit the rivers in the fall of 1811 and retired to his mines in Missouri. Although he was not active in the fur business, he was still a name noted in the civic activities of the St. Louis area. He served

21 Chittenden, I, 144.
Manuel Lisa had not given up on Henry and the rest of the party. Lisa had just won the famous race with Hunt up the Missouri and was going up to wilder country to continue his search for Henry, when Andrew appeared on his way downstream.

22 Oglesby, p. 116.
Some authorities feel that this act of Henry's helped to thwart British plans of getting the Sioux to join Tecumseh and the Prophet in their federation against the Americans preceding the War of 1812.

23 Brackenridge, p. 96.
as a peace officer, an election judge, a juryman, and held fraternal positions. He enlisted in the 6th Regiment in the War of 1812. Here his leadership abilities advanced him to the rank of Major in the First Battalion. We have no record of his being in any battles, but he served honorably.\textsuperscript{24}

Henry was an honorable man in all respects of life. There is record of his declining to put his money in his wife's name to save himself from bankruptcy. He preferred to live a poor man rather than a dishonest one.\textsuperscript{25}

Fort Henry Today

The location of Fort Henry today is a subject of discussion and argument. Lately historians place the site of the fort on the south bank of Henry's Fork of the Snake River some seven miles north of Rexburg, Idaho, and about two hundred yards east of the Salem farm-to-market road. Here, in 1937, the Salem Boy Scout Troop erected a monument and placed upon it the following words: "Fort Henry. The First White Settlement West of the Rocky Mt. Established 1810 by Cap. Henry - W. Hunt Presented by Salem Boy Scouts August 1937."\textsuperscript{26} The


\textsuperscript{25}Chittenden, I, p. 250.

\textsuperscript{26}This inscription was copied on my own (author) visit to the site of the fort. There are two errors on the monument. The first is in the line saying, "The first white settlement west of the Rocky Mt." According to W. J. Ghent in his book, The Early Far West, Lieutenant Finch, of the British North West Fur Company had established a fort on the Columbia prior to Henry's Fort. The second error comes in the line saying, "Established 1810 by Cap. Henry - W. Hunt." Wilson Price Hunt was not at the fort until the year following Henry's building and occupation of it. His name should not be connected with Henry's as helping to establish Henry's Fort.
marker has been placed at the edge of a ten-foot excavation indicating
the site of the fort.

The present site is about one hundred yards from the river,
suggesting that the course of the river has changed since the building
of the fort. Many of the springs and marshlands which were near the fort
in earlier times have dried up, probably because of the great amount of
water drawn from the river for irrigation purposes. The trees, which
may have served as a windbreak for the fort, have been felled, and the
land to the south is farmed extensively. Thus, the once primitive
wilderness now bears the marks of the modern farmer.

In 1927 Frank Miller, of St. Anthony, Idaho, interviewed William
McMinn, who homesteaded this area in 1881. McMinn had found a gun barrel,
an axe, and a piece of homemade chain on his ground, as well as several
piles of lava rocks arranged in a semi-circle. McMinn later dug into
this area and came up with ashes and a number of stones. On one of the
stones was inscribed, "Gov. Camp 1811 - H. Wells," Another stone read,
"Al the cook but nothing to cook." 27

Merrill D. Beal, while a professor at Ricks College became
interested in the problem, and with the help of several of his history
students began an excavation of the site. In Dr. Beal's words, "We
discovered broken lines of charcoal roughly conforming to a ten by ten
foot room, with considerable ashes upon a base at a five foot depth.
We also found the top of a gallon crock; but the prize find was a
river-worn basalt rock bearing the inscription, "'Fort Henry 1811 by
Capt. Hunt.'" 28

In 1917 a young man by the name of Hazen A. Hawkes was working

27 Beal and Wells, I, p. 93. 28 Ibid.
on the cleaning of a canal near Conant Creek, about fifteen miles east of Beal's diggings, when he and his companions spotted some fox cubs near a den. As they were digging to find the cubs, they uncovered a stone bearing the names of A. Henry, J. Hoback, P. McBride, B. Jackson, 1810 and L. Cather. A few years later Hawkes' wife discovered another stone bearing the inscription, "Henry 1810." This rock was broken in such a manner that the letter preceding Henry's name cannot be clearly distinguished, but it is thought to be an "A" or "camp." Upon the discovery of this rock was formed the opinion that the site of Henry's Fort may have been near Conant Creek. The original rock was lost for some time, but was found again by Hawkes in 1952. Since then he has discovered a meadow in this same area bearing marks of having once been a camp.29

There is little actual proof to substantiate the claim of Fort Henry being situated in the Conant Creek area. It is suspected that the camp was one the five men used as a trapping base in their excursions from the main post, as the whole of the Upper Snake River Valley was explored and trapped during this time. The rocks, however, add to the story of Idaho and the saga of the mountain men.

CHAPTER VI.

OVERLAND AND RETURNING ASTORIANS

Wilson Price Hunt

John Jacob Astor was born in Baden, Germany, on July 17, 1763.¹ He came to America in 1783 and immediately became a successful businessman. He got into the early fur business, and when it became a rich industry Astor had large investments bringing in huge profits. In 1809 Astor obtained a charter from the state of New York incorporating "The American Fur Company."² The company had a capital of one million dollars and had the privilege of raising it to two million.

Astor conceived a grand plan for fur trade and profit. Upon hearing the news of the furs that could be obtained from the Northwest, he set up the following scheme. A main trading post was to be established at the mouth of the Columbia River. Interior posts were to be built to trade with the Indians. Coastal vessels would trade up and down the west coast with Indians and trappers. An annual ship would come from the East to supply the posts and to carry their furs to China.³ This would assure control of the Northwest for the Americans, and Thomas Jefferson supported this plan.

Astor chose Wilson Price Hunt, of New Jersey, to lead out in fulfilling these plans, as he was a gentleman of great possibility and worth. Hunt was also a native-born citizen of the United States, which would give loyalty to their cause. Hunt is described as a man scrupulously upright and faithful in his dealings, amicable in his disposition, and of most accommodating manners.  

Two expeditions were outfitted: one was to go overland by way of the Missouri River and the other to go by sea around Cape Horn. Hunt was in charge of the land expedition, which left Montreal in July, 1810. The party proceeded up the Ottawa River, across Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, and down the Mississippi River to arrive in St. Louis on September 3, 1810.  

In St. Louis a rivalry developed with Manuel Lisa and his Missouri Fur Company, as they were planning a trip up the Missouri to trap, and neither group trusted the other. Hunt wintered on the Missouri four hundred and fifty miles above St. Louis. He spent some time trying to get more hunters and trappers to give him larger numbers. When he joined the main group in March, 1811, he had with him Mr. John Bradbury, of the Linnaean Society of Liverpool, and Mr. Thomas Nuttall, a collector of American plants. On the 18th of March, John Colter came into camp. He was immediately asked to return to guide them to the coast. Colter had just acquired a new bride and was hesitant to go back into the wilderness. He informed them of the dangers of the Indians and then proceeded on down the river.  

On April 21, 1811, the party, known as the "Overland Astorians,"

---

4Ibid., p. 123.  5Ibid., p. 125-131.  6Ibid., p. 139.
numbering nearly sixty, began to ascend the Missouri.\textsuperscript{7} Manuel Lisa was trying to catch Hunt's party as he thought they would be able to pass through Indian country better together, but Hunt felt that Lisa might get the Indians to turn on him, so he pressed on. This developed into one of the greatest races ever performed on the river. Lisa eventually caught up to Hunt, and then Hunt was persuaded by Edward Robinson, John Hoback, and Jacob Reznor to go overland.\textsuperscript{8} These men had been with Henry and knew from first-hand experience the dangers that were on the upper Missouri.

On the 18th of July the party started overland. They had eighty-two horses heavily laden with Indian goods, beaver traps, ammunition, and Indian corn. Each partner was mounted and Pierre Dorion, a guide whom Hunt had obtained in St. Louis, had a horse for his children and equipment.\textsuperscript{9} They traveled up the Grand River, crossed the Little Missouri, moved up the Powder River, crossed the Big Horn, skirted the Wind River, and moved down the Hoback River into Jackson Hole. When they came in sight of the Teton Peaks, Hunt named them the "Pilot Knobs."\textsuperscript{10} At first they thought they could make canoes and go down the Mad (Snake) River. The stream looked navigable, but Indians told them it was impassable. John Day was sent to explore and returned with the news that it was impossible to travel even along the side of the river.

Hunt crossed the river and made his way over Teton Pass into Pierre's Hole. Here they turned northwestward and moved across the low hills to Henry's Fort. Since it was snowing, Fort Henry proved to be

\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., p. 155-174. \textsuperscript{8}Ibid., p. 175-177. \textsuperscript{9}Ibid., p. 215. \textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 257.
a useful rest station for the Hunt party when they reached that spot on October 8th. When they saw the comparatively smooth-flowing Henry’s Fork they decided to make the rest of the trip in canoes down this stream. When they were ready to leave, there were a few who were given equipment and the charge to trap around the area. Edward Robinson, John Hoback, Jacob Resnor, Martin Cass, and Joseph Miller were chosen to stay and trap. Edward Robinson, a Kentucky woodsman then in his sixty-seventh year, was a veteran Indian fighter in his native state and had been scalped. He wore a handkerchief bound around his head to protect it from the sun. The rest were veteran trappers, and the general feeling was that this group would meet with much success.

On the 19th of October, Hunt’s party left Fort Henry and headed downstream in canoes. Hunt describes the river as running smoothly and wide with occasional rapids. Their first trouble came at the cataract at Idaho Falls. Here two of their canoes filled with water and, although the crews were saved, one of the canoes and its contents were lost.

Shortly after this, Archibald Pelton was found. He had been with Andrew Henry at the Montana fort and had escaped from an Indian battle there. He told Hunt that the Blackfeet had killed all the men with Henry and that he alone had escaped. He had spent the three years


13Irving, p. 271.
previous wandering the Snake River Plain with the Snake Indians.\textsuperscript{14}

By the 28th of October the party arrived at the now-famed Caldron Linn.\textsuperscript{15} Here one of the boats struck a rock and Antonie Clappine drowned. The river here and right below proved to be un-navigable.\textsuperscript{16} Hunt sent out exploring parties to see if they could proceed by water. The groups came back with the news that it would be impossible to continue their trip by water. It was decided that each partner would take men and set out to find food and a way to the Columbia. Mr. M'Lellan was to take three men and set out westward. Mr. Crooks was to take eighteen men and continue along the south side of the river. Mr. Hunt, with eighteen men, Pierre Dorion and his family, would move down the north side of the river. Mr. Mckensie was to take four men and set out to the north to see if they could find friendly Indians and food.\textsuperscript{17}

The main concern of the groups was to find enough food to stay alive, as most of the supplies were either lost in the rapids or would be cached. Hunt states, "All their remaining stock of provisions consisted of forty pounds of Indian corn, twenty pounds of grease, about five pounds of portable soup, and a sufficient quantity of dried meat to allow each man a pittance of five pounds and a quarter, to be reserved for emergencies: ..."\textsuperscript{18}


\textsuperscript{15}This name was given by some Scotchman, probably Ramsey Crooks or Donald Mackensie, as the word is from the Scotch, lyn, meaning a pool of water in a perturbed state, as at the foot of a waterfall. Caldron Linn is located in southern Idaho approximately twenty miles east of Twin Falls, Idaho.

\textsuperscript{16}Irving, p. 276-7. \textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 280-6. \textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 285.
A cache was to be prepared to place the materials that would be of no use in a trip downriver. The following is a description of the main cache Hunt prepared and is a general description of most caches:

... They choose a dry situation, then describing a circle of some twenty inches diameter, remove the sod as gently and carefully as possible. The hole is then sunk a foot deep or more, perpendicularly. It is then worked gradually wider as it descends, till it becomes six or seven feet deep ... As the earth is dug out, it is handed up in a vessel, and carefully laid upon a skin or cloth, in which it is carried away, and usually thrown into the river ... till all is stowed away. When the hole is nearly full, a hide is laid on top, and the earth is thrown upon this, and beaten down, until with the addition of the sod first removed, the whole is on a level with the ground, and there remains not the slightest appearance of an excavation. The first shower effaces every sign of what has been done, and such a cache is safe for years.19

The groups split up and went their ways. All of them suffered great hardship and starvation before they finally arrived at the mouth of the Columbia. The steep canyons of the Snake caused some of them extreme suffering for thirst as they could see the water but could not reach it. They had made their split in the early part of November, and some of them made it to the Columbia by the latter part of January. Hunt and his group arrived at the fort they were supposed to build on February 15, 1812.20 The last group suffered the most and didn't arrive until the 11th of May. Hunt had traveled about two thousand seventy three miles since leaving the Missouri River.21

Fort Astoria, which had been built by Astor's ocean expedition, consisted of four long, low huts at this time. Gabriel Franchere made the official welcome to Hunt's party on the 18th of February. It had

20Irving, p. 320-1. 21Stuart, p. 308.
been almost a year since the Tonquin had arrived by water and the construction had begun. The spot which had been selected for the fort was on a handsome eminence called "Point George." It commanded a view of the Columbia in front, was bounded on the right by a long, high, and rocky peninsula covered with timber, and on its left, Cape Disappointment, with the bar and its terrific chain of breakers.22

There were fifteen of the Astorians who remained in Oregon to become permanent settlers, and three more who might have done so except for their untimely deaths. A record of these men can be found in the twenty-fourth volume of the Washington Historical Society. Hunt returned to St. Louis where the following is recorded, "In 1817 Mr. Hunt purchased from heirs of Labbadie a tract of several thousand acres of land lying on the water of the Gravois Creek about eight miles southwest of Saint Louis. On this land he built a mill, made a farm and other improvements, and the place was long well known in this locality as Hunt's Mill."23

Robert Stuart

Robert Stuart was born in Perthshire, Scotland, on February 18, 1785. His father, John, was a schoolmaster and his mother was Mary Buchanan. Robert's character was greatly influenced by the Presbyterian Church of which he was a member.24 Stuart left Scotland in 1807 because of the urging of his uncle, David Stuart, of the North West Fur

---


24Rollins, p. xxxv-xxxvi.
Company. He worked for the fur company until 1810, when he was offered a partnership in the Pacific Fur Company. Stuart was on the *Tonquin* when it left the east coast of America to make its way around the Cape Horn to meet the "Overland Astorians" at the mouth of the Columbia River. After landing at the chosen site, Stuart spent his time in the West from March, 1811, to the last of June, 1812, helping to build Fort Astoria and exploring.

