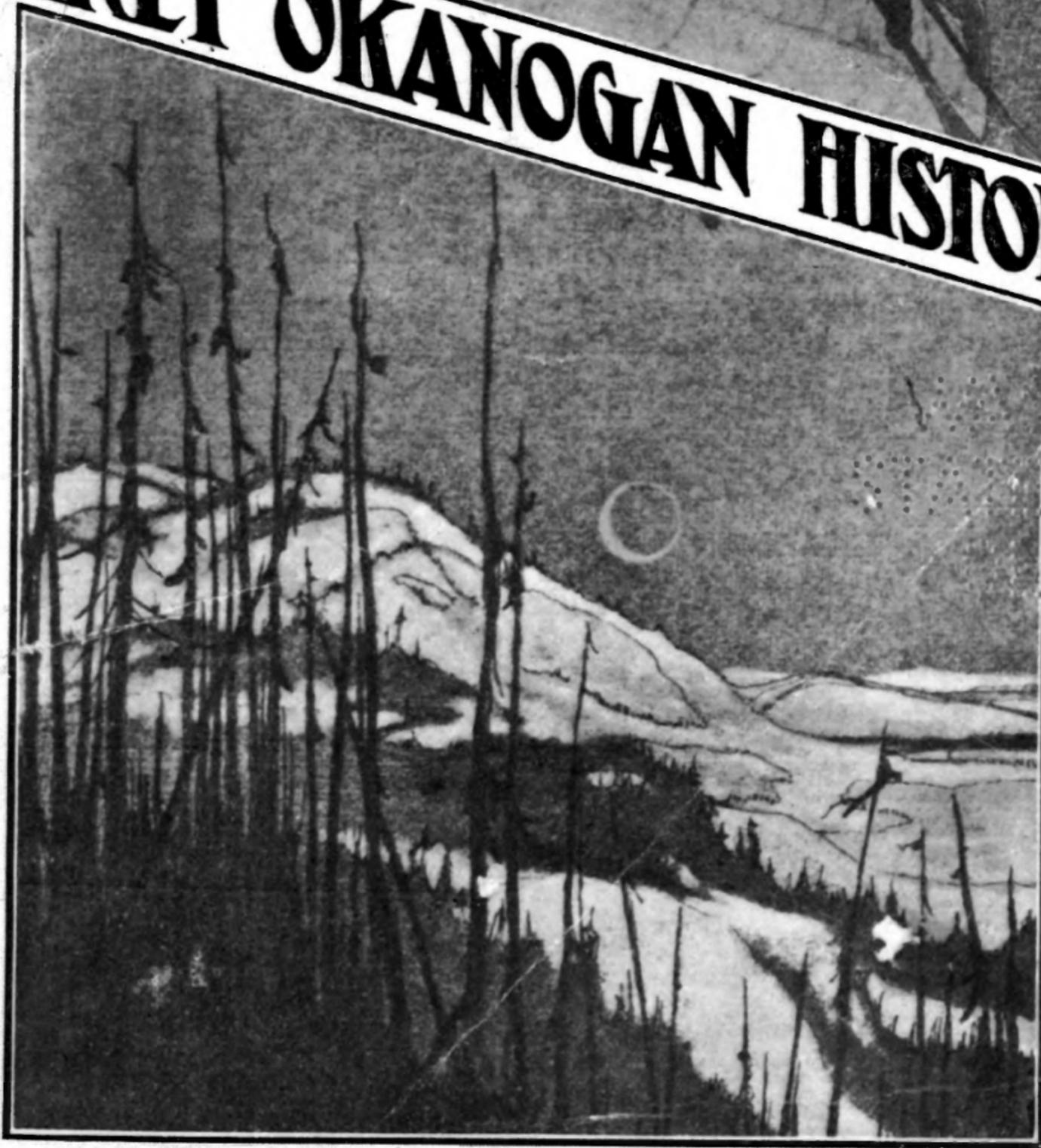




EARLY OKANOGAN HISTORY



A souvenir of the one hundredth anniversary of the first settlement in the State of Washington under the American flag. An event which occurred at the mouth of the Okanogan River Sept, 1811



JOHN JACOB ASTOR.

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EARLY OKANOGAN HISTORY

By WILLIAM C. BROWN.



Gives an Account of

The First Coming of the White Men to this Section

and
Briefly Narrates the Events Leading up to and Attending
the Establishment of

The First Settlement in the State of Washington Under the American Flag

An Event Which Occurred at the Mouth of the Okanogan
River, September 1st, 1811.

PRESS OF THE OKANOGAN INDEPENDENT, OKANOGAN, WASHINGTON

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CHAPTER I.

THE COMING OF THE NOR'WESTERS.

