

The Trapper and the Pioneer in Utah

By
Ike Russell

A Survey of the Points at Which Their Work Came into Contact and Made for a Fellowship of Consideration in Utah History

What is the nature of the fellowship between trapper and pioneer, that those who dwell in the valley where the one settled should remember also the service here of the other?

Orators of the steam-heated variety like to picture it that the fellowship is slight or non-existent. One such, speaking at the dedication of the Knight smelter last July, shouted to his assembled listeners that it was the settlers and not the trappers who made this country worth while.

And what he said was just so. Precisely because it was not the trappers who settled the country, and because they went their way to be followed by an eclipse of the interest in their work of trail blazing, exploring, guiding, and peace-making with Indian tribes, the question of rewriting into Utah's history the preface that they enacted for it, is an inherited privilege of this generation.

We have already seen how the trappers brought to Utah its geographical names, and how an American, Ashley, carried out of Cache valley the furs that first attracted to the mountains the great horde of trappers comprising the American Fur company, the many free traders who had the game eliminated before ever the wagons of the pioneers took up their trail in this direction.

And we have seen how Ashley's first partner, Jedediah Smith, was the first explorer to cross the southern rim of the Great Basin, and pathfind a route to Los Angeles from Utah lake, and how map makers, using his information, brought out the first reliable maps of the country adjacent to the Great Salt Lake. How the first wheeled vehicle came to Utah in 1827, we have also seen, and how the first use was made of the famous South Pass through which poured into Utah and the west a stream of settlers.

For this paper there remains to trace the fellowship of pioneer with trapper—how the explorations of the one helped the other along his way. And what the background was to such meetings as Moses Harris and Miles Goodyear and Jim Bridger, and J. W. Farnham, and Father De Smet had with the pioneers along their course up the Platte and into Salt Lake valley.

For explorers had lived in vain if settlers moving in a great mass, had been compelled to come over their trails without knowing them, and to find out again all that it had taken a score of years and ten to develop into the common knowledge of the western frontier.

Out of St. Louis the trail grew to Salt Lake just as it grew from there to Santa Fe and to Oregon, and at this great crossing point of all western trails, grew up a clearing house of western information. It became this first when Lewis and Clark wintered there, westward bound, and never lost its frontier prestige until the railroad made the old trails a matter of history. In this clearing house was thrown for general information Jim Bridger's story of his discovery of Great Salt Lake. To the same center went his stories of the Yellowstone park that for thirty years no editor dared to publish for fear of ridicule that such lies could possibly be worth repeating. And finally, as interest in the west grew from faint beginnings into a general frontier ferment that threw wagon train after wagon train on to the plains bent upon saving Oregon from England, and settling the Willamette valley in numbers strong enough to do it, the government was forced to take notice, and to send the son-in-law of Senator Benton of Missouri, Lieutenant John Charles Fremont of the engineer corps, on a tour of investigation.

The word "exploration" is purposely avoided, as Fremont is known as a "pathfinder" only in political speeches, and himself confessed at the end of his principal expedition, that he had gone over trails already made, and under the guidance always of men who had already been over them.

Then for our pioneers. The first contact we find of their fellowship with previous explorers is when Orson Hyde, on a Church mission to Washington, is handed a copy of Fremont's report, 20,000 of which were ordered printed by congress to serve as a guide book for settlers bound to the west. In the abstract of it he sent to his Church leader, he outlined the path three years later followed by the pioneers up the Platte river,

coast to the end of the Sierras, and back via the "Spanish Trail" across southern Utah, to Utah lake, and then out through the mountains.

Note has already been made of the way in which historical societies of other states are gathering data of the first importance to Utah, and how much of this data illumines the shadows that have so long rested on the early period here.

A sample of this recovery of history is the following extract from a letter written by Father Pierre Jean De Smet, to his nephew, Charles, in March, 1851. Found among the De Smet papers in St. Louis, a veritable hive of documents of early western history, the letter is now preserved in a four-volume edition of the life and writings of Father De Smet, edited by H. M. Chittenden, whose works have already been mentioned several times.

When the Utah pioneers were encamped outside of Nauvoo, determined upon coming west, Father De Smet met Brigham Young, directly in the path of the western trails, and he was fresh from the country into which the pioneers were heading.

This is the way Father De Smet described their meeting in the letter mentioned: "In the fall of 1846 as I drew near to the frontier of the state of Missouri, I found the advance guard of the Mormons, numbering about 10,000, camped in the territory of the Omahas, not far from the old Council Bluffs. They had just been driven out for the second time from a state of the Union. They had resolved to winter on the threshold of the great desert, and then to move onward into it to put distance between them and their persecutors, without even knowing at that time the goal of their long wanderings, nor the spot where they should once more build themselves permanent dwellings. They asked me a thousand questions about the regions I had explored, and the spot which I have just described to you (the basin of the Great Salt Lake), pleased them greatly from the account I gave them of it. Was that what determined them? I would not dare to assert it. They are there. In the last three years Utah has changed its aspect and from a desert has become a flourishing territory which will soon become one of the states of the Union."

A song persistently sung in the pioneer camps had this for its refrain: "Upper California, that's the land for me." A glance at Fremont's last map clearly shows Upper California to consist of all country west of the continental divide, and considering it this way he wrote a special treatise on this country that was widely distributed.

It is clear that all preliminary trawling through Utah and trapping and trading was a work of preparation for an era of settlement, that could not have hurled its course across an unknown desert, as it passed easily over after 1843, with the permanent helps established all along the line.

"I have established a small fort," wrote Jim Bridger to his St. Louis backer, December 10, 1843, "on Black's Fork of the Green river, which promises fairly well. The emigrants (for Oregon) are coming out fairly well supplied with money, but by the time they get here they are in need of all kinds of supplies, horses, provisions, smith work, etc. Should I receive the goods hereby ordered I will do a considerable business with them."

Here, then, is the real turning point between

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The Soul's Question

By Irene Dickson Schulder.

GODS ancient and forgotten,
At whose shrines no prayers are
said,
By the faith and fear begotten
Of the peoples who are dead,—

YOU, that stirred their souls with long-
ing,
You, that freed their hearts from
care,
You, that gave the peace belonging
To the holy power of prayer;

HAVE you now no place in heaven,
As you have no place on earth?
And was all that finer leaven
Dross, devoid of truth and worth?

WILL the God whom now we cherish
Pass, as you have passed, away?
And must all our noblest perish,
Falling into slow decay?

OR does Truth, deep and abiding,
Lie beneath these faltering creeds,
Both the Past and Present guiding
By the light of trustful deeds?

TO a life that has no ending,
Where our doubts and sorrows
cease,
And our lost loves, o'er us bending,
Welcome us to Peace?

stated that he was having a copy of the book sent on directly, and concluded by urging an immediate expedition to the Willamette valley for the reason that the country was much in demand, was rapidly filling with settlers, and that if the Church in considerable numbers settled there at once, others would look elsewhere in finding western homes.

Large portions of this book were reprinted in the Millennial Star, and although a Utah history characterizes Fremont's reports on the Great Basin country as "discouraging," there is absolutely nothing in his text to warrant the statement. The country he described extended up the Platte valley, through from Weber canyon to Fort Hall (Pocatello), on to Oregon, down the