When Wilson Price Hunt arrived at Fort Astoria, it was decided that an express should be sent back eastward to let the company know what was going on. In the Pacific Fur Company records the following is recorded:

Resolved that it being necessary to send an express to New York and all the papers and other things being prepared, Mr. Robert Stuart is hereby instructed to have and to take charge of them, with which he is to go as directly to N.Y. as circumstances will admit, and there to be governed by the directions of Mr. Astor as to the time of his returning to the Northwest coast. It is also resolved that John Day, Benjamin Jones, Francois LeClerc and Andre Vallee accompany Mr. Stuart as far as St. Louis where he is to pay them the balance due each by means of drafts drawn by our W. P. Hunt on John Jacob Astor. June 27, 1812.25

Stuart left Astoria on June 29, 1812,26 under salute of cannon. The six men accompanying Stuart were Benjamin Jones, Francois LeClaric, Andre Valle, Ramsay Crooks, Robert McClellan, and John Day. John Day exhibited symptoms of mental disorder on the 1st of July and had to be sent back to the fort on the 3rd of July.

Friendly Indians informed Stuart of a shorter route to the Snake River country to the south of Hunt's westward path. The decision was made to take the new route, and the party came across northeastern


26Rollins, p. 3
Oregon to enter Idaho in mid August.27

Upon arriving at the Snake River, they proceeded upstream on the right bank of the river. On August 20th they met John Hoback, Edward Robinson, Jacob Reznor, and Joseph Miller. This group of four had left Hunt’s party at Fort Henry the year before and had since been trapping southeastern Idaho. They had traveled two hundred miles south and two hundred miles east to the upper Green River. Here they were robbed twice by a band of Arapaho Indians. These Indians took all their horses, clothing, and equipment. They then traveled nine hundred fifty miles westward suffering from hunger, thirst, and fatigue. They met the Stuart group almost naked with nothing but news of good trapping areas.28

The four trappers joined Stuart, and the party now numbered ten. They moved on up river through southern Idaho. On August 29, 1812, they arrived at Caldron Linn to find that Hunt’s large and carefully hidden cache had been completely ransacked. Apparently wolves had started the uncovering, leading Indians to investigate, and all was gone but a few books.29 Later Stuart learned that it was Andre’ LaChapelle, Francois Landry, and Jean Baptiste Turcotte, three members of Hunt’s original party, who had tired in eastern Oregon, left Hunt, and returned with Indians to raid the cache.30

The next day Reznor, Robinson, and Hoback were outfitted for a

27Ibid., p. 80.


29Rollins, p. 111-112.

30Ibid., p. 80.
two year hunt. Their intention was to trap the Henry's Fort area. Mr. Miller had had enough of the Indian country and preferred to stay with Stuart, bringing the party's number of seven.

Stuart continued upstream on the Snake until they came to the Portneuf River. They ascended the Portneuf, crossed over to Bear River, ascended this stream, and then moved into western Wyoming. They were traveling in unknown country now and their apprehension of Indian trouble grew. On the 13th of September they turned due north from the direction they had been traveling. This decision came because Miller had trapped and traveled the country to the north, and was influenced by the observation of Indian smoke coming from the direction they were headed.

At this point Stuart departed from what later became the Oregon Trail. He was only 110 miles from South Pass. He was about to begin a detour that, by his reckoning, added over 400 miles to their trip. Miller appears to have been wrong, as they would have reached country he was familiar with if they had continued their previous course. Temporarily uncertain as to their whereabouts, they decided to go to Teton Pass where they could follow Hunt's trail to the East.

On September 19th, as they descended Grey's River near the Snake River, Indians attacked and stole all their horses. Stuart was impressed enough by the Indian method of stealing horses to record it as follows:

This method of stealing horses is deserving of being more

---

31 The three trappers who had turned down repeated offers to return to civilization were killed this same year. They trapped and worked their way towards the Boise area. Here they were joined by some who were working under John Reed. They were attacked by Indians and all killed except Dorion's wife and two children, who were away from the party during the Indian attack.

32 Spaulding, p. 97-98. 33 Ibid., p. 98n.
minutely described; one of the party rode past our camp and placed himself on a conspicuous knob in the direction they wanted to run them off; when the others (who were hidden behind our camp) seeing him prepare, rose the warwhoop yell, (which is the most horribly discordant howling imaginable being in imitation of the different beasts of prey, at this diabolical noise the animals naturally rose their heads to see what the matter was - at that instant he who had placed himself in advance, put spurs to his steed, and ours seeing him gallop off in apparent fright, started all in the same direction, as if a legion of infernals were in pursuit of them. -- In this manner a dozen or two of those fellows have sometimes succeeded in running off every horse belonging to war parties, of perhaps 5 or 500 men; for once those creatures take fright, nothing short of broken necks can stop their progress---.

With their horses gone, Stuart felt it would be wise to make a raft to go down the Snake River to a place where they could obtain horses from friendly Indians. Stuart recorded the finding of large quantities of beaver and fish as they descended. On September 27, they emerged from the canyon and left the river. They proceeded to

34 Rollins, p. 134-5.

35 At this point it seems fit to comment on the two editions that have been published of Robert Stuart's journal. Mr. Rollins' edition was published in 1935 and has extensive and detailed footnotes. Mr. Spaulding's edition was published in 1953 and has some new information, especially in the introduction. However, in Mr. Spaulding's treatment of Stuart's travels in southeastern Idaho there are some errors. For example, Stuart's journal entry of September 23rd describes the river as "... 4 miles N.W. brought us to a part of the river where mountains on the right and cut bluffs on the left made us apprehensive of rapids ..." Mr. Spaulding describes this area as follows, "Stuart's party was due West from the location of Ucon, Idaho, and somewhat north of the middle of the great bend made by the river in this area." The actual course of the river west of Ucon is through rich irrigated farm land of the Snake River Plain, about twenty miles from where it leaves the mountain area. Mr. Spaulding also makes use of landmarks which are little known in the Snake River Valley. For example, on September 26th, Stuart camped on the forks of Moody Creek, some ten miles from Rexburg, Idaho. Mr. Spaulding states that they were camped fourteen miles west of Sam, Idaho. Sam, Idaho, was a post office in Teton Basin, which has since been abandoned. There is a mountain range lying between Sam and the Stuart camp. Mr. Spaulding uses suburbs of Idaho Falls to base his placing of Stuart's camp instead of using the well-known landmark of the city itself. My conclusion can only be that even though Mr. Rollins' edition is thirty-two years old now, it is the most accurate as far as eastern Idaho is concerned.
walk northeastward across low hills\textsuperscript{36} till they camped at the forks of Moody Creek.

By September 30th the party was camped on Canyon Creek at the site of the hot springs there. Stuart describes the springs as being oily to touch, foaming like soapsuds, and smelling at a distance. The principal spring was very hot and sulphuric. The column of smoke that issued from the spring area could be seen for two miles.\textsuperscript{37}

It was at these springs that Robert McClellan left the group. They were preparing to go over the mountains to Pierre's Hole to avoid being seen by Indians. McClellan was absolutely fearless and was regarded as a great trapper. He was reckless and impetuous. He swore he would rather face all the Blackfeet in the country than encounter the difficulties of the mountains.\textsuperscript{38} So while the rest of the party moved eastward to go over the range of mountains, McClellan moved northward to go around the mountains.

The Stuart group moved into Pierre's Hole and on their way towards Teton Pass were able to kill some elk and a bear. They crossed

\textsuperscript{36}This low hill area is known as the Rexburg Bench. It rises sharply out of the valley to form a bench of rolling hills. The bench is approximately ten miles wide from east to west and fifteen to twenty miles long north to south. This area today is dry farmed and raises large quantities of wheat. Since wells have provided water for sprinkling, there are large quantities of potatoes raised there also.

\textsuperscript{37}Merritt Neibaur is the present owner of Green Canyon Hot Springs, which has utilized the water from the springs that Stuart describes to provide modern recreation. The springs today are covered with a concrete protection for sanitary purposes. They issue forth at a temperature of one hundred fifteen degrees and a volume of one hundred thirty to one hundred fifty gallons per minute. The water is very clear and contains dissolved minerals of lime, magnesium, and a trace of iron. At the time of the earthquake in Yellowstone Park, in 1959, the volume of water increased and became cloudy for a time. This leads to the theory that the springs are connected with the thermal activity in the Park.

\textsuperscript{38}Drumm, \textit{The Quarterly of Oregon Historical Society}, XXIV, 345-49.
the pass and found themselves once again at the Snake River. They also found McClellan here near starvation. One of the Canadians of the group was suffering enough that he suggested a drawing of lots so that they could have something to eat. Stuart used his authority as leader and the gun he carried to discourage this suggestion. 39

They traveled a little eastward and then turned south. They were able to trade for a horse and some supplies from Indians but were still in bad shape when they began to descend the Green River. It was on October 22 that they reached the vicinity of South Pass. 40 Shortly after this they were able to get enough supplies to get them the rest of the way to St. Louis.

Stuart and his party arrived in St. Louis on April 30, 1813, after following the later Oregon Trail most of the way. This is where Stuart achieved his fame. He traveled nearly five thousand miles and most of it was later made into the well-known trail. 41 After his experience in the mountains and the rivers of the West 42 Stuart was heralded by the press as follows:

The narrative of this event will evidence to the world that a journey to the Western Sea will not be considered (within a few years) of much greater importance than a trip to New York . . . By information received from these gentlemen a journey across the


40There is some controversy as to who was the discoverer of South Pass. This question is discussed extensively by Charles L. Camp in the California Historical Society Quarterly, IV, pp. 126-9.

41Rollins, p. 240.

42On July 21, 1813, Stuart married Elizabeth Emma Sullivan in New York. He continued to work at the fur trade until he retired from the company in 1834. Then he moved to Detroit where he became active in real estate. He was elected as director of the State Bank of Michigan and was active in community affairs. Stuart died on October 28, 1848, in Michigan.
continent of North America might be performed with a wagon, there being no obstruction in the whole route that any person would dare to call a mountain in addition to its being the most direct route to go from this place to the mouth of the Columbia. 43

---

CHAPTER VII.

HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY VERSUS AMERICAN TRAPPERS

Early Snake River Country Fur Trade

The War of 1812 caused a significant change in the fur trade. The British sent a frigate to accompany an armed North West Company ship to seize Astoria from the Pacific Fur Company. The North West Company had already been active on the upper Columbia and they now extended operations to include the whole Northwest. In 1816 they decided to open the Snake River to fur trade and selected Donald McKenzie for the undertaking.¹

McKenzie's first expeditions were quite successful. These trips were into the Nez Perce area and covered the years from October, 1816, to June, 1818.² His third expedition was made up of fifty-five men, one hundred ninety-five horses, and three hundred traps. They left Fort Nez Perce in September, 1818, and went across the Blue Mountains to trap the Boise River country. From here they followed the Snake River upstream and eventually got as far as the Bear River. McKenzie's aims in this expedition were (1) to see the principal Snake chiefs with whom he had not yet made peace, (2) to examine the country, and (3) to ascertain the state of navigation of the Snake River with a

view to further operations. From Bear River the party turned northward to skirt the Rocky Mountains until they reached the headwaters of the Snake. Then they returned to the Boise River and from there on up to Fort Nez Perce.