ONE HUNDRED years ago this summer the first white men came to this section. The first to come was David Thompson and his party, making a dash down the Columbia river in July, 1811, in the interests of the Northwest Fur Company. Thompson is unquestionably entitled to the honor of being the first white man that traversed the Columbia from its headwaters to the sea. Lewis & Clark had been before him from the mouth of the Snake down to the ocean, but no explorers or traders were on the Columbia above the mouth of the Snake in advance of David Thompson. He is therefore, beyond all dispute, entitled to the honor of being the first white man that reached the mouth of the Okanogan river. And our river certainly had a most worthy discoverer, for Thompson is fit to compare with the greatest of the great pathfinders of the West. In Thompson was combined many exceptional qualities. He was a skilled surveyor and was thoroughly grounded in astronomy and capable of taking exact observations, and together with these qualifications he had in him the instincts of an intrepid, fearless and painstaking explorer. In short, he was a scientist as well as a natural born explorer. As a young man he entered the employ of the Hudson Bay Company in the far North. In about the year 1789 he left the Hudson Bay Company and cast his fortunes with its great rival, the Northwest Fur Company, and continued with that company until 1812, by which time he had become one of the commanding figures in that powerful organization. From 1812 on he was largely in the employ of the Canadian Government surveying and map making. During the latter days of his life he was for a long time engaged in highly responsible professional duties upon the Canadian Boundary Survey. The record of the greater portion of the life's work of this man is still available for his original journals in his own handwriting are preserved in the archives of the Crown Lands Department at Toronto. The same occupy about forty vol-

umes, and one very large map made with his own hand covering the region from the Great Lakes to the Pacific. A copy of this map is before us at this time, and on it we find that Thompson wrote the name of our river in large letters, "Ookenaw-kane River." The date of the map is 1812, according to his inscription attached thereto. The Thompson Journals, however, have never been published, and for this reason the name and fame of the man is little known amongst the general public, and it has long been a matter of regret among those versed in the history and geography of the greater Northwest that the luminous record of the life work of this so modest, so meritorious an explorer, so scientific a surveyor, and so great a discoverer as Thompson was, has never seen the light, either under government patronage or by private enterprise. Although Thompson was a partner in the Northwest Company and primarily engaged in its commercial ventures up till 1812, he was not, however, especially during the latter years of his connection with that company, much engaged in actual trade, nor held stationary at any of the posts, but was employed finding new routes and penetrating into unknown regions. To him was delegated for many years some of the most important expeditions into new and unexplored sections of country for the purpose of establishing trading posts for that great fur company, and his good judgment and sagacity in selecting such sites marked him not only as a great explorer and geographer, but as a far sighted trader also, for time almost invariably showed the wisdom of the locations he selected. As his days in the fur trade were in part during those strenuous years when the Hudson Bay Company and the Northwest Fur Company were fighting the great war for supremacy in the North, he had ample opportunity to show his qualities.

After the Louisiana purchase by the United States and the return of the Lewis & Clark expedition with their report upon the conditions which they found in the Pacific Northwest, which report was published in 1807, it became an open secret that the Americans and especially the great fur merchant of New York, namely John

Jacob Astor, had designs upon the Columbia river basin. This caused uneasiness amongst the Nor'westers, and they resolved to anticipate any and all American fur trading enterprises at the mouth of the Columbia or at any point inland upon the waters thereof. The Northwest Company then had trading posts from Montreal to the Rocky mountains, and their men had already penetrated the passes of the Rockies, and were trading with the Indians along the westward flowing rivers in what is now British Columbia, western Montana, and northern Idaho. David Thompson was then upon the Saskatchewan and he was detailed to push through to the mouth of the Columbia and establish a chain of posts along the way. He attempted to come through in 1810, but became confused where the Columbia doubles on itself and makes a great ox bow curve to the north in the Kootenai Country, but he came through another pass and struck the river again far to the north early in 1811. At this time he came to the Columbia at the mouth of what he called Canoe river. (It has borne the same name ever since.) This point is several hundred miles north of what is now the international boundary line. Some of his men had weakened and had become discouraged to the point of mutiny, and we find that he was much disgusted at this period, but he was possessed of indomitable tenacity and perseverance. He went ahead with those he could depend upon; built canoes, and began the descent of the Columbia. We find him and his party at Illthkoyape Falls (Kettle Falls) in the latter part of May or the first of June, 1811. From here he left the Columbia, and about the middle of June, 1811, established a trading post for his company on what he called the Skeetshoo river (Spokane river) in longitude 117 degrees, 27 minutes and 45 seconds west, according to the records he made at the time, which post he named "Spokane House." This post was established on the Spokane river near the mouth of what is now called Hangman's creek near the city of Spokane. On June 21st, his journals show him back at Kettle Falls where he remained until July 3rd fixing his canoes, catching salmon and otherwise arranging for the trip to the mouth of the Columbia.

These features of his journey we have gathered from various published works, and from a partial transcript from his original journals kindly furnished us by Hon. Aubrey White, Deputy Minister, Lands and Forests, Toronto, Canada. He traveled in a large light built canoe that was constructed at Kettle Falls specially for the purpose, scantily provisioned and equipped, that they might make the journey with all speed and swiftness. This canoe was manned with seven men, five of them being French-Canadians and two Iroquois Indians. There also appears to have been an interpreter who was evidently a local Indian. It was a crew of long tried men in the service of the Northwest Company. We will write down their names as they were the first civilized men to traverse the Columbia above the mouth of the Snake, and likewise, of course, the first that ever set eyes on the Okanogan. The Frenchmen were: Michel Bordeaux, Pierre Pariel, Joseph Cote, Michel Boullard and Francois Gregoire. The Iroquois were Ignace and Charles, or Charlo as he was more commonly called. Charlo had been for many years in the employ of the Northwest Company, and had been with Mr. Thompson the year before on the Saskatchewan and at the sources of the Columbia. One authority says he was foreman on the trip down the river. Michel Boullard was an old voyageur that had seen long service with the company. He appears first with Thompson on the upper Saskatchewan in 1800, and seems to have served most of the time between 1800 and 1810, with Thompson, Finan McDougal and other Nor'westers in the Rocky mountain region of Northwest Canada. In August, 1811, Boullard was traded by Thompson to David Stewart for a Sandwich Islander that Thompson took a liking to. This David Stewart was the founder of Fort Okanogan for the Astor Company. Stewart wanted Boullard for his long experience as an interpreter, and thus he came to serve the American company on the Okanogan river, and was well known through this valley clear up to the head of Okanogan Lake from 1812 to 1814, and is frequently referred to in the reports and writings

