

THE TRAPPER AND THE PIONEER

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the settler and the trapper era, and here is where we have the first permanent establishment in the western progress of civilization. This was one of the places where the pioneers stopped to rest and to overhaul their equipment. From Bridger they learned in detail of the country ahead, that he had been in Salt Lake valley fifty times in his life, and where its most fertile spots lay.

To Utahns it may be something of a surprise that white men had found Utah worth while for twenty years and then had decided sorrowfully that it was no longer fit for a white man as early as 1839. If so, then picture this scene occurring between an overland traveler and his mountain guide as they approached an old cabin belonging to the guide a decade previous. The date is August 1, 1839. The place is in the Green river valley near the present site of Vernal. The traveler was Thomas J. Farnham, whose "Travels in the Rocky Mountains" was published in 1843, and the guide was a mountaineer named Kelly.

"As our horses had found but little to eat during the past night," the narrative proceeds, "we led and drove the poor animals through three miles of fallen timber and turned them loose to feed upon the first good grass that we found. It chanced to be one of Kelly's old encampments; where he had, some years before, fortified himself with logs, and remained seven days with a sick fellow trapper. 'A fearful time that,' said he, 'but the buffalo were plenty here then. The mountains were then rich. Why, sir, the bulls were so bold that they would come close to the fence there at night and bellow and roar until I eased them of their blood by a pill of lead in the liver. So you see I did not go far for meat. Now the mountains are so poor that one would stand a right good chance of starving if he were obliged to hang up there for seven days. The game is all driven out. No place here for a white man now. Too poor, too poor. What little we get is bull beef. Formerly we ate nothing but cows, fat and young. More danger then, to be sure; but more beaver, too, and plenty of grease about the buffalo ribs. Ah, those were good times; but a white man has now no more business here.'"

This paragraph throws much light upon the change that came over Utah just before the settlers came, clearing it of its trapper inhabitants. A little farther on Farnham finds a group of starving, penniless trappers in Brown's hole, talking of ranches in California, and one of these men Fremont mentions three years later, as the owner of a California ranch near the Sutter establishment, where he had gone in disgust that Utah mountains were no longer able to subsist a white man!

What the contact of white men with Indians in Utah had done for the settlers, made itself evident upon the very day of the arrival of the wagon train July 24, 1847. The first thing that happened was that a horse strayed into camp, from some previous outfit. And the second thing was that the Bannock Indians from the north and the Utes from the south came riding in to do just what all white men had taught them, offer furs in trade for tobacco and whatever other American luxuries they could procure.

From Fort Hall, the British Hudson Bay Trading company's post, which had been established since 1834, came white men into the pioneer camp soon after it was pitched, with flour to sell, and goods to barter. At Fort Laramie, the pioneers crossed from the north bank of the Platte to the south bank in a ferry rented them by the veteran trappers who were then taking their last revenues from the mountains. Before reaching Fort Laramie, to instance points of contact with trappers along the roads, the pio-

neers had halted to exchange words with the master of a wagon train headed from the west, bound east, in regular freighting work. This freighter of the plains, Charles Beaumont, stopped with the pioneers long enough for fifty or sixty letters to be written and given to him to carry back to their friends and relatives in Winter Quarters.

And before Brannan with his California papers had been encountered Major Moses Harris had been met on the continental divide, Harris delivering to the pioneers a file of still another American newspaper operating in the west. This was an Oregon print, published in the Willamette valley, into which for ten years a stream of immigration had been pouring.

How the lowly off ox with his high partner became the standard animal of the plains, traffic is one of the interesting developments made for the settler by the trapper and trader. In the fascinating pages of Washington Irving, the Utah reader may find his Astorians galloping into the Utah country on horseback, astray from their direct route east. He may follow them on horseback to the Bear river, and there they fell in with an Indian chief who soon leaves them waifs upon a vast expanse of land, shaking his fist jeeringly at them as his braves ride off behind their stampeded animals. That was in the day before the problem had been solved, and when happenings were of such a nature as to create it.

Mules the Indian liked, and horses he liked, and for his meat the fat of buffalo calves in good season and the meat of buffalo bulls in hard times, was the staple.

What use, then, could he make of the ox? Horses the traders lost and mules they lost, but the pioneers had no question to decide when they chose oxen to yoke to their prairie schooners. It was seventeen years before them that the ox found his place as the burden bearer of the westward journeys.