There were approximately seventy-five men in the next expedition of McKenzie into the Snake Country. His principle aim on this expedition was to talk to the Indians, which he had not done before. He was met by men at the Skan-naugh (Boise) River with supplies, and while there was harrassed by Indians. The expedition moved on to the Bear River, where McKenzie took ten men with him to seek out the Indians while the rest trapped. Everything turned out quite successfully. The Indians were friendly and the trapping was good. It took one hundred fifty-four horses to haul the furs back to Fort Nez Perce. McKenzie's last trip into the Snake Country was quite routine. Not much has been recorded about it. There were seventy-five men in the expedition which lasted from July 4, 1820, to July 10, 1821.

The North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company merged on April 5, 1821, bringing a real change to the Oregon country. The Hudson's Bay had not been in the area, and the North West Company was only able to show a profit because of the Snake country expeditions. McKenzie was promoted and moved out, leaving no one with real experience to go into the trapping area. One of McKenzie's men, Michel Bourdon, took over the leadership of the Snake country trade. The expeditions of the next few years were torn with desertions and Indian problems.

Finan McDonald led the expedition of 1823 into the Snake country. A new path had been developed to get them to the fur country faster.

---

3Ibid., p. 299. 4Ibid., p. 302. 5Ibid., p. 303.
They would go into Montana and from there cross the Lemhi pass to enter Idaho from the north. McDonald had trouble with the Blackfeet in Montana and they followed him into Idaho. Here the trappers became fed up with the problem and attacked the Indians. The result was six white men killed, including Michel Bourdon, and sixty-eight Indians. 6 McDonald trapped on over to Henry's Fork and then returned to his home base with four thousand furs and was thoroughly disgusted with the Snake country. He states, "I got Safe home from the Snake Cuntre thank . . . and when that Cuntre will see me agane the Beaver will have Gould Skin. . . ." 7

A new system was adopted by the Hudson's Bay Company to see if conditions could be improved in the Snake expeditions. They assigned a man for a three year period to be in charge of the expeditions. The first man chosen for this job was Alexander M. Ross. In a letter from Governor Simpson of the Hudson's Bay home office to the Chief Factors of the Columbia River District, he warned, "The Snake Country Expedition has been fitted out under Mr. Ross, who should be cautioned against opening a road for the Americans." 8 This letter was dated July 12, 1823, just previous to Ross's expedition of the spring of 1824.

Ross made his way through deep snow into Idaho over the Lemhi Pass and then set about to the task of acquiring furs. He decided to seek new territory rather than to follow the same routes that had been followed by those prior to him. He spent a lot of time searching in


7Fleming, p. 53n.

the Salmon River Mountains for beaver but found little. He moved on
southward and was able to find some fur when he got to the south fork
of the Boise River. He met with a lot of success here and worked the
area thoroughly, moving up the Snake River to the Raft River and then
returning to the Salmon country. At the Salmon River he was joined by
Jedediah Smith of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Smith accompanied
him across the Lemhi Pass and all the way back to the Flathead Post.
It was thought by many that Smith was there to spy on the Hudson's Bay
operation, and Ross was reprimanded for allowing Smith to travel with
him.

Peter Skene Ogden

Peter Skene Ogden was born about 1794 in Quebec. His father
was the Honorable Isaac Ogden, a Judge of the Admiralty Court of Quebec,
and his mother was Sarah Hanson Ogden. Ogden started his fur career
as a clerk with the North West Company in 1809 or 1810. He worked his
way rapidly to the station of partner in the company, but in the merger
of Hudson's Bay and the North West fur interests in 1821, Ogden was left
out. After much persuasion he was able to get reinstated in 1823 and
assigned to the Oregon country.

Ogden's first assignment was to fill the gap of fur trade in
the Snake country. The Snake River Expedition of 1824-25 was one of
the best equipped to ever go into the country. There were two gentlemen
(leaders), two interpreters, seventy-one men and lads, eighty guns,

\[9^9\] Dale L. Morgan, \textit{Jedediah Smith} (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill

\[10^10\] T. C. Elliott, "Peter Skene Ogden Journals," \textit{The Quarterly
three hundred sixty-four beaver traps, and three hundred seventy-two horses. On December 20, 1824, he left the Flathead Post to head for the rich trapping areas to the south. Nine days later, seven Americans, headed by Jedediah Smith, attached themselves to Ogden's party. This was the same group that had gone to the post with Ross, and it was felt that Smith wanted to follow the Hudson's Bay trappers to where the rich beaver areas were known to be. They entered Idaho on February 11, 1825, through the same Lemhi Pass that Lewis and Clark traversed on their way to the Pacific.

They camped that day on the Lemhi River and then proceeded south-east towards the headwaters of the stream. Soon they discovered hostile Indians following them looking for a chance to steal. Heavy guards discouraged the Indians. Snow made their movement slow, and the faster Americans left Ogden's group to hurry on to the Henry's Fork trapping. Ogden made his way down Day's River (Little Lost River), having crossed a range of mountains, and moved over the plains to the Snake River near the present-day town of Blackfoot.

Ogden trapped the Blackfoot River to the headwaters of the Portneuf and moved slowly down that fur-producing stream. By April 26, they were working the Bear River. They followed the Bear River into

---


14The Portneuf River received its name from that of a trapper who camped there. The identity has not been established, but there was a Joseph Portneuf who was in the Columbia District in the Hudson's Bay outfit of 1824-25.

15Bear River was discovered in 1819 by Michel Bourdon, who was being employed by the Hudson's Bay Company in the Snake country. It was so named because of the number of bear in the vicinity.
Cache Valley. Now Ogden was in Mexican territory, having crossed the forty-second parallel. In this territory Ogden faced his greatest challenge when the American free-men met in an attempt to get his supplies and furs.

On May 23, 1825, Johnson Gardner confronted Ogden, charging him with being on American soil. Ogden called Gardner’s bluff and the problem resolved into an invitation by the Americans to have the men of the Hudson’s Bay Company quit, and join the group that offered better profit for their work. The next day twelve of Ogden’s party left, taking their furs with them. The day after Ogden’s group was reduced to forty-one.

Ogden now felt that his numbers had been so reduced that he would be unable to continue. They marched northward to enter the Snake River Valley near present-day Pocatello. They then ascended the Snake and Henry’s Fork. They turned north again to pass through the sands to Camas Creek. They moved up Beaver Creek to cross the continental

---

16 There is some question in Ogden’s journal as to who discovered the Great Salt Lake. Ogden doesn’t mention seeing it, although some of his men probably did. According to Ogden’s journal, Charles McKay saw the Lake from a mountain on the 12th of May, 1825. A later letter gives evidence that Ogden did see the lake. However, Jim Bridger is given the credit for discovering the Great Salt Lake as he followed the Bear River to the Salt Lake in the fall of 1824. (Alter, p. 48-9.)

17 According to Ogden, ”the freemen employed in the Snake River expedition were the very scum of the country and generally outcasts from the Service for misconduct, are the most unruly and troublesome gang to deal with in this or perhaps any other part of the World.” (Fleming, p. XXXIII.)


19 Just to the west of St. Anthony, Idaho, there is a large area of sand dunes. There are lava beds with an occasional crater and some fifteen to twenty miles of sand dunes.
divide at Monida Pass. Having reached Montana they proceeded to trap for beaver in the valleys to the northwest. By September they were back at the pass and moved into Idaho.

Ogden now moved down the west side of the Snake River Valley trapping the streams there. They trapped the "Riviere Malade or Sickly Rivers." By October 19th they had reached the Boise River and from there worked their way over to Fort Nez Perce (Walla Walla).

Ogden's second expedition took him into Oregon. He had fifty men with him when they set out in November, 1825. After spending some time in Oregon, they moved eastward into Idaho. By March 14th they were near the Caldron Linn in southern Idaho. They found Indians who had an American flag. Ogden was hesitant in meeting with Americans for fear he would lose some more men. When he did meet the Americans two of his men deserted and one of the Americans came to him. This occurred near present-day American Falls. Ogden trapped in southern and western Idaho and then followed his trail back through Oregon to near where he started.

Ogden's third expedition only touched Idaho's western border when he came to the Snake River. Most of the trip was spent in Oregon and in Northern California. He returned on this trip to Fort Vancouver.

Ogden's later life was spent in and around Fort Vancouver. In

---

20These two rivers are the present day Big and Little Wood Rivers. Donald McKenzie named the river Malad because the meat of the beaver there made his men sick. Poisoning of beaver flesh came from their feeding on the roots of the hemlock. (Rich, Ogden's Journals, III, 86-88.)


1847 he was instrumental in negotiating for the return of five men, eight women, and thirty-four children who were being held captive by Indians. They were the captives who survived the Whitman Massacre. Ogden died in the Oregon country on September 27, 1854, and was buried at Oregon City, Oregon.\textsuperscript{23}

The Snake expeditions now were handled by John Work. He had come west with Peter Skene Ogden in 1823 to the fort at the mouth of the Columbia. He had worked principally with the forts of the upper Columbia, and then took Ogden's place as chief trader of the Snake country.

There were many Americans coming into the Snake country, so the Hudson's Bay Company continued their policy of making a fur desert of the area. Work left Fort Nez Perce on August 22, 1830, with an expedition of thirty-seven men, four hired servants, one slave, two youths, twenty-nine women, and forty-five children.\textsuperscript{24} His intent was to follow the same path as Ogden's earlier trips and to denude the area of fur-bearing animals.

They had a slight brush with the Blackfeet when twenty Indians attacked one of the parties of four trappers; killing two of the men. At the Sickly River (Malade River)\textsuperscript{25} Work records, "... Little but reeds growing. The beaver feed on the roots. Whether this causes the


\textsuperscript{25}The Malad River is in the southern part of Idaho. It is only three or four miles in length except during the spring runoff. It flows down a picturesque gorge to empty into the Snake River.
sickening quality of the flesh or the roots; several of the people are sick from eating the beaver. Hemlock is also found the roots of which cause the flesh to be poisonous .... 26

Work met twenty Americans on the 10th of October and feared that he was going to be followed as had the Hudson's Bay people in the past. The increasing numbers of Americans are noted by Work. He tells of seeing two hundred men and one hundred hunters in a party under Crooks and Company. He also states that Mr. Fontenelle is at the Snake River with a group of men. 27

Work moved his expedition up the Portneuf River, worked the Bannock River, and later moved down the Raft River to the Snake. Here they turned southward to skirt the north end of the Great Salt Lake. They went on over to the Humboldt River and worked there for a month. Work moved into eastern Oregon and back to Fort Nez Perce, where he arrived on July 20, 1831. He had traveled one thousand miles and reported a scarcity of beaver in the area. 28: Work was the last of the Snake brigade leaders, as the Hudson's Bay turned their efforts at this time to building and maintaining forts to enable them to trade with the free trappers and the Indians.

Ashley-Henry Expeditions

There is, perhaps, no class of men on the face of the earth who lead a life of more continued exertion, peril, and excitement, and who are more enamored of their occupations than the free trappers of

27 Ibid., p. 368.
the West. No toil, no danger, no privation can turn the trapper from his pursuit. His passionate excitement at times resembles a mania. In vain may the most vigilant and cruel savages beset his path; in vain may rocks, and precipices, and wintry torrents oppose his progress; let but a single track of a beaver meet his eye, and he forgets all dangers and defies all difficulties. . . . He is to be found with his traps swung on his back clambering the most frightful precipices, searching, by routes inaccessible to the horse, and never before trodden by white man, for springs and lakes unknown to his comrades, and where he may meet with his favorite game.29

A man who has spent the greatest part of his life with danger and adventure cannot be content to spend his days in the everyday dreary life of the common man. So it was no surprise to many of the citizens of St. Louis to see the following notice in the March 6, 1822, issue of the Missouri Republican:

To Enterprising Young Men

The subscriber wishes to engage one hundred men to ascend the river Missouri to its sources, there to be employed, for one, two, or three years. For particulars, enquire of Major Andrew Henry, near the Lead Mines, in the County of Washington (who will ascend with and command the party) or the subscriber at St. Louis. — William H. Ashley30

There is some question as to whether Henry was Ashley's partner or just an employee. Also under question is the name of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company and whether it applied to the Ashley organization. There is no documentary evidence yet uncovered that Henry was other than an employee or that the name of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company was used before 1830, when it was adopted by the organization of Fitzpatrick, Bridger, M. G. Sublette, Gervais, and Fraeb.31 Many historians

Art. 20. If a citizen of the United States should kill, wound, or strike a subject of Algiers, or, on the contrary, a subject of Algiers should kill, wound, or strike, a citizen of the United States, the law of the country shall take place, and equal justice shall be rendered, the Consul assisting at the trial; but the sentence of punishment against an American citizen shall not be greater or more severe than it would have been against a Turk in the same predicament; and if any delinquent should make his escape, the Consul shall not be responsible for him in any manner whatever.

Art. 21. The Consul of the United States of America shall not be required to pay any customs or duties whatever, on any thing he imports from a foreign country for the use of his house and family.