of that period. The biography of the men with Thompson might be indefinitely extended, but cannot be done here.

As above stated, Thompson and his party started down the river from Kettle Falls on July 3rd, 1811, and right here where we strike the all-important part of his journey, we come upon unpublished history. For as heretofore noted, Thompson's journals have never been printed. They are copiously referred to, cited, and copied in piecemeal, but there is nowhere anything like a complete print. The journal of that part of his Columbia trip which we want most exists only in its original manuscript form and occupies Book 27 of Volume XI. of the David Thompson Mss. in the archives of the Crown Lands Department at Toronto, and the same runs from July 3rd, 1811, to April 28th, 1812, and is entitled "Voyage to the Mouth of the Columbia by the Grace of God by D. Thompson & 7 men on the part of the N. W. Company." The writer of this article has attempted to get a transcript of this part of Thompson's journals, but up to date has been unable to do so, and we will have to trace his movements upon the authority of other works that refer to his journals and his travels. On July 6th he was down some place about where Wenatchee now is, but just where it is impossible for us to say from the information before us, but we have sufficient in our possession to definitely assert that he must have passed the mouth of the Okanogan river about July 5th, and we can safely say that the Okanogan river was first seen by white men on either July 4th or July 5th, 1811. It is necessarily certain that it must have been one of those days. The exact time, however, is undoubtedly recorded in the old original manuscript and awaits only a research at Toronto by somebody who has the inclination, means and opportunity to get it. On July 9th Thompson reached the mouth of the Snake river. Here he came upon the old course traveled by Lewis & Clark six years before, but up to this point he certainly was first. At the junction of the two great streams, in the midst of a big Indian camp which he found there, he erected a tall pole and hoisted the British flag, and posted a notice as follows: "Know

hereby that this country is claimed by Great Britain as part of its territories and that the N. W. Company of Merchants from Canada, finding the factory of this people inconvenient to them, do hereby intend to erect a Factory in this place for the Commerce of the Country around." It will be noted that Thompson uses the word "factory;" both the Northwest Company and the Hudson Bay Company used to call their trading posts "factories" and the trader in charge of the post was called a "factor." On July 15th, the canoe containing Thompson and his men reached the goal of their journey, the mouth of the Columbia. He had faithfully carried out the task that was given him and the operations of the Northwest Fur Company now stretched overland from Montreal to the mouth of the Columbia. But the Nor'westers had been forestalled in the race to the mouth of the Columbia, for when Thompson arrived there he found the men of John Jacob Astor's "Pacific Fur Company" erecting their Fort "Astoria." The men of the American company had come around the Horn from New York in that company's ship, the famous and afterward ill-fated "Tonquin." They had gotten their ship across the bar at the mouth of the Columbia in the latter days of March, 1811, and their fort was well toward completion when Thompson arrived. Thompson was well known to many of the Astorians and they told him for Astor had recruited many of the principal partners in his enterprise at Montreal from Northwest Fur Company men. Thompson frankly told them his business in the country and that he had already taken possession up-stream and had established a permanent post on the Spokane, and likewise the Astorians plainly told him that they were after the fur trade on the Columbia and all its tributaries, and here began the struggle between the powerful Northwest Company and the newly organized Pacific Fur Company backed by Astor, for the fur trade and for the occupancy of the Pacific Northwest; the one company for England and for British dominion on the Pacific, the other for the United States and for American supremacy here. The very first result of the contest was the establishment by the American company of its first

inland post at the mouth of the Okanogan river. We will now shift our narrative to the American company and relate the events connected with its coming and its early doings, and especially in reference to its post at the mouth of the Okanogan.

CHAPTER II.

THE COMING OF ASTOR'S MEN.

THE Louisiana Purchase which transferred the vast and loosely defined Louisiana Territory from France to the United States was consummated in 1803. The purchase extended the territory of the United States to a connection with the "Oregon Country," but what constituted the "Oregon Country" was so absolutely indefinite that no one seems to have known what it meant, and opinions greatly differed. England claimed the country by right of the discoveries and explorations of her navigators along the coast. The United States laid more or less definite claims founded on the discoveries and voyages of American trading ships that had visited the coast. The consummation of the Louisiana Purchase gave a great impetus to the interest taken by Americans in the north Pacific, for prior to that time the Mississippi river was the western boundary of the United States and Oregon was therefore non-contiguous territory prior to 1803. One of the first results of the Louisiana Purchase was the sending out of the Lewis & Clark expedition in 1804-05. They returned in 1806 and their published report fired the zeal of John Jacob Astor of New York to at once establish a trading post at the mouth of the Columbia and occupy the great surrounding region. His enterprise was two-fold; one was commercial conquest, the other was territorial expansion for the United States. At that time Astor had been in New York some twenty odd years, and while he had not yet, by any means, reached the full flood tide of his great wealth and prominence as a merchant and speculator, still he was already one of the richest men in America and was recognized as the leading fur trader in the United States. He was well known in all the great fur markets of the world. He had become a ship owner and had formed commercial relations that extended around the earth.