Here is the official record of the entrance of his advent into frontier travel. "The Bent brothers," wrote Thomas Forsyth to Secretary of War Lewis Cass, in a general letter of explanation on the conduct of the fur trade, dated at St. Louis, October 24, 1831, "have set out for Santa Fe with a train of oxen. If the experiment succeeds it will answer the triple purpose: first, of drawing the wagons; second, the Indians will not steal them as they would horses and mules; and, thirdly, in cases of necessity part of the oxen will answer for provisions." The document containing this note of the first use of an animal playing such a large part in the early history of Utah is now on file with the Wisconsin Historical Society.

An item of similar interest is a letter from General Ashley, which will be reproduced later, showing that as early as 1827 the division of trains on the plains into companies of fifty and subdivisions of ten was in vogue. When the pioneers organized in this manner, set out they found themselves, on April 21, surrounded by Pawnee Indians, "whose actions were not hostile, but who intimated that gifts would be acceptable." In doing what thirty years of contact with the whites had taught them to do, the Indians found a difference between this caravan and the others of white men they had seen, in that the others always had presents of highly valuable vermilion paint and priceless glass beads to give the chieftains in exchange for wholly worthless and altogether despisedly useless beaver skins and deer hides.

Early in May the French trader Beaumont, with his wagons from the west bound east, was encountered, and May 24, the Indians again showed the effect of expecting to trade with the white men who came among them. The chief of

a Sioux band attired in trade cloth, presented a letter from P. D. Papin, a fur trader of the American Fur company, and counted on this to gain for him a respectful hearing and entertainment, for Papin was an established prairie power. The American flag which his retainers carried, had been given them so that they would not carry a British flag, previously put into their possession by Hudson Bay people, and calculated to attract their peltries across the northern border.

The longest stop of the pioneers on the road west was at the Laramie refuge, in which trapper headquarters they settled down to overhaul their outfit and prepare for the mountain stage of their journey. Here they learned that a big Missouri party was upon the plains bound for California, with their old enemy, Governor Boggs, in its membership. One day after leaving Laramie they halted to allow a wagon train of eleven wagons to pass, freighting along to Oregon. Twenty-one wagons passed on the next day, and on the third day thirteen wagons.

On the eighth there arrived from Fort Bridger a train of wagons loaded with peltries, bound for Fort Laramie. These were Bridger's wagons, and the valley of the Great Salt Lake comes into direct notice here in that a party of three men with fifteen animals, mostly pack animals, are headed past them en route from Santa Fe to San Francisco bay, via Great Salt Lake valley.

William Clayton, who kept a diary through the pioneer journey, speaks of a favorable impression made by Miles Goodyear upon Brigham Young, and the fact that Goodyear was hired to meet the pioneers and guide them into Cache valley by way of the old Oregon trail, via Soda Springs. Only the fact that Goodyear failed to keep his appointment seemed to head off this movement, and a little later Clayton records a long talk between Brigham Young and Bridger, in which he sets forth that Bridger told Brigham he had been into Salt Lake valley fifty times, that there was an abundance of blue grass and clover southeast of Great Salt Lake, that the best way in was over the Hastings or Donner trail through what is now Emigration canyon, that cherries and berries were plentiful near Utah lake, that there was plenty of timber on all the mountain streams, and plenty of fish in them, and that the Indians south of Utah lake raise as good corn, wheat, and pumpkins as were ever raised in old Kentucky.

This is all that Whitney quotes from Clayton. Then he goes on to add in his own language that Bridger said he "would give \$1,000 for the first ear of corn ripened in Salt Lake valley." Tullidge declares, again without quoting any authority, that it was a bushel of wheat for which Bridger offered the reward. Erastus Snow, in a sermon preached in 1880, gives what appears to be the first statement of this historic alleged declaration, but what kind of a sport Bridger is made out to lay such a wager on Salt Lake valley's hopes, just after saying that the first valley to the south produced corn, wheat and pumpkins to rival his old Kentucky home, the reader is left to judge. Perhaps a narrative that has grossly misread Fremont, has also confused itself as to Fremont.

If Amassa Potter still lives in Payson he will testify that the facts were as Bridger is reported by Clayton, writing at the time of the interview, for the writer well remembers seeing samples of fine wheat Potter declared he had dug out of Indian mounds located near Payson, in 1895.

Such, then, is the brief sketch of the direct contact between pioneers and trapping explorers, and if it has added to the reasons why the work of these two upbuilding forces should be treated in a certain fellowship, an understanding of the one being necessary to a complete knowledge of the other, it has fulfilled its purpose.