Art. 22. Should any of the citizens of the United States of America die within the Regency of Algiers, the Dew and his subjects shall not interfere with the property of the deceased, but it shall be under the immediate direction of the Consul, unless otherwise disposed of by will; Should there be no Consul, the effects shall be deposited in the hands of some person worthy of trust, until the party shall appear who has a right to demand them, when they shall render an account of the property; neither shall the Dew, or his subjects, give hindrance in the execution of any will not may appear.

ARTICLE ADDITIONAL AND EXPLANATORY.

The United States of America, in order to give the Dew of Algiers a proof of their desire to maintain the relations of peace and amity between the two powers, upon a footing the most liberal,
feel that Henry was a partner in the organization even though there is no evidence uncovered so far to prove one way or another. Associated with Henry and Ashley in their trading and trapping enterprises were many men of prominence in Rocky Mountain history. They were men such as Jedediah Smith, Jim Bridger, Jim Beckwourth, David Jackson, William Sublette, Louis Vasquez, Edward Rose, Hugh Glass, and Thomas Fitzpatrick—"The most significant group of continental explorers ever brought together." 32

As the applicants came Henry and Ashley placed them into classes, under competent instructors, for screening in regard to capabilities. There was evidence, however, that sheer eagerness for adventure was being offered in lieu of the desired military obedience, learning, and ability which Major Henry knew were essentials. The new style fur business was for the company to send out its own trappers instead of relying upon the Indians to do the trapping and the company to do the trading. Thus, the greenhorns had to learn the art of trapping to bring in the needed furs, as well as learning to defend themselves and exist in the wild country. 33 Nearly twice the one hundred needed signed up, and many were turned away: "The men were green, but under expert guidance turned into fair trappers.

Knowledge of the terms that were offered to the new trappers comes from a letter of correspondence between two of the competitors of Henry and Ashley. Thomas Hemstead, writing to his partner Joshua Pilcher, said, "I am told the Ashley-Henry hunters and trappers are to

---


have one-half of the fur they make; the company to furnish them with
guns, powder, lead, etc. They only are to help build the fort and
defend it in case of necessity.\textsuperscript{34} These terms seemed to offer much
more to the trapper than had contracts between trapper and management
of previous years and helped to set a trend that was built up through
the years.

From the \textit{St. Louis Enquirer} came the following description of
the men who were about to go up river and start their careers as
mountain men.

The party is composed of young men, many of whom have relinquished
the most respectable employments and circles of society for this
arduous but truly meritorious undertaking.\textsuperscript{35}

The expedition was outfitted with two new keelboats which cost
$3,500 a piece. They were sixty-five feet long and fifteen feet wide.
The cargo and cabin superstructures were nearly six feet high, allowing
for a lot of needed cargo space. The loading capacity, when drawing
the recommended twenty-five to thirty inches of water, was twenty-five
tons—equal to that of an entire train of wagons.\textsuperscript{36} They were setting
out with enough supplies to last a small army of men the several years
that they would be in the mountains. They were also to supply some of
the forts that were located in the areas of their trapping.

On April 11, 1822, the first license for Ashley to trade on
the Upper Missouri was recorded, and a license of the same tenor and
date was granted to Major Andrew Henry.\textsuperscript{37} With all of the smaller
details out of the way, Henry spread the ten foot sail on the twenty
foot mast of the lead keel bost, and a brisk wind started the expedition

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., p. 13. \textsuperscript{35}Ibid., p. 14. \textsuperscript{36}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{37}Chittenden, I, p. 261-262.
on its way. An item in the *Missouri Intelligencer* issue of March 25, states, "Two keel boats belonging to General Ashley left St. Louis on the ninth for Yellowstone." This presents some question as to the actual departure date, but has been explained as several parties leaving at different times to join farther up the river.

The source of the *Missouri* was the Three Forks country, which Henry had been driven out of before by the Blackfeet. This time Ashley and he felt that they had enough men and guns to take care of that menace. Henry split the party at the Mandan Indian villages, and they proceeded westward in two groups, one by land and the other by the river. For protection from the Indians a system of guard duty was developed. A captain appointed guards and then called out every twenty minutes to be sure they were awake. It was the duty of the captain to check if anyone failed to reply. If a guard was found asleep he was fined five dollars and forced to walk for three days. The usual time of guard duty was two-and-one-half hours. Even with this type of precaution, a large band of Assiniboina Indians attacked them and got away with thirty-five horses. This loss caused Henry to decide not to try to get all the way to Three Forks that year but to winter near the mouth of the Yellowstone and go on in the spring.

Upon arriving at the mouth of the Yellowstone, a shelter was constructed between the two rivers one mile above their confluence. Word was received at this time that the *Missouri Fur Company* was also going up the river with their goal the Three Forks area. Henry decided

---


to take a small exploring party of twenty-one men up the Missouri to see if a spot could be found closer to Three Forks in which they could winter. He also sent men out to trap the surrounding areas, bringing them into the Jackson's Hole country. The Missouri Company fort was up the Yellowstone at the mouth of the Big Horn River. Henry found the place he was looking for near the mouth of the Musselshell River. This placed his camp at nearly the same distance from the Three Forks as the Missouri trappers were. Four small log huts connected by an enclosing palisade became the home of the trappers for this winter. 40

Henry was not content to remain idle for the whole winter. He chose eleven men and they set out to go up the Missouri to the Three Forks to scout and prepare for the main group to follow in the spring. They had been in the area a short time exploring and were excited about the large number of beaver that were there. A short distance above the Great Falls of the Missouri a large group of Blackfeet attacked the party. So savage was the attack that four were killed and others were wounded. This attack was in April 1823, and it so disheartened the group that Henry decided he was through with the Blackfeet. He went back down the river to the main group, and then all of them retreated to the mouth of the Yellowstone. 41 The rival Missouri Fur Company had reached and trapped the sources of the Missouri River, but on their return were attacked by the Blackfeet on the 31st of May below the mountains on the Yellowstone River. The leaders, Immel and Jones, and five other men were killed and all their equipment and furs were lost. 42

Henry and his party of trappers spent the next few months going down river to rescue Ashley from an Arikara Indian attack, winning an

attack by Mandan Indians, having one of his men, Hugh Glass,\textsuperscript{43} maulled
by a grizzly bear,\textsuperscript{44} and then returning to the Yellowstone country.

\textsuperscript{43}The story of Hugh Glass became a legend among the mountain
men. He had been in many scrapes before and had always been able to
come out of them alive, so many thought that he had a charmed life. On
the trip to the Yellowstone with Henry, he had been detailed to hunt.
As he came through a dense thicket a large bear came out to attack him.
He shot it, but one shot was not enough to stop the raging bear. It
began to claw and rip at Glass. His shots and the bear's growls brought
the rest of the trappers, who quickly disposed of the bear. Glass was
a mangled picture of humanity. Henry offered eighty dollars to any two
men who would remain behind until Glass died or recovered. As it was
supposed that he would die soon, Bridger and Fitzgerald volunteered to
stay, and the rest made their way rapidly to their destination. Days
passed with no change in Glass, but the two with him were becoming
worried about prowling Indians in the area. Fitzgerald was the experi-
enced trapper and talked Bridger into abandoning the near-lifeless
Glass. They left and rejoined Henry in the Yellowstone camp. Glass
had not been completely unconscious and knew that he had been deserted.
He dragged himself for days until he found a friendly Indian camp.
They doctoried him, and soon he was on his way up river with vengeance
glowing in his eyes. According to trapper code, Glass could kill both
Bridger and Fitzgerald and not be held accountable in the eyes of the
law. Glass caught up to Bridger at the Yellowstone camp, but Henry
stepped in and pled the case of the young man. Henry stated that he
shouldn't be killed because of a mistake of youth. Glass was sympa-
thetic with Bridger, and this act saved the life of one of the greatest
of all mountain men. Glass then went downriver to find Fitzgerald, who
had joined the army as the only way he could protect himself. After an
interview with the commander who was over Fitzgerald, Glass decided
that it would not be the right time to kill Fitzgerald. He returned to
the mountains and was killed by Indians before he could ever get to
Fitzgerald. (Frost, p. 86n-87n.)

\textsuperscript{44}According to Webster's dictionary, a bear is a heavy mammal
that has long shaggy hair and a rudimentary tail and walks on the soles
of its feet with the heels touching the ground. "Ursidae" is the Latin
term denoting the bear family. "Ursus Horribilis" is the Latin name for
the grizzly bear, meaning "horrible bear." "Silver-tip" is another name
for the grizzly. The long black hairs have a tip of white which gives
them a silvery color. Lewis and Clark in their journals refer often to
the "White bear" as it abounded in large numbers in the Rockies in the
early 1800's.

The grizzly is about six feet in length and averages about five
hundred pounds in weight. From the days of the earliest explorers of
the Rocky Mountain regions, grizzly bears have borne the undisputed title
of America's fiercest and most dangerous big game animal. In early days,
having little fear of the primitive weapons of the Indians, they were
bold and indifferent to the presence of man, and no higher badge of
supreme courage and prowess could be gained than a necklace of grizzly
In the fall of 1824, Henry made his last trip down the Missouri River to bring the cargo of furs to St. Louis and to end his career as a mountain man and fur trader. The catch that he brought in this time was perhaps the largest of any that he had ever been in charge of. For Henry the desire for adventure and excitement had been fulfilled with this last trip, and he decided that it was time for him to retire.

The journals of many of the trappers tell stories of their narrow escapes from the attacks of grizzly bears and describe them quite vividly. In the book Astoria, Washington Irving says: "... His speed exceeds that of a man but is inferior to that of a horse. In attacking he rears himself on his hind legs and springs the length of his body." Henry Marie Brackenridge, in his book Views of Louisiana, written in 1814, warns the traveler by saying: "... The African lion or the Tyger of Bengal are not more terrible or fierce. He is the enemy of man; and literally thirsts for human blood... He is three times the size of a common brown bear and six times that of an European one."

Andrew Henry knew from personal experience of the troubles the grizzly could cause. While camping at the Three Forks Fort in Montana, a shout at the gate brought the men running to see if the trapper there was being pursued by the Blackfeet or a grizzly. Later Henry mentioned the attacks of the bears as being part of the cause for his leaving Three Forks for the warmer and more hospitable area south.

One classic example of a grizzly bear's temperament is recorded in the journal of Thomas James, called Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans. James and his party had killed one bear and were searching for another. James states, "I, with my dog, entered a narrow path and had gone some distance when I saw the dog ahead suddenly bristle up, bark, and walk lightly as if scenting danger. I called to the men to come up, and watched the dog. He soon found the bear guarding a dead elk which he and his dead companion had killed and covered with leaves. As soon as he saw the dog he plunged at him and came furiously toward me, driving the dog before him and snorting and raging like a mad bull. I leveled my gun and snapped, and then ran with the bear at my heels and his hot breath upon me. I reached the river bank and turned short up a path in which I met my companions coming to my call. They, however, seeing me running were panic stricken and took to their heels also, thus were we all in full retreat from bruin, who crossed the river and fled through the willows on the other side..."

Because grizzlies are so destructive to cattle, colts, sheep, and pigs, they have been hunted down and killed in most of the United States. There are still a few in the forests and mountains of Idaho and especially in and around Yellowstone Park.

According to Chittenden in his book, The American Fur Trade of the Far West, Henry left St. Louis on October 21, 1824, on his last expedition up the river. Then he states that no one knows what came of him after this trip or how long he was in the mountains.
went to spend the remainder of his days at his home in Washington County, Missouri.

Ashley and his men spent the next years trapping different areas, such as the Green River, Jackson's Hole, the Snake River Valley, and Bear River; but unlike the brigades of before, the men split up into small groups. Ashley states, "The beaver is a shy and astute animal and is best captured by units of not more than three or four men trapping different streams. Therefore, for the purpose of trapping, the parties which had traveled together during the past year broke up into small groups." On March 8, 1826, Ashley left St. Louis with a party of twenty-five men for his last trip to the mountains. They traveled along the valleys of the Platte, North Platte, and Sweetwater Rivers to cross South Pass, arriving at the valley of the Green River to be informed that the rendezvous of that year was to be held at the Weber River. By articles of agreement signed on the 18th of July, 1826, "near the Grand Lake west of the Rocky Mountains," which was probably Cache Valley, Ashley relinquished his interest in the business to three of his lieutenants, Jedediah S. Smith, David E. Jackson, and William L. Sublette. He agreed to supply the new firm with merchandise and to market their furs.47

Jedediah Smith

According to Jedediah Smith's chief biographer, "During his eight years in the West, Jedediah Smith made the effective discovery of South Pass; he was the first man to reach California overland from the American frontier, the first to cross the Sierra Nevada, the first to

---

46custom refs 38. 47Ibid., p. 43.
travel the length and width of the Great Basin, the first to reach Oregon by a journey up the California coast. He saw more of the West than any man of his time, and was familiar with it from the Missouri River to the Pacific, from Mexico to Canada."\(^{48}\)

We have already noted that Smith was active in finding the rich fur areas that the Hudson's Bay trappers were working. In 1824-25 he had come by way of Green River, through the Bear River Valley, and across the Snake River Plain near the three buttes to join up with Ross. In 1829 he had made his trip through the whole of the West and was up at Fort Vancouver promising Dr. McLoughlin that he would abandon the Snake country in return for his kindness. In accordance with this, the three partners sold their business on August 4, 1830, to Thomas Fitzpatrick, Milton Sublette, James Bridger, Henry Faeb, and Baptiste Gervais.\(^{49}\) These men called their company the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. This company was active in the fur trade and trapping of the Snake River Valley. Jim Bridger was known to favor an area in southern Idaho to the east of Fort Hall. It was a good beaver area, and he spent many of his hunts in the mountains there.