Having fixed upon his general plan, Mr. Astor proceeded to organize his "Pacific Fur Company," and fit out his expeditions. The articles of agreement of the Pacific Fur Company were signed in

New York, June 23rd, 1810. Mr. Astor was to be the head of the company to furnish means not to exceed, however, an advance of four hundred thousand dollars, and to bear all losses for a period of five years. Of the hundred shares into which the stock was divided, Mr. Astor was to hold fifty and his associates fifty. Wilson Price Hunt of New Jersey was to be first resident partner and agent on the Columbia. Other partners were, Alexander McKay, Duncan McDougal, Donald McKenzie, Ramsay Crooks, Robert McLellan, Joseph Miller, Robert Stuart, John Clarke and David Stuart. Ramsay Crooks, Robert McLellan and Joseph Miller were fur traders who had gained more or less eminence in the business, principally along the Missouri river. The others were all British subjects and men who had been partners in the Northwest Fur Company, for Mr. Astor was well acquainted in Montreal and was a great admirer of the splendid organization of the Hudson Bay Company and of the Northwest Fur Company, and he had turned to that source to find able, efficient and experienced men to join him in the enterprise. They were mostly Scotch as their names plainly show, in fact the Northwest Company was controlled at all times by Scotchmen. The reader should note well the name last on the list above set forth, for it was David Stuart that was in charge of the expedition that established Fort Okanogan, and as our river had a most worthy discoverer, so also the man who first placed an outpost of civilization upon our river was a most worthy individual. He had been long with the Northwest Company before he joined the Astor enterprise, and he was a fur trader of the first order. He was furthermore a most even tempered and kindly old man, and all the records of the time speak of him in the most commendable terms.

The Astor enterprise went out in two expeditions; one overland under Wilson Price Hunt and Donald McKenzie above mentioned, the other went by sea around Cape Horn. The land expedition attempted to follow the trail of Lewis & Clark, and encountered great difficulties and hardships. It did not reach the mouth of the Columbia till January, 1812. In fact they came straggling in

through the months of February, March and April, 1812, and some did not arrive until May. The expedition by sea was much more successful. Their ship, the *Tonquin*, cleared New York harbor under escort of the famous frigate "*Constitution*," September 8, 1810, safely rounded the Horn, touched at the Sandwich islands and entered the mouth of the Columbia, March 25th, 1811. With this party were the partners, Alexander McKay, Duncan McDougal, David and Robert Stuart and four clerks or apprentices, namely Alexander Ross, Francis B. Pillette, Donald McLellan and Ovide de Montigny. All four of these clerks were subsequently on the Okanogan, the most prominent of which was Ross. He was for years on the Okanogan and he wrote three books, as we will hereinafter more fully mention, two of which treat of the early history of this particular section of the country. But to return to the *Tonquin*.

As soon as a suitable site was found, the same being near the present location of the city of Astoria, the *Tonquin* began discharging cargo on the beach, and the work of building the fort began. The partner, Duncan McDougal, was in charge pending the arrival of the overland expedition under Mr. Hunt. The work of unloading the *Tonquin* and building the fort had so far proceeded that the *Tonquin* set sail on June 5th for a trading voyage northward along the coast. The vessel never returned and none of her people were ever seen again, as she was raided by Indians while trading in a bay near Nootka sound on the west coast of Vancouver island, and was blown up either by accident or design within thirty days after the departure of the ship from the mouth of the Columbia. This left the Astorians without a ship, and much badly needed equipment was also lost, but as she had practically only the captain and crew aboard, all of the partners, clerks and voyageurs of the company having remained at the mouth of the Columbia to work on the completion of the fort, the loss of the vessel, although a serious deprivation and placed the enterprise at great disadvantage, was not a fatal blow to the main plans of the great undertaking. As hereinbefore noted, the Astorians while still busy upon the construction of their estab-

lishment, were surprised on July 15th, 1811, by the arrival of David Thompson and his party of Nor'westers from the interior. The Astorian partners immediately determined to establish an inland post as a counter check to the Northwest Company, and as Thompson was about to return to the interior, it was agreed that the expedition of the Astorians to establish such inland post should travel with the Thompson party for mutual assistance and protection against the Indians and the perils of the river. Accordingly on the 22nd of July, 1811, the two parties started up the Columbia from Astoria. Old David Stuart was in charge of the Astorian party. With him were the four young clerks, Ovide de Montigny, Francis Pillette, Donald McLellan and Alexander Ross, two or three Canadian voyageurs whose names do not appear any place that I can find, and two Sandwich Islanders. It should be understood that when the Tonquin stopped at the Hawaiian Islands on the way out, quite a number of natives from these islands were employed and brought along on the ship. It appears that they were very efficient boatmen and packers, especially during hot weather. Hawaiians were much used for many years through this section by the fur companies. Alexander Ross in his "Adventures" gives us a full and complete account of this trip up the river, of the establishment of the post at the mouth of the Okanogan, and the course of events at Fort Okanogan during the first two years of its existence, and in a subsequent book entitled, "Fur Traders of the West," he gives us a very complete history of Fort Okanogan and surrounding country up till about 1816, for Ross was in charge at the post off and on pretty much all the time between 1811 and 1816, when he was transferred first to Kamloops and later to the Walla Walla. Fort Okanogan, however, was rebuilt in 1816 when Ross Cox was in charge, and here again we are fortunate, for he also wrote a book which deals very fully with the affairs at Fort Okanogan along about 1816. For our narrative of the first trip of the Astorians up the Columbia in July and August, 1811, we will follow the record left by Ross in his "Adventures" which is before us as we write.

*David Thompson visited the
astorians at the post.*

CHAPTER III.

FORT OKANOGAN.

THE joint parties of Stuart and Thompson did not, however, continue far together. The Thompson party was traveling light. Their canoe was not loaded with any merchandise for trade. Furthermore, Stuart and his men did not have canoes suitable for up-river work. They had merely obtained from the Indians at the mouth of the Columbia two ordinary big dug-outs commonly used along the coast. This style of canoe, while it has its advantages for some purposes and is a very desirable affair when used by the coast Indians for the purposes that it is intended, it is not a good up-stream craft. Ross says in his book that the Stuart party traveled in "two clumsy Chinook canoes, each laded with fifteen or twenty packages of goods of ninety pounds weight." By July 24th, 1811, they had reached the mouth of the Willamette. On the 28th the joint parties reached and passed the Cascades of the Columbia. On the 31st, Mr. Thompson's party finding themselves able to travel much faster than the canoes of Mr. Stuart, proceeded on by themselves. It was here, upon separating, that Thompson traded Boullard to Stuart for a Sandwich Islander. On August 8, 1811, at noon, Thompson reached the mouth of the Snake river (he called it Chapaton river). Here he laid up his canoe and took the over-land route back to "Spokane House." As near as we can now ascertain he must have traveled a course very much the same as that now followed by the Northern Pacific railway between Pasco and Spokane. On August 13th he was at Spokane House, so the trip across must have taken less than five days. Thompson was undoubtedly the first white man to cross through over-land from the mouth of the Snake to Spokane. On August 4th the Stuart party passed Celilo rapids. Day by day Ross chronicles the progress of the canoes of the Stuart party up the Columbia. He relates many occurrences of great interest, and although he designates the various localities by names which are as a rule now obsolete, yet the whereabouts of the party can usually be

readily determined. We will not attempt to follow the itinerary of the party day by day. At "Priest Rapids" they picked up an Indian who was a medicine man and he continued with them to the mouth of the Okanogan in charge of their horses, of which they bought a goodly number at the numerous Indian camps they encountered along the river. This Indian Ross constantly refers to as the "priest" and says they named the rapids where they got him, "Priest Rapids." Hence, we learn the derivation of the name, "Priest Rapids." On the 24th of August they reached the mouth of the Pisquowsh river, the Wah-na-at-cha of the Lewis & Clark map, or the Wenatchee of today. The name is Piskowish on Thompson's map and appears as Pisscows on the map of Ross. Here they met Indians in great numbers and the chief, Sopa, made them a present of two horses and they purchased four more giving for each, one yard of print and two yards of red gartering which was so highly prized by the Indians that horses from all quarters were brought to them, but they declined to buy more, not knowing what to do with them. On August 25th they passed the mouth of the Intyclook, the Entiat of today. They camped that night on the wooded point above the mouth of the Entiat. On the 26th they reached Whitehill Rapids, a place "where the river almost barred across by a ledge of low flat rocks, makes several quick bends." This place the writer has been unable to satisfactorily identify but it is either the Indian rapids or the Chelan rapids of today. Here they saw big horn, white goats and deer on the bluffs. On the 27th, about 10:00 a. m., they reached the mouth of the Tsill-ane. This, of course, is the Chelan. On the 29th they reached the foot of the Methow rapids. They made a portage around them and camped that night at the mouth of the Methow. Here the Indians assembled in great numbers and offered them many horses for sale, and in all respects were exceeding kind. They invited them to stay and trade through the winter asserting that their country abounded in beaver and that there was plenty of game for food. They remained at the mouth of the

Methow over the 30th. We will now copy verbatim what Mr. Ross has to say in his book.

“On the 31st we parted from our friendly visitors, and shaping our course in an easterly direction along the bend of the river, we pushed on for about nine miles till we reached the mouth of a smooth stream called Oakinacken, which we ascended for about two miles, leaving the main Columbia for the first time, and then pitched our tents for the night. A great concourse of Indians followed us all day, and encamped with us. After acquainting them with the object of our visit to their country, they strongly urged us to settle among them. For some time, however, Mr. Stuart resisted their pressing solicitations, chiefly with the view of trying their sincerity; but, at last consenting, the chiefs immediately held a council, and then pledged themselves to be always our friends, to kill us plenty of beavers, to furnish us at all times with provisions and to insure our protection and safety.”