There were many different companies working the rivers now, and it seemed that a new system of getting the furs to market was needed. The natural result of that had been the organization of the Rendezvous.

Rendezvous

Rendezvous, according to Webster's Dictionary, is a place set for a meeting; a meeting by appointment; and a retreat or refuge. To

\(^{48}\)Morgan, p. 7.

the trapper it meant a week or two of vacation and enjoyment among a
large group of his fellow trappers.

William H. Ashley is given credit for the beginning of the annual
rendezvous in 1825 at Henry's Fork of the Green River. Instead of
depending on the savages to furnish their furs, Henry and Ashley deter-
mined to employ white men in the actual task of trapping, and for the
regularly established post to substitute, in large measure, the annual
rendezvous. The trapper was to supplant the trader. 50 This system was
rapidly adopted by the other fur companies.

From the middle of June to the middle of September all trapping
was suspended because at that time the beavers are shedding their fur
and the skins are of little value. This time, then, became the
trapper's holiday when he was free for fun and frolic, and ready for a
'saturnalia' among the mountains. 51

An annual gathering place was appointed, and here the scattered
bands of trappers assembled at the appointed time to receive pay for the
season's work and to purchase supplies for the ensuing year. Here plans
for the coming year were studied out and arrangements for any contem-
plated enterprise were completed. These meetings were held at various
places, but Pierre's Hole became the best known because of the Indian
battle that transpired there and the number of men who kept journals of
the rendezvous of 1832. 52

The trappers had a real feeling of release when they arrived at
the rendezvous. After nearly a year of being on their toes at all times
to ward off an Indian attack, it was a real joy to be in the presence...

50Ibid., p. 67. 51Irving, Captain Bonneville, p. 229.
52Vandiveer, p. 239.
of so many others and much too large a group to worry about hostile Indians. For example, Nathaniel Wyeth recorded the following figures in his journal of the people who were present at the Pierre's Hole Rendezvous of 1832: "120 lodges of friendly Nez Perce, 80 Lodges of Flatheads, 90 trappers under Mr. Dripps of the firm of Dripps & Fontenelle, and 100 men of the Rocky Mt. Fur Company." There were many free traders present who did not depend upon the companies for support but did their own trading with the Indians and then traded with the companies.

All was not strictly business for the trapper at these times. It has been recorded in journals that the events usually began with racing and some exhibits of personal strength which were regarded with admiring wonder by any newcomers to the mountains. Soon all the manlier sports degenerated into the baser exhibitions of 'crazy drunk' condition. The vessel in which the trapper received and carried about his supply of alcohol was one of the small camp kettles. "Passing round" this clumsy goblet very freely it was not long before a goodly number were in the condition just named and ready for any mad adventure whatever.

At the 1825 rendezvous at Henry's Fork of the Green River, General Ashley records that he picked up 8,829 pounds of beaver worth in St. Louis from $45,000 to $50,000. This system was so effective that Peter Skene Ogden wrote to his superiors of the Hudson's Bay


55 Morgan, p. 172.
Company complaining, "In the expedition to the Snake country two-thirds of my time is lost in traveling to and from headquarters. Far different is the mode by which the Americans conduct their trapping expeditions; their trappers remain five and six years in their hunting grounds, and their equipers meet them annually to secure their furs and to give them their supplies. Although great the expense and danger they must encounter in reaching the Missouri, still they find it to their advantage to conduct their business this way. There is a wide difference in the prices they pay for their furs and sell their goods as compared to us—a difference of 200 percent."  

There were fifteen rendezvous as follows: 1825, Henry's Fork of the Green River; 1826, Weber River (Great Salt Lake); 1827, Bear Lake; 1828, Bear Lake; 1829, first in July, The Popo Agie River; second in August, at Pierre's Hole; 1830, Wind River at the mouth of Popo Agie; 1831, Powder River; 1832, Pierre's Hole; 1833, Fort Bonneville on Green River; 1834, Ham's Fork of the Green River; 1835, Green River; 1836, Horse Creek of the Green River; 1837, Green River; 1838, Wind River; 1839 Horse Creek of the Green River; 1840, on the Green River, near the mouth of Horse Creek.  

The most extensive of these meetings in eastern Idaho was the rendezvous of 1832 in Pierre's Hole. This will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

---

57 Ibid.
CHAPTER VIII.

EAST AND WEST OF THE TETON RANGE

Jackson's Hole

On the eastern side of the Teton Range of the Rockies lies an area surrounded by mountains called Jackson's Hole. This basin was named after David Jackson of the fur company of Smith, Jackson, and Sublette. There were no large gatherings of fur trappers in Jackson's Hole due to the nearness of more favorable meeting places such as Pierre's Hole to the west, the Green River to the south, and the Wind River to the east. However, this area was traversed much by the early trappers.

John Colter¹ is given credit as being the first white man into the Jackson's Hole area because of a map that was made in 1814 showing Colter's travels.² There have been some attempts to discredit this map as there is evidence that the places Colter told about fit other localities better.³

John Hoback, Jacob Rezner, and John Robinson were the next

¹See Colter, Chapter IV, p. 19-21.
²Charles C. Paullin, Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States (Washington: Carnegie Institute, 1932), Vol. XV, Plate 32A.
visitors to Jackson's Hole. They came eastward over the Teton Pass in 1811, having spent the winter at Andrew Henry's Fort on the north fork of the Snake River. They made their way eastward and met Wilson Price Hunt coming up the Missouri River. The three Kentuckians were then persuaded to guide Hunt westward bringing the party through the Jackson area.

With this start the Jackson's Hole area became a regular part of the route traveled by fur trappers. It was a natural junction area connecting Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana. Perhaps 1832 was the year of the most fur trapper travel in this country as many passed through the basin on their way to the Pierre's Hole Rendezvous.

Pierre's Hole Rendezvous

The first rendezvous in Pierre's Hole was in 1829. The general trapper rendezvous that year was held at the Popo Agie River in July, but the Rocky Mountain Fur Company went on to Pierre's Hole to meet their men in August. This meeting was overshadowed by the reports that accompanied the later rendezvous there.

The Pierre's Hole Rendezvous of 1832 received more publicity than any of the other meetings of the trappers in the era of their activity. There were not less than nine participants who wrote at full length regarding their experiences at this gathering. The rendezvous had been set for east of the Rocky Mountains, but due to pressure from the American Fur Company, it was changed to get it into an area less controlled by one company. W. A. Ferris of the American Fur Company said, "Pierre's Hole has been selected as a pleasant place for a general rendezvous by the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, Mr. Vanderburg, and ourselves. It receives its name from an Iroquois chieftan, who first discovered it
and who was killed in 1827 on the source of the Jefferson River." 

Reverend Samuel Parker described the area: "Pierre's Hole is an extensive
level country, of rich soil, well watered by branches of the Lewis
[Henry's Fork] River, and is less frosty than any part we have passed
this side of the rocky chain of mountains. The valley is well covered
with grass, but is deficient in woodland, having only a scanty supply of
cotton-wood and willows scattered along the streams."  
For a description of the way the land is formed, Osborn Russell stated, "This valley
lies north and south in an oblong form, about thirty miles long and ten
wide, surrounded, except on the north by wild and rugged mountains; the
east range resembles mountains piled on mountains and capped with three
spiral peaks which pierce the clouds. ... The Snake Indians called
them 'The Hoary Headed Fathers.'  

William Sublette arrived at the rendezvous on July 8, 1832. 
Nathaniel Wyeth had accompanied him part of the way and was on his first
trip to the West. Wyeth recorded upon his arrival the presence of one
hundred-twenty lodges of the Nez Perce, eighty lodges of Flatheads, a
company of ninety trappers under Mr. Dripps of Dripps and Fontenelle of
the American Fur Company, and one hundred men of the Rocky Mountain Fur
Company, under Milton Sublette and Mr. Frapp. The principal activities
of a rendezvous have already been recorded. After the general business
of the gathering had been taken care of and the areas of the next year's
hunt discussed, the groups began to break up. On July 14, Wyeth and

---


7 Young, 159.
Milton Sublette left the camp headed southward. Towards the end of the valley they observed a long line of people coming down the mountain. Upon closer observation they discovered them to be Indians, instead of the group of trappers they had been expecting.

The Indians were Blackfeet and numbered some one hundred-fifty men, women, and children. The Indians had one chief advance with a pipe of peace. Antonine Goddin and a Flathead Indian rode forward from the trappers' side. When they got close enough the trapper and Flathead shot the Blackfoot chief and then fled to the safety of the trapper party. The Blackfeet at once set about to fight. They felt they were fighting a small group of men and were surprised when many riders soon appeared, having been summoned by a messenger from Sublette. The Blackfeet made themselves a fort of branches thrown up in front of a deep wood. From behind this they had some protection, but the trappers were fighting from a relatively open position.

William Sublette arrived and immediately suggested attacking the fort through a swamp. They moved up close to the fort and then began firing into it. As reinforcements arrived they caused the Blackfeet much alarm, but the Indians continued their defense of the swampy position. At pauses in the battle, the Indians of the two sides would talk to each other to throw insults and taunts. The Blackfeet at one time told of a much larger group of Blackfeet just over the mountains that would avenge them if they were all killed. This was interpreted by the Nez Perce Indians to mean that a larger group of Indians was attacking the main gathering of the trappers to the north. Immediately many of the trappers left to help their partners. Night came before they could return, and on investigation the next day it was found that
the Indians had made a complete retreat. The Blackfoot losses amounted
to twenty-six men, and the trappers lost thirteen men, seven of them
being Nez Perce. William Sublette was wounded but not too seriously,
and Wyeth had a professional doctor in his company who quickly took
care of him.

The descriptions recorded of the battle were very vivid. Each
part was described in detail and each person saw it quite differently.
The descriptions run from the battle scene taking place in a swamp to
having taken place on a mountain. Reverend Parker, after reading a
description of the battle said, "With those who have seen the field of
battle, the glowing description, drawn out in long detail, loses its
interest for although I saw it, yet I did not see dense woods, nor a
swamp of any magnitude anywhere near."

Of the importance of the Pierre's Hole Rendezvous, Hiram Martin
Chittenden stated:

The rendezvous in Pierre's Hole was one of the most important of
those singular gatherings ever held in the mountains, and it marked
the turning point in the Rocky mountain trade. A great change
was beginning to come over the business. The field was no longer
to the Rocky Mountain Fur Company alone. The powerful opposition
of the American Fur Company had evidently come to stay. Wyeth
had entered the country, and although his present condition
amounted to nothing, there was no telling what a man of his energy
might not yet accomplish. Finally there was Captain Bonneville,
backed by New York Capitalists, invading the mountains with a
formidable party.

Today there is little left of the battleground that would coin-
cide with the descriptions given in journals. If it were not for the
efforts of Benjamin W. Driggs, the site of the battle might now have

8John E. Sunder, Bill Sublette-Mountain Man (Norman: University

9Parker, p. 96. 10Chittenden, p. 299.
been a part of history that could not be recovered. He studied the records and talked with many who had been shown the site by actual participants in the battle. Mr. Driggs places the battleground in the open country near the main highway between present-day Driggs and Victor. There has never been a monument or marker placed on the battlefield although a state historical marker is on the highway near the site of the rendezvous.
CHAPTER IX.

A BUSINESS VENTURE

Nathaniel Wyeth

Nathaniel J. Wyeth made his first appearance in the West in 1832 when he came to the Rendezvous in Pierre's Hole. From there he had gone across Idaho to Fort Vancouver. He had explored the Willamette Valley and knew of the possibilities of the people being able to settle there. On his return in 1833 he had been filled with thoughts of the possibilities of starting a salmon industry at the mouth of the Columbia. He had a history of being a successful businessman in the East, and it was not hard for him to get people interested in backing him for a business effort in the Oregon country, especially since he had returned East with one hundred sixty-nine packs of beaver and the promise of being able to supply some of the fur companies at the next year's rendezvous. He organized the Columbia River Fishing and Trading Company to adopt Astor's earlier plan of trading on the Pacific.

On April 28, 1834, Nathaniel Wyeth left Independence with fifty-eight men. Two of these were botanists, two were missionaries, and the rest were assorted trappers. Most of the men were under contract to Wyeth, but Osborne Russell, one of the party, records that six of the men were independent trappers.¹ They came up the Kansas River, the

Blue River, up the North Platte, and across to Green River. They arrived at the Green River Rendezvous on the 19th of June.\(^2\) The exact details of the agreement between Wyeth and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company have not been found, but after his arrival they refused to honor the contract for supplies Wyeth had brought them.\(^3\) William Sublette had arrived at the Rendezvous before Wyeth, presenting his claim to the Rocky Mountain men for debts owed to him. They had been forced to trade with Sublette and had few furs left when Wyeth arrived. Apparently he did leave some of his supplies with them but not as many as he planned. Mr. Russell said, "Here Mr. Wyeth disposed of a part of his goods to the Rocky Mountain Fur Company . . ."\(^4\)

As a result, Wyeth had a real surplus of supplies. He knew that there were a lot of fur parties both of the Hudson's Bay and the American companies in the Snake River Valley. With this knowledge in mind he moved from the Rendezvous to find a suitable place to build a fort that would allow him to make some profit from the supplies that he had in his train. Beaver prices in Philadelphia had sagged from six dollars a pound in 1831 to two dollars and sixty-two cents a pound in 1834.\(^5\) This may have also helped Wyeth to decide that the real money was to be made in supplying the men rather than trying to get into the trapping business.

They moved from the rendezvous at Ham's Fork of Green River, passed Bear Lake and turned northwest to the Snake River Valley. While going through the Bear River Valley Russell described it thus:

The river, which was about twenty yards wide, ran through large,

\(^2\)Young, p. 221.  \(^3\)Ibid., p. 221.  \(^4\)Russell, Journal, p. 9.  \(^5\)Lavender, p. 418.
fertile bottoms bordered by rolling ridges which gradually ascended on each side of the river to the high ranges of dark and lofty mountains upon whose tops the snow remained nearly the year round.\textsuperscript{6}

They also had occasion to pass the Soda Springs area, which gave rise to the following comment by Russell:

This place which looked so lonely, visited only by the rambling trapper or solitary savage, will doubtless at no distant day, be a resort for thousands of the gay and fashionable world, as well as invalids and spectators.\textsuperscript{7}

Upon arriving in the Snake River Valley, Wyeth set about to find a spot to erect a fort. His journal entry of July 14, 1834, states, "Went down the river about 3 miles and found a location for a fort and succeeded and killed a Buffalo near the spot."\textsuperscript{8} This does not seem like an appropriate statement when the importance of the fort to the later travel in that section is considered, but at that time Wyeth felt that the fort was going to be just a way to get rid of his supplies.

Wyeth left Fort Hall in August, 1834, and proceeded to follow the Snake River downstream, but on the north side. He finally crossed the river to continue his journey to Walla Walla, where he arrived on September 2nd.\textsuperscript{9} A good portion of his men had left him at Fort Hall to become independent trappers. Russell, for one, seemed very happy to be out of the company. He thus expressed his feelings; "The time for which myself and all of Mr. Wyeth's men were engaged had recently expired, so that now I was independent of the world and no longer to be termed a 'greenhorn.' At least I determined not to be so green as to

\textsuperscript{6}Russell, \textit{Journal}, p. 9. \textsuperscript{7}Ibid. \textsuperscript{8}Young, p. 227.

\textsuperscript{9}Wyeth moved down the Columbia River to build Fort William at the mouth of the Willamette River. Here he was a direct challenge to the British traders and they soon undercut his business, causing him to sell out to them. This ended Wyeth's ventures in the West as a fur trapper or businessman.
bind myself to an arbitrary Rocky Mountain Chieftain to be kicked over
hill and dale at his pleasure."  

These men roamed at will over the
country trapping and then meeting at the rendezvous to sell their furs
to one of the companies there.

Fort Hall

Wyeth's party wasted no time in getting the fort built. On
the 18th of July, Russell described the fort building by saying, "We
commenced the fort, which was a stockade eighty feet square, built of
cottonwood trees set on end, sunk two and one-half feet in the ground
and standing about fifteen feet above, with two bastions eight feet
square at the opposite angles. On the 4th of August the fort was
completed . . ."  

The structure was named Fort Hall in honor of Henry
Hall, senior partner of Messrs. Henry Hall, Tucker, Williams, and
Nathaniel Wyeth.  

With Wyeth at Fort Hall was Reverend Jason Lee. On July 27,
1834, a Sunday, he conducted a religious service. Lee said, ". . .
the first formal Protestant religious observance to be held in the
vast interior lying west of the Rocky Mountains,"  

The next day they had a funeral service for one of the men who had been killed the
previous day in a horse race. Mr. Lee described the position of the
fort as follows:

This Fort is in Lat. 43° 14', N. but Lon. is not yet ascer-


11Ibid., p. 11.

Champlain Society, 1941), p. 125.

13Cornelius J. Brosnan, Jason Lee, Prophet of the New Oregon
tained. It is on Lewis' Fork in an unpleasant situation being surrounded with sand which is sometimes driven before the wind in as great quantity as snow in the East.\textsuperscript{14}

The Hudson's Bay people were worried about the presence of an American trading post so close to their own interests. McLoughlin, of the Hudson's Bay Company, received word from headquarters that he must endeavor to put Wyeth out of business by steady, well-regulated opposition. He was convinced, however, that Wyeth's whole enterprise was unsound and that there was no need to go to the expense of actively opposing it.\textsuperscript{15}

McLoughlin's forecast about Wyeth soon came true. Before long Wyeth was having a hard time finding enough supplies to keep his enterprise going. He wrote a letter on May 5, 1836, to McLoughlin presenting the following proposal:

Wyeth would obtain supplies from the Hudson's Bay Company asking for a guarantee of the purchase of his furs. In return Wyeth would be willing to abandon Fort Hall and draw a line of Demarcation where he would only work the upper waters of the Snake.\textsuperscript{16}

McLoughlin thought that this was fair and proposed the idea to his superiors. Simpson wrote on behalf of himself and the Council of the Northern Department in June, 1836, this answer:

We think it better to oppose him [Wyeth] Vigorously. Allow him to do his Worst and to Decline Entering into Any Arrangement with him than afford him An opportunity to Secure a firm footing in the country by temporising Measures.\textsuperscript{17}

This was a shock to McLoughlin, as it was a reversal of the company's policy to that time. Vindication of McLoughlin's policy came in 1837


\textsuperscript{15}Rich, McLoughlin's Letters ..., V, cvii-cviii.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. cix-cxiii.  \textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
with the Hudson's Bay purchase of Fort Hall.

Captain Thing of Fort Hall attempted to raise a garden in the year of transition (1836) at the fort. He raised peas, onions, and corn that proved to be a real treat to the people passing through. One of the highlights of Reverend H. H. Spaulding's trip to the West was his stop at the fort. He states, "Here turnips have been raised but too frosty for farming. Some timber on a small spot and apparently several thousand acres of good soil. This is a dangerous situation, in the vicinity of the Blackfeet, a blood-thirsty Indian tribe, frequently at the gates of the fort, have destroyed many lives and stolen hundreds of horses." 18

Wyeth, by 1837, was in bad financial straits. He approached the Hudson's Bay Company again, this time with an offer to sell the fort to them. Dr. McLoughlin explains the offer in a letter to the Company dated October 31, 1837:

As mentioned in the 15th Paragraph of mine of 19th March last to the Governor and Council at York, Mr. McLeod left this on 18th April with an Outfit, and proceeded to the American Rendezvous which he reached on 28th June, on Green River, a Branch of the Rio Colorado, about 200 Miles S. E. of Salt Lake. On the 18th July the Americans arrived from St. Louis, when he was informed through Captain Thing, Mr. Wyeth's Clerk, that Mr. Wyeth had given over the business, and given him the power to sell out, but states nothing regarding the proposal he made to Your Honors, and he writes Captain Thing he would find further instructions at Vancouver. Captain Thing offered Mr. McLeod at once to Sell to the Hudsons Bay Company all Mr. Wyeth Goods &c. at a 100 p Cent on Boston prices,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price/Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fort Hall</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000 Dollars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traps</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$   ea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$   ea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

trappers advances at their valuation in the Books; Mr. McLeod very properly would not accept these terms as too high, and Captain Thing immediately sold his Traps and Horses to Fountenelle & Drips [Lucien Fountenelle and Andrew Drips of the American Fur Company] at those prices, and brought down his Furs here, and according to the

offer you made him, I purchased his Goods &c. Valuing them at our Importation of '36, and taking the Boston prime cost for such articles as you offered, and putting no value on useless articles, (However to give us a claim on these last, when the accounts were made out, I gave him Fifty Dollars for them), Beaver 4½ Dollars p. lb. (The Rocky Mountain price) on conditions that he would take Five Hundred Dollars for Fort Hall and his Outstanding Debts, to be paid by Bills on England, the Dollar to be valued at 4/2. But if these terms did not suit him, I offered him a passage for his effects and furs to Oahu, on his paying freight, he accepted the offers I made him, and sold us all Mr. Wyeth Furs, Goods &c. as you see by the accompanying account, and for which I will draw on the terms stated when we have closed his accounts, and he leaves this for Oahu. 19

The total price paid to Wyeth by the Hudson's Bay Company for Fort Hall came to eight thousand, one hundred seventy-nine dollars and ninety-eight cents. 20

The Hudson's Bay Company wasted no time in taking over the fort. Suggestions were even made at this time to send men down the Colorado to trap clear to California. Now that the Company had a stronghold in the country, they wanted to get as much out of it as possible. The Snake country was not producing the desired number of furs. The emphasis of the trade was moving away to areas not so infested with trappers. Procuring provisions became hard at the fort and they started living in a "hand to mouth" condition. Attempts to grow grain failed because of the dryness of the area. 21 On November 1, 1839, a party of twelve men sm arting from an attack of the Sioux in the Browns Hole (Green River) country came to Fort Hall and stole several horses from


20 Fort Hall Under the Hudson's Bay Company, " The Quarterly of Oregon Historical Society, XLI (1940), 35n.

the Hudson's Bay Company. Relations between the two groups never improved. In a letter dated October 31, 1842, from Dr. McLoughlin to Governor Depy, the following is recorded:

Narcisse Raymond left Fort Hall in Spring of 1842 to visit Green River area to trade and collect debts from Americans working there. He left his trade goods under one man and went to the Americans. He was warned by the American leader to return to his goods for fear they would be taken. He thought the American just wanted to get rid of him and stayed. When he did return his packs and all were gone. 50 pounds worth.

In 1842-3 Fort Hall bought 2,500 beaver skins. In 1845-6 the Fort bought 1,600 beaver skins and a few other bringing the total value of three thousand pounds. Things were not going as well as the company wished, but they were able to maintain the impression that as long as they were there the country was to be regarded as being British. In 1843, Theodore Talbot came to the fort and recorded that the Bourgeois of Fort Hall, a Captain R. Grant, talked of the country as belonging to the British.

Fort Hall became an important place in the immigration towards the Oregon and California country. As early as 1844 the records kept at the Fort showed that one thousand people had come through headed for Oregon and another two hundred headed for California. Peter

---

22E. Willard Smith, "Journal of E. Willard Smith while with the Fur Traders, Vasquez and Sublette, in the Rocky Mountain Region, 1839-1840," The Quarterly of Oregon Historical Society, XIV (1913), 226.

23Rich, McLoughlin's Letters .. . VI, p. 82.


Burnett, leading a group of immigrants, stopped at Fort Hall in 1843. He thus described it: "The fort was situated on the south bank of the Snake River, in a wide, fertile valley covered with luxuriant grass and watered by numerous springs and small streams. This valley had once been a great resort for buffaloes, and their skulls were scattered around in every direction."  

Burnett had more to say as he described the sagebrush area to the west of Fort Hall. He said, "The road was rocky and rough, except in the dry valleys, and these were covered with a thick growth of sage or wormwood, which was from two to three feet high, and offered a great obstruction to the first five or six wagons passing through it. The soil ... was very soft on the surface, and easily worked up into a most disagreeable dust, as fine as ashes or flour."  

Another important visitor was Joseph Burke, a famed English botanist who spent the winter of 1844-45 at Fort Hall. He was on a trip collecting specimens of plants and animals of North America for the Earl of Derby and the Royal Botanic Gardens of London.  

Hundon's Bay Company's official policy was to help immigrants only to the extent of being paid and polite. They did not go to the extent of affording accessories to them. They continued to operate the fort after the 1846 Oregon Boundary Question was settled, and it was not until 1856 that they abandoned the fort because of the lack of trade and Indian unrest. In the Treaty of July 1, 1863, for the "Final Settlement of the Claims of the Hudson's Bay and Puget Sound Agricultural  

---

27 Peter H. Burnett, "Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer," The Quarterly of Oregon Historical Society, V (1904), 76.

28 Ibid., V, 77.

Companies," Fort Hall was one of the posts for which the Hudson's Bay Company claimed payment.\(^{30}\)

Fort Hall today is covered by the waters of the American Falls reservoir. The exact site of the fort has been determined by the unearthing of old wagon parts and relics by Ezra Meisker. It is about ten miles northeast of the mouth of the Portneuf River. In the spring, when the water in the reservoir is high, the road to the fort and its monument are under water.

CHAPTER X.