“On the 1st of September, 1811, we embarked and descended the Oakinacken again, landed on a level spot within half a mile of its mouth. There we unloaded, took our canoes out of the water, and pitched our tents—which operation concluded our long and irksome voyage of forty-two days.”

“The source of the Oakinacken is 280 miles due north, and in its course south the stream runs through three lakes to its junction with the Columbia; it is hemmed in on the east by a sloping range of high rocky hills at the foot of which the two rivers meet. *On the south bank of the Oakinacken, half a mile from its mouth, was the site pitched upon for the new establishment.*”

“The general aspect of the surrounding country is barren and dreary, but to the north the banks of the river are lined with the willow and poplar, and the valley through which it meanders presents a pleasing landscape.”

It is clear from this that the Stuart party camped in the evening of August 31st, 1811, on the banks of the Okanogan river, just about where Mary Carden's ranch is now located, and that the site of the

post which they established next day must have been almost exactly where *Long Jim's* stables and corrals are now situated. This was the first settlement under the American flag in what is now the state of Washington. As soon as they had their building well started, Pillette and McLellan with two voyageurs were despatched back to Astoria in one of the canoes, and as soon as they had the building completed, Mr. Stuart with Montigny and the two remaining voyageurs came up the Okanogan river, evidently with pack horses for they carried a considerable amount of merchandise for trade with the Indians, and they continued on far to the north, passed along by Okanogan lake and proceeded over the height of land onto the headwaters of the Thompson river into the country of the Shuswap Indians, near where the city of Kamloops now stands, and they did not return for one hundred and eighty-eight days. While Mr. Stuart was on the Thompson river he made arrangements to establish a trading post there the ensuing winter. He arrived back at Fort Okanogan, March 22nd, 1812. During the six months and over that he was absent, during the winter of 1811 and 1812, Ross was in charge at Fort Okanogan, and he has this to say in his book in regard to what he did there in the way of trade that winter:

“During Mr. Stuart’s absence of 188 days I had procured 1550, beavers, besides other peltries, worth in the Canton (China) market, 2,250 pounds sterling, and which on an average stood the concern in but 5½ pence apiece, valuing the merchandise at sterling cost, or in round numbers, 35 pounds sterling; a specimen of our trade among the Indians!”

Ross devotes considerable space in his “Adventures” to his experiences during that first winter at Fort Okanogan.

On March 22, 1812, another party consisting of seventeen men was made up at Astoria and placed under command of Robert Stuart, a nephew of David. A portion of this brigade was to proceed overland to St. Louis, with despatches for Mr. Astor at New York, and another portion carried supplies to Fort Okanogan and was to bring back the results of the winter’s trade. After many vicissitudes and

Indian fights, this party arrived at Fort Okanogan, April 24th, 1812, and after remaining five days, left for Astoria again, carrying approximately 2,500 beaver skins. Mr. David Stuart accompanied this party and left at Fort Okanogan, for the summer only, Mr. Ross, Donald M'Gillis who had come up from Astoria with the Robert Stuart party, and our old acquaintance, Michel Boullard. On May 6th, Ross left M'Gillis in charge and started with Boullard and an Indian with sixteen pack and saddle horses on a trading excursion up the Okanogan river to the country of the Shu-swaps, following very closely Mr. Stuart's route the winter before. They had a very successful trading trip and they arrived back at Fort Okanogan, July 12, 1812. David Stuart arrived back from Astoria with a stock of goods, August 12, 1812, and on August 25th he and his men left Fort Okanogan to winter among the Shu-swaps at Kamloops. Ross was again left in charge at Fort Okanogan for the winter of 1812 and 1813. He escorted Mr. Stuart as far as the mouth of the Similkameen and then returned to prepare his post for the winter operations. After spending the fall of 1812 in various trading excursions to nearby points, he left Fort Okanogan, December 2nd, to pay a visit to Mr. John Clark, at Fort Spokane, which was a post that had just been established by the Astor Company along side of "Spokane House" which was the name of the post as we have heretofore seen, that was established and maintained by the Northwest Company. The same condition prevailed at these two posts which was in vogue all over the north country in those days at all points where the great fur companies were contending with one another. Ross has this to say of his visit to Spokane:

"During the three days I remained with him (Clark) I had frequent opportunities of observing the sly and underhand dealings of the competing parties, for the opposition posts of the North-West Company and Mr. Clark were built contiguous to each other. When the two parties happened to meet, they made amplest protestations of friendship and kindness, and a stranger unacquainted with the politics of Indian trade, would have pronounced them sincere; but the

moment their backs were turned they tore each other to pieces. Each party had its maneuvering scouts out in all directions, watching the motions of the Indians and laying plots and plans to entrap or foil each other. He that got the most skins, never minding the cost of crime, was the cleverest fellow; and under such tutors the Indians were apt disciples. They played their tricks also, and turned the foibles and wiles of their teachers to their own advantage."