THE DECLINING YEARS OF THE FUR TRADE

Christopher Carson

Kit (Christopher) Carson has received more fame from his being a guide to the army and to wagon trains than from his activities in the fur trade, but he did spend some years gaining experience in Eastern Idaho that was to help him later. In 1831, Carson was working with Fitzpatrick, of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. He trapped up the Sweetwater River, into Jackson's Hole and then moved across the Snake River Valley to the head of the Salmon. In the spring of 1832, he was trapping the Bear River. He moved over to the Green River and then moved south to go on to the Arkansas River.¹

By 1834, Carson was back in the Snake River Valley. He wintered at the forks of the Snake River near the buttes,² some sixty miles above Fort Hall. Carson spent the spring of 1836 trapping on the Snake and Green Rivers. In September he set out on a circular trip that took him through the Yellowstone Park Country, along the Big Horn River, into the Three Forks Country of the Missouri River, and back across the moun-


²These two Buttes are just north of the junction of Henry's Fork with the South Fork of the Snake River and are known as the Menan Buttes. They are about twelve miles west of Rexburg and were used as landmarks for travelers.
tains to the Snake River, where he wintered. In 1836 he made his way into the Great Basin area of Utah. 3

In the latter part of 1836, Carson had all of his horses stolen from him while he was at Fort Hall. He went from there to take part in the Horse Creek or Green River Rendezvous. Then he joined up with Fontenelle to go into the Yellowstone area. By 1839 he was an experienced traveler and knew the country well. This year he spent in the vicinity of Fort Hall, trapping the Snake River, over in the Salmon country, down to the Snake again, working Raft River and Goose Creek. After returning to Fort Hall, he moved northward to go into the Three Forks Country again. It is no wonder that whenever anyone wanted an experienced guide to take them to areas in the West they would often ask for Carson or at least consult him on the country to be traveled. He spent time moving around and getting acquainted with the land he was working. This was a valuable asset to him when the Army came to make explorations. These later experiences will be taken up with the entrance of John C. Fremont into the West.

Captain Bonneville

Benjamin L. E. Bonneville was educated at the West Point Academy. His military service took him to the frontier where he came in contact with the fur traders and trappers of the mountains. Here he formed his plans to explore the West and to enter into the trading business. He was able to obtain a leave of absence from the Army with the understanding that he would collect information about the Indians and the country. He had some strong backers in his venture financially, and he

3Carson, p. 41-4.
had enough spirit for all concerned.

On May 1, 1832, Captain Bonneville took his departure from Fort Osage, on the Missouri River, to go inland to the wilderness. Most of the one hundred ten men that were with him were experienced hunters and trappers. Instead of taking the usual means of transportation with mules and packhorses, they took wagons. Bonneville felt this would save time in packing and unpacking at each evening stop.

Bonneville was headed for Pierre's Hole to join in the rendezvous for the year. He crossed the Kansas River, went to the forks of the Platte, ascended it to Laramies Fork, and crossed to Green River. He was joined there on July 26, by Mr. Fontenelle of the American Fur Company. The two groups were still at the Green River when news came of the battle with the Blackfeet at Pierre's Hole. Both camps hastily constructed breastworks as they were told that the Blackfeet were headed their way. The Blackfeet came to both camps under flag of truce, and after observing the defenses of the Americans were deterred from any fight.

They broke camp on August 22, and set out for their original destination. They knew they would be too late to do any trading at the rendezvous because the wagons had slowed them down too much. They had to abandon the wagons at this time. Bonneville went through Jackson's Hole and over Teton Pass. He is one of the on-the-spot recorders of the battle there even though he was a month too late to describe the events from his own sight. They moved through Pierre's Hole, down the

---

4Irving, Captain Bonneville, p. 43.
5Ibid., p. 45-82.
Teton River, across the Snake River, passed Mud Lake, up Birch Creek, to the headwaters of Lemhi River. Here they met some friendly Nez Perce who offered to share their meager food supply. Bonneville moved on down the river to the Salmon River proper, where he made his winter quarters on September twenty-sixth.  

They built a temporary fortification, and Bonneville divided the men. Twenty were to stay at the home base and the rest were divided into three brigades to do trapping in the area. It was a bad winter, and food became scarce. Bonneville states, "Now and then there was a scanty meal of fish or wild fowl, occasionally an antelope; but frequently the cravings of hunger had to be appeased with roots, or the flesh of wolves and muskrats."  

The Nez Perce that wintered with Bonneville continually amazed him with their religious principles. They would not hunt on their Sabbath Day. They had a religious ceremony before they went out to hunt. They were always able to exibit great faith. He commented, "They are, certainly, more like a nation of saints than a horde of savages."  

Bonneville's Fort on the Salmon River was a full realization of his wishes. He was here leading a hunter's life in the wilderness. Many of his trapping parties were harrassed by the Blackfeet, but no deaths were recorded in the time they spent in their winter quarters. They were visited by a party of Pends Oreille Indians who informed them of the advances of the Hudson's Bay Company to the west of them.  

6This lake is in west central Jefferson County. It once covered two thousand, four hundred, sixty acres but it is slowly disappearing. It has no surface outlet and Camas Creek flows into it.  
7Irving, Captain Bonneville, p. 123-125.  
8Ibid., p. 127-29.  
9Ibid., p. 129-30.  
10Ibid., p. 130-8.
probably influenced Bonneville to visit the Company's Post later on.

Bonneville finally sent about fifty of his men to winter on the Snake River, as the lack of game and grass caused by the large numbers of Indians was getting critical. He elected to remain with the Indians and told his men that they would get together on the Green River the next summer at the rendezvous there. One of the best studies of the Nez Perce Indians is recorded by Bonneville as he spent the rest of the winter moving with this tribe.

Early in the new year they decided to move to the Snake River. They set out from the Salmon River, down Birch Creek, and finding the snow too deep crossed the range of mountains to the south of them to follow the Big Lost River out onto the Snake River Plain.\(^\text{11}\) By the middle of January, 1833, they found Indians near the Snake River who informed them of two other parties of whites in the area. One of the groups was led by an old friend, Mathieu, who had left Bonneville at Green River.\(^\text{12}\)

After a three weeks rest on the Snake River, the party returned to their Salmon River fort and the caches of furs they had left there. For the spring hunt they moved south to trap on the Malade River near present-day Gooding. As they came to the Lost River they discovered Milton Sublette with twenty-two veteran trappers also headed for the Malade River.\(^\text{13}\) Both groups trapped the area together, and then Bonneville returned, as he had told his trappers that they would rendezvous at their Salmon headquarters in the summer of 1833.

With his whole party together again, Bonneville set out for the Green River Rendezvous. They left the Salmon country in the middle of

\(^{11}\text{Ibid., p. 170-80.}\) \(^{12}\text{Ibid., p. 188-89.}\) \(^{13}\text{Ibid., p. 198.}\)
June retracing their earlier steps across the Snake River Plain and through Pierre's Hole to arrive at their destination on the 13th of July.

The next season Bonneville sent out Walker with forty men to explore and trap on a route to California. Bonneville, himself, spent the season in the Crow country around the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming. They were to rendezvous at the Bear Lake the next year. For the next few months he trapped around the Wyoming and southern Idaho areas quite extensively until he found himself at the Green River in the middle of October. From here he set out westward and northward. He explored and trapped the Bear Lake area; moved past the Soda Springs, and came to the Snake River once again. He went to see some of his men in the Salmon River area and then spent time with the Bannock Indians on the Snake River Plains. It was in this area that he wintered again.

By the end of December, 1833, Bonneville was restless and decided to visit the Hudson's Bay areas to make himself acquainted with the country and the Indians. He left in the winter and expected to rejoin the main party of his men near their Portneuf winter encampment. He made his way west on the left side of the Snake River, and his progress was slow because of the snow and lava formations. They arrived at Fort Walla Walla on March 4, 1834, but were refused supplies there. Having made some observation, they left two days after arriving to return to the Portneuf area. Here he found his men gone and had about a month of search before finding the group in the Bear River Valley.

On the 13th of June they met the Walker party that had been sent out the previous year. Bonneville says that Walker had been instructed to explore the Great Salt Lake but had gone on to California and then

\[14\text{ibid.}, p. 315. \quad 15\text{ibid.}, p. 370-95.\]
In the fall of 1834 he decided to try the Hudson's Bay Company again. At Fort Walla Walla he was received politely but again denied supplies, and rather than starve they returned to their own groups in the Snake River Plains. Bonneville spent the winter on the Bear River.

On the 22nd of June, 1835, Bonneville raised the camp to head for the Wind River area. He joined his men there on the 4th of July and then turned eastward to end his mountain career. He arrived at the frontier on August 22, 1835, to become a member of civilized life again. 17

When asked of his accomplishments, Bonneville stated, "... I was the first to take wagons through the South Pass 7,085 feet, and the first to recognize Green River as the Colorado of the West..." 18 He made valuable contributions to the knowledge of the Indians of the West and to the workings of the Hudson's Bay Company.

On his later life Bonneville comments, "... When the law passed removing all retired officers from duty, I came here (Fort Smith, Arkansas), and opened a farm, on lands I purchased from the United States in 1837, where I am now, in my old age, a farmer, my family with me..." 19

Bonneville retired from the fur trade during the transition period from a profitable business where fortune could be made to a common business that needed a lot of hard work to be able to make a

16 Ibid., p. 402.  
17 Ibid., p. 514.  
19 Ibid., p. 109.
profit. On September 10, 1842, the American Fur Company suspended payments, being some three hundred thousand dollars in debt. One of its competitors gave it a somewhat dubious farewell by stating, "The Great American Fur Company . . . has exploded. Disappeared, overwhelmed with the most miserable bankruptcy . . . they have met their just desert." There were many others who gave up the business as it became too complicated to make a profit.

John C. Fremont

John C. Fremont was the second of the official representatives of the United States Government to come into Idaho, Lewis and Clark having preceded him. His father-in-law was the influential Senator Thomas H. Benton. Using his influence, Benton was able to get Fremont advanced in the army and also put in charge of an exploring party to select sites for military posts along the Oregon Trail.

In the spring of 1842, Fremont was on a boat going to the upper Missouri when he chanced to meet Kit Carson. Carson was engaged as a guide to help the group through the areas that he had traveled. Thomas Fitzpatrick was also hired as a guide, and with these two experienced men it seemed that Fremont was off to a very good start.

On June 4, 1842, Fremont left Kansas City and made a trip to the Wind River Mountains and back to near Omaha. He was to explore the country between the Missouri and the Rocky Mountains. It was implied that a road was to be opened for Oregon emigration as well as the military presence that would help to convince others that the country belonged to the Americans. On this expedition Fremont was to get his

\[20\text{Lavender, p. 419.} \quad 21\text{Carson, p. 65-6.} \quad 22\text{Charles Pruess, Exploring with Fremont, p. xxiii.}\]
first look at the Rocky Mountains that he had heard so much about. He stated, "The whole range stood forth in bold relief against the surrounding sky, a succession of stupendous masses, all clothed in pure white mantles and linked together, forming a rigid and impetrable barrier of cliffs piled on cliffs, each in eager rivalship, ambitiously pointing towards the highest heavens. The coming sun soon cast his golden veil upon them, and we turned away to seek relief from the dazzling refulgence of his reflected rays."²³

Fremont's second expedition lasted from May 30, 1843, to July 15, 1844. He left from near Kansas City, moved up the Republican River, crossed the South Platte River, moved up the North Platte River,²⁴ and followed what was generally called the Oregon Trail in later years. Shortly after entering Idaho he was attacked by Snake Indians. The war party was described

with guns and naked swords, lances, and bows and arrows—Indians entirely naked, and warriors fully dressed for war, with the long red streamers of their war bonnets reaching nearly to the ground—all mingled together in bravery for savage warfare.²⁵

After the Indians were quieted down a peaceful atmosphere emerged. The Americans had been thought to be hostile because of their armed manner of approach.

Fremont spent some time in the vicinity of Soda Springs, where his assistant described the springs, "At Beer Springs, a strange volcanic eruption, burnt-out crater, lava, cracked earth . . ."²⁶

²⁴Preuss, p. 81-86.
²⁶Preuss, p. 86.
Carson went ahead of the main group to arrange for supplies that would be needed at Fort Hall, and it was only because of Fremont's foresight in sending him that they were able to get as many supplies as they wanted. The numbers of immigrants on the trail had grown to such numbers that the forts along the way were having a hard time trying to supply them all, even though they were charging very high prices.

Fremont took time out from his trip into the Snake River Valley to go to see the Great Salt Lake. He left Soda Springs on August 25th to go to Salt Lake and then came back, arriving at Fort Hall on the twenty-second of September.\(^\text{27}\)

The rest of Fremont's trip was partly to fulfill his assignment and partly to explore the whole of the West. He left Fort Hall to follow the Snake River to Fort Boise. From here the party left the river and crossed the Blue Mountains to Fort Walla Walla. They then proceeded down the Columbia River to arrive at Fort Vancouver November 7, 1843.\(^\text{28}\)

Fremont turned southward after leaving Fort Vancouver to make his way through Oregon, into Nevada, down the east side of the Sierras, across them into California near Lake Tahoe, down central California, back east to the Mohave River, through Las Vegas, northeast through Utah, east at Utah Lake, across Colorado to Pueblo, by Bent's fort to arrive back at Kansas City on July 15, 1844.