Ross got back to his post from Spokane, December 14th, 1812, but nearly lost his own life and the lives of all his men and horses in a big snow storm that they encountered in the Big Bend country. On December 20th he set out to visit Mr. Stuart at the Kamloops post. Ross calls it "Cumcloups." He arrived there on the last day of the year, 1812. Here we find the enterprise and energy of the indomitable and ubiquitous David Thompson again in evidence. He had come through the passes of the Selkirks from the upper reaches of the Columbia and established a Northwest Company post alongside Mr. Stuart's establishment. Mr. Ross has this to say of the conditions prevailing at Kamloops:

"There was opposition there as well as at Mr. Clark's place, but without the trickery and maneuvering. M. La Rocque, the Northwest clerk in charge, and Mr. Stuart were open and candid, and on friendly terms. The field before them was wide enough for both parties, and, what is more, they thought so; consequently they followed a fair and straightforward course of trade; with Mr. Stuart I remained five days, and in coming home I took a near and unknown route, in order to explore a part of the country I had not seen before."

Mr. Ross evidently returned from Kamloops through by Nicola lake and struck the Similkameen some place near where Princeton now stands. He came down that river and struck the Okanogan river at the "forks," as he says, and got to Fort Okanogan, January 24th, 1813. On May 13th, 1813, Mr. Stuart arrived at Fort Okanogan from the Kamloops country with a rich catch of fur. They remained at Okanogan ten days, packing, pressing and loading the furs, and then Ross and Stuart with a crew of men set out with the

canoes for the rendezvous at the mouth of the Walla Walla. Ross goes into a world of details in regard to all of these happenings and it must be admitted that he is an entertaining writer and his chapters on the Okanogan Indians are very valuable from an ethnological point of view, but as a geographer and descriptive writer he was a failure, although there should be a few exceptions made to this statement, as, for instance, his account of the first trip up the Columbia. But he traveled up and down the Okanogan country from the mouth of the river to the head of Okanogan lake time and again, yet he scarcely ever tells us the name of a landmark, a stream or a mountain. He made one exploring trip into the Methow country and evidently crossed the Twisp pass and got well down on the Skagit, yet it is impossible to tell from his writings where he was at any time, perhaps for the very good reason that Ross did not know. He says his Indian guide got lost on the Methow trip, but to read his account, one is lead to believe that it is just a case of "blaming it on the cat." He took unto himself, at Fort Okanogan, an Indian girl of the Okanogan tribe, and when he returned to Winnipeg, about 1825, he took her and his half-breed children with him, and the Pacific Northwest knew them no more. Ross became prominent in Manitoba and Assiniboia. He was chosen first sheriff of the province of Manitoba, and in 1835, was appointed a member of the first government council. It is said that his Indian wife was of exceptional intelligence and in later life became one of the grand old ladies of the Red River settlement. His third book which appeared in 1856, the year of his death, referred entirely to the Winnipeg country, and is entitled "The Red River Settlement."

At first he was faithful to Astor but later turned bitterly against him. In fact, his works contain many severe criticisms of Mr. Astor and also of his associates, the justice or injustice of which is difficult now to determine.

Stuart and Ross reached the rendezvous at the mouth of the Walla Walla May 30th, 1813, and a few days afterward the brigades began arriving from up the Snake river and overland from

Spokane. These brigades brought from the Spokane establishment the tidings of the breaking out of the war between United States and Great Britain. Upon arrival of the consolidated brigades at Astoria, June 14th, 1813, a council of the partners was held. There was found to be dissension amongst the partners and a feeling of discouragement and dismay pervaded the meeting on account of the news of the war and their wholly unprotected situation from an attack by a British war ship or privateer. There was also great dissatisfaction among some in regard to Mr. Astor's management of the company, and to crown it all, the opposition of the Northwest Company was getting stronger. It was decided, however, after much discussion, to attempt to continue the enterprise for another year in spite of the hazards and difficulties, and preparations were at once made to send out the wintering parties again. The outward bound brigades left Astoria in a body on July 5th, 1813, Stuart and Ross for the Okanogan and Kamloops country, Clark for the Spokane country and McKenzie for the Willamette country. Resolutions were also passed authorizing McDougal, the head factor at Astoria to sell out everything to the Northwest Company at any time if the situation became desperate and that company could be induced to buy.

On August 15th, 1813, the brigades reached Fort Okanogan. Here Ross was left in charge again for the winter. Clark and his men proceeded with their goods to Spokane and David Stuart took the now well known pack train route up this river to winter again at Kamloops, among the Shu-swaps.

We have now reached the beginning of the end of the Astor Company. Events were fast culminating that were to change the course of things for many years to come, but the influence of Mr. Astor's efforts was not lost as subsequent results proved, for although it ended in commercial failure, it very materially strengthened the case of the United States in establishing its claims to this section of the country when the final arbitration of the boundary dispute was settled, something over a third of a century later.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NOR'WESTERS TRIUMPH OVER ASTOR.