Fremont's third expedition was the turning point in his career.

\(^{27}\) The two other chroniclers of the events of Fremont's trip disagree as to the date at which he arrived at Fort Hall. Both accounts are written by men who were with Fremont on his trip. One account by Charles Preuss says they arrived on September 22nd. The other account, by Theodore Talbot, states that they arrived on September 18th. It is possible that they arrived in two separate parties, and this would account for the difference.

\(^{28}\) Preuss, p. 90-102.
He went back to California and became involved in the California revolt. He considered himself to be the conqueror of California and became the first civil governor of that newly-acquired territory. He also disobeyed orders that came to him from his superiors. He was taken to Washington as a prisoner and faced a court-martial for his trouble in California.29

A fourth expedition was undertaken by Fremont in 1848. This time he was not being employed by the Government but was being backed by his father-in-law and some other capitalists who believed in the scheme he proposed. The purpose was to find a route for a railroad to the Pacific Coast.30 They set out to cross the Rocky Mountains in midwinter, and soon found that they could not progress unless they turned southward. They gave up the idea of the railroad trail and made their way down to the Rio Grande where they turned westward to follow the Gila River route into Los Angeles.

Fremont was in Idaho at a time when there were few of the organized companies still working at finding the beaver. The pressures of low prices and no large beaver areas had combined to drive them out. There were still a few of the independent trappers around, but it was becoming increasingly hard for them to make a living, and many of them were finding it easier to grow some vegetables and raise livestock to supplement their meager incomes. The absence of the large company brigades had caused a change in the attitude of the Indians towards the independent trapper. Now the trapper was better off to be a member of the tribe or he could easily be robbed. Contempt for the white man was beginning to develop, which was increased with the coming of the Missionaries and the advance of settlers into Idaho.

29 Ibid., p. xxv. 30 Ibid., p. xxvi-xxvii.
CHAPTER XI.

THE BEGINNINGS OF MISSIONS

Protestant Missions

In 1831 a Nez Perce and Flathead delegation arrived in St. Louis to learn more of the white man's religion. Their own religious beliefs were in some respects very close to the Christian beliefs of some of the trappers. The missionary press of the day picked up the cry and called for volunteers to go to the Indians to answer their "Macedonian call." The response was immediate and successful. In 1834, Jason Lee and other Methodists set out for the Oregon Country. Presbyterians came out the next year. Soon there was a regular stream of missionaries coming into the Northwest.

In 1835 two men were accepted by the American Missionary Board to go to the Indians of the Columbia area to preach. They were Samuel Parker and Marcus Whitman. They traveled with the American Fur Company as far west as the Green River Rendezvous.¹ Here they split, as Whitman could see the need to return and plead for more missionaries. Parker went on to start work with the Indians and to get a better survey of their needs. Parker stated, "[M]y leading object was to become acquainted with the situation of the remote Indian tribes and their disposition in regard to teachers of Christianity, yet a careful attention was given

to the geography of the country, with its productions; the climate and seasons, animals, lakes, rivers, and smaller fountains; forests and prairies, mountains and valleys, its mineral and geological structure, and all the various aspects of its physical condition. 2 With this type of goal in mind it is no wonder that there is much description and detail in Parker's own account of his travels.

Parker left the rendezvous to travel north into Jackson Hole. From here he crossed the Teton Pass to enter Pierre's Hole. He visited the site of the Indian battle there and makes comments about it that were discussed previously. From Pierre's Hole they went northwestward to the Snake River Valley. They crossed Henry's Fork of the Snake and headed towards the Salmon River area, where he was to meet with the Nez Perce Indians. 3 He wintered with these Indians near Fort Vancouver and then departed by boat to go back East via the Sandwich (Hawaiian Islands).

Upon arriving in the East he made a favorable report which influenced others to make plans to come to the Oregon Country.

On August 27, 1835, 4 Henry H. Spaulding was chosen by the American Missionary Board to be a missionary to the Indians. He teamed up with Marcus Whitman and their wives to lead an expedition to the Indians. They left in the early summer of 1836, traveling with wagons. They arrived at the Green River Rendezvous on the 6th of July. There they could not be convinced to abandon their wagons and took them on to Fort Hall. Here they changed the wagons into carts. Then they pro-

---


3Ibid., p. 11-23.

ceed to Fort Boise where they were forced to abandon them.5

The Reverend Spaulding was impressed with their labors with the Indians and wrote to one of his friends the following: "... and all America with her gold and happiness could not purchase a place for me in the states, if I must leave these poor heathen standing thick around, pleading with their own tongues; actually, for the bread of eternal life."6

In 1838 Reverend and Mrs. Elkanah Walker, Mr. and Mrs. William Gray, Reverend and Mrs. Cushing Bells; and Reverend and Mrs. A. B. Smith went to the Oregon country to reinforce the missionaries that were already there.7 After this there were missionaries with almost every group of immigrants that came through the Fort Hall supply station.

Catholic Missions

It was natural for the Roman Catholic Missions to extend themselves to the Indians of the Northwest. They were already strong to the north of Idaho, and most of the Hudson's Bay men were Catholic. On March 27, 1840, Jesuit Father Pierre J. DeSmet left St. Louis to travel westward with Andrew Dripps of the American Fur Company.8 At the rendezvous at Green River that year, he was met by ten Flathead Indians who were to guide him to their country. They went north of the Green River to meet the main body of Flatheads at Pierre's Hole. There were some sixteen hundred Flatheads there, and Father DeSmet performed his first religious exercise in the Northwest. They moved out of Pierre's Hole

---

5Bells, p. 34.


7Drury, p. 194.  
8Chittenden, I, p. 31-32.
to the Snake River, which they traveled upstream to its source. They arrived at Henry's Lake on July 22. A stone was later found near Henry's Lake with an engraving that said, "Sanctus Ignatius Patronus Montium. Die Julii 23, 1840." From Henry's Lake the party went on over to the Three Forks Country where DeSmet became convinced that more missionaries were needed. He returned to the East to procure more help.

On his second trip west, Father DeSmet followed a different path. He left St. Louis on April 30, 1841, and followed the Oregon Trail to Fort Hall. Then they turned northeast to pass the buttes near the junction of Henry's and South Forks of the Snake River. They turned north here and followed almost exactly the present Oregon Short Line Railroad route north to Dear Lodge Valley. This group brought several missionaries and they opened the way for many of the Catholic Fathers to help the Indians.

Salmon River Mission

The Mormon approach to Indians was a unique one. The Indians were considered to be human beings who were in a state of barbarism, who could be civilized with patience, kindness, and labor. With this in mind the leaders of the church set out to win the friendship of the redman. Missionaries were called to settle in Indian districts to raise cattle, plant crops, and establish schools. The Salmon River area was one of these districts. The actual mission was located on the Lemhi River, a few miles upstream from the Salmon River. The missionaries here were able to exist in harmony with the Indians for a few years until the general Indian unrest forced them out.

---

10 *Ibid*.  
CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION

The era of the fur trade in the Upper Snake River Area lasted for some fifty years. In the earlier period there was a large harvest to be made, but as is often the case, the good thing did not last. When the companies moved in, the beaver began to disappear. By the 1830's the heights had been reached and the downward trend in the fur business began. By the 1840's most of the companies had broken up, leaving only a few of the independent trappers to carry on their trade with anyone who happened by.

A good description of the trapper in general is given by Merrill D. Beal and Merle W. Wells in their book History of Idaho:

Surely the Idaho trappers were a reckless breed of men. Coming from almost everywhere, they enacted a saga that reads like an epoch from a long forgotten age. They exploited the Indians and married them; they loved wild life and destroyed it; they tamed the wilderness and departed therefrom. Some, like John Colter, turned into prosaic farmers; others became guides, only to lag superfluously upon the stage; some turned to trade; some to government appointments as Indian agents. A few lingered on as trappers, sighing for the golden days that were gone forever. Trappers of the Great West--they had given their all and there were no regrets. Their levity and valor, their hardships and pleasure, what a medley it made.¹

After Fort Hall was given back to the Americans, many of the Hudson's Bay Company men, rather than return to the service of the Company, moved up the valley to take up farming land where they would be able to end their days in the land where they were happy.

¹Beal and Wells, p. 204.
In the canyon of the South Fork of the Snake River, just before it enters the Snake River Plain, and some fifteen miles up, there are some Indian writings on the wall of a steep rock bank. Just a mile above this bank are some caves in the side of a steep cliff. Several years ago, as people were exploring the caves in this cliff, a relatively important find was discovered. They had lowered themselves on ropes to investigate one of the larger caves. As they entered it they discovered a skeleton of a man and a flintlock firearm.\(^2\) There has been no evidence uncovered to prove who the person was in the cave or to show exactly how he got there. It may have been that he was being pursued by Indians and found this means of escape. It may have been a favorite resting spot of relative safety in the course of the fur men's travels. No matter what the answer, it is relatively safe to assume that the man was one of the corps of trappers who committed his life to the Upper Snake River Area.

---

\(^2\)Carl P. Russell states, "The flintlock firearm and all its appurtenances prevailed through the greater part of the era of the mountain man. It was not until 1816 that the percussion system of detonation was perfected, and even for many years thereafter there was a reluctance among many of the men on the western frontier to abandon the flintlock." (Carl P. Russell, Guns on the Early Frontiers (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957), p. 219.)
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books - Primary Sources


**Books - Secondary Sources**


Mattes, Merrill J. *Fur Traders and Trappers of the Old West*. (n.p.) Yellowstone Library and Museum Ass. (n.d.)


**Articles and Periodicals - Primary Sources**

Ball, John, "John Ball's Letter," *The Historical Society of Montana*, I (1876), 104,


Burnett, Peter H. "Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer," The Quarterly of Oregon Historical Society, V (1904), 64-98.


"Fort Hall Under the Hudson's Bay Company," The Quarterly of Oregon Historical Society, XLI (1940), 38.


"Journal of E. Willard Smith While with the Fur Traders, Vasquez and Sublette, in the Rocky Mountain Region, 1839-1840," The Quarterly of Oregon Historical Society, XIV (1913), 373.


Articles and Periodicals - Secondary Sources


Elliot, T. C. "David Thompson and the Columbia River," The Quarterly of Oregon Historical Society, XII (1911), 195-205.


Unpublished Material


ABSTRACT

The Upper Snake River area was a center of much fur trade activity during the first half of the 1800's. It has many streams and they had abundant quantities of the furs that were being sought by the large parties of men who came into the country.

The early explorers of the Pacific coast hastened the exploration and development of the interior. As they moved along the shores they recorded the possibilities of the riches that were there and helped to form the opinions in each country of how valuable it would be to own the Northwest. This desire to get a good claim on the land brought the explorers by land. First Alexander McKenzie came across Canada to the Pacific. By 1804 the United States was making its bid by sending Lewis and Clark to explore the Missouri River and to make their way to the Pacific, giving the Americans a real claim on the country.

The reports brought back by these explorers caused visions of wealth to be gained from the large amounts of fur that were reported. Manuel Lisa commissioned Andrew Henry to search for fur. Henry left St. Louis in 1810 and found the Blackfeet Indians of the Upper Missouri very unhospitable. He moved southward into Eastern Idaho, and there constructed the first American Fur Post west of the Rocky Mountains. The next spring they returned to tell news that was so disappointing that fur trade activities of the Americans stayed east of the Rockies for ten years.

Wilson Price Hunt came overland in 1811 with a group to establish
a post at the mouth of the Columbia River and experienced great difficulties in crossing Idaho. Robert Stuart, returning from the West Coast in 1812, spent considerable time in the Upper Snake River area, as he was following the route that later became known as the Oregon Trail.

The North West Fur Company and later the Hudson's Bay Company made good use of the Americans' absence. They sent fur brigades into the Snake country and reaped a harvest of furs. The Americans soon awoke and moved into the area in the early 1820's. Many of the men who made a name in the fur trade or as a mountain man worked in the fur trade in this area.

The Americans and British never got along very well. A rivalry grew between them that lasted throughout the fur trade era. In 1834, Nathaniel Wyeth showed what was to become a later trend by building Fort Hall in a position that later helped many immigrants on to their goals. The glories of the fur trade and the excitement of the West brought men like Captain Bonneville to the Upper Snake River area. He spent three years in the wilderness traveling widely to obtain furs and to enjoy the life. He was followed by John C. Fremont on an official exploring and map-making trip for the Government.

By 1840 there was a real decline in the fur activity. The big companies had moved out of the trade, leaving only independent trappers to work the beaver trade. Missionaries were coming in seemingly large numbers, and the country was taking on a civilized look. Soon groups of immigrants came into the country supplanting the old fur interest.
APPROVED:

Chairman, Advisory Committee

Member, Advisory Committee

Chairman, Major Department