THE Nor'westers were quick to see the opportunity offered them by the war and the defenseless condition of the Astor establishments on the Columbia. The management hurried the news across the continent to the Pacific partners that a British sloop-of-war, the "Raccoon" was on the way to the mouth of the Columbia, to capture the American trading post, also that they had a ship of their own, the "Isaac Todd" enroute to the mouth of the Columbia with supplies and equipment to enable the Northwest Company to establish a trading post there; that the Isaac Todd was armed, and also held letters of marque and reprisal and was therefore a duly accredited privateer and in a position to seize the American post as a prize of war. As a result of this there suddenly appeared at the Okanogan post, on the last day of September, 1813, a big Northwest Company brigade of ten canoes under the leadership of John George McTravish and John Stuart. They stopped but a few hours with Ross at Okanogan for they were hurrying down to the mouth to meet the Isaac Todd upon its arrival, and likewise they were clothed with full authority to make a purchase of all the holdings and property of the Astor Company, if a good bargain could be made. Ross says they were in high spirits and came sweeping gaily down the Columbia, with the canoe-men singing their boat songs in wild chorus. And well they might be jubilant, for they had every advantage. They had the American company between the devil and the deep sea. They would either force them to sell out or fall a prize of war. This brigade reached Astoria October 7th, 1813.

Without going into details, Duncan McDougal, the factor in charge at Astoria, sold out the whole Astorian enterprise on the Pacific to the Northwest Company on November 12th, 1813. The American flag was hauled down and the Union Jack was run up in its stead. The name of the place was changed from Astoria to Fort George.

Shortly afterwards the *Racoon* arrived and her captain took formal possession of the country for England. The "*Isaac Todd*" was however badly delayed on her voyage and did not arrive till the following April.

All the inland posts including Fort Okanogan, of course, now passed to the Northwest Company. Fort Okanogan was turned over December 15th, 1813. Ross entered the service of the Northwest Company and was placed in charge for the new management. His second book starts with his service under the new regime, and, as before stated, it is entitled "*Fur Hunters of the West.*" It opens with an account of a trip from Fort Okanogan overland to the Yakima country for the purpose of acquiring horses. Many horses were maintained at Fort Okanogan as long as the fur from the north continued to come down the trail along this river. They grazed these extensive horse bands on what is now the southwestern portion of the South Half. Afterwards, however, when the Northwest Company and the Hudson Bay Company consolidated and Fort Okanogan became a Hudson Bay post, the fur from the north was not brought down through the Okanogan valley by the horse brigades, but was sent over the mountains to the mouth of the Fraser. This greatly lessened the importance of the place. There were many wolves in this country in the early days and both Ross and Cox in their books make frequent mention of the depredations of these fierce animals upon the horse bands grazing in the vicinity of the fort. They also mention the existence of elk in the country in those days, but we have been unable to find when or how they disappeared. Ross continued in charge at Fort Okanogan until the spring of 1816, when he was transferred to Fort George and the next year we find him as factor at Kamloops, and in 1817-18 he was in charge of the post on the Walla Walla. He also made one trip from Okanogan to the buffalo plains in Montana, returning with a good catch of fur and robes. Ross was succeeded at Fort Okanogan in the spring of 1816 by Ross Cox who was a very bright and highly educated young Irishman. To him was entrusted the rebuilding and remodeling of

the fort. He goes into the matter in detail and has left us a very fair map of the immediate vicinity around the mouth, even going so far as to designate the places where there were rattlesnakes. He evidently had a true Irishman's aversion for snakes. He has the word "rattlesnakes" written all over what is now Brewster flat. We will copy only the following excerpts from his work in regard to the fort which he rebuilt as above stated in the summer of 1816:

"By the month of September we had erected a new dwelling house for the person in charge, containing four excellent rooms and a large dining hall, two good houses for the men and a spacious store for the furs and merchandise to which was attached a shop for trading with the natives. The whole was surrounded by strong palisades fifteen feet high and flanked by two bastions. Each bastion had in its lower story a light brass four-pounder, and the upper loop-holes were left for the use of musketry."

The post was built about a mile southeast of the original fort and was situated so as to command the Columbia. It has now entirely disappeared but many old timers, both Indian and white, remember it and there is no question about the exact location of the same. It stood on the bank of the Columbia a little below the old Indian grave yard that is there today and just above the river end of Long Jim's fence. We find further on in the work of Cox the following commentary:

"The situation of Okanogan is admirably adapted for a trading post, with a fertile soil, a healthy climate, horses in abundance for land carriage, an opening to the sea by the Columbia and a communication to the interior by it and the Okanogan. The river is well stocked with fish and the natives quiet and friendly. It will, in my opinion, be selected as a spot pre-eminently calculated for the site of a town when civilization (which is at present so rapidly migrating to the westward) crosses the Rocky mountains and reaches the Columbia."

Cox wrote these words well nigh a hundred years ago, but events up to date show him to have been a poor guesser, for there is

less at the mouth of the Okanogan now than in his day, but the prospects at present are that time may yet vindicate his prediction.

Cox wrote in a very interesting manner of the Okanogan Indians, and in this regard it tallies quite closely with the writings of Ross on the same subject, but differs in some quite important particulars. Both men, however, were eminently qualified to speak on the subject of which they wrote; both of them became proficient in the Indian language and Cox became very popular amongst these Indians. The writer has inquired extensively amongst old Indians to find out if they had any recollection or were familiar by tradition or otherwise, with the names of the old traders and voyageurs at Fort Okanogan. Such efforts have been absolutely barren of results, except that old Doctor John, who died a year ago last fall, gave proof when interviewed on the subject, shortly before his death, that he had heard of Cox. There are old half-breeds living on the Spokane reservation and in the Colville valley that were born at Fort Okanogan three-quarters of a century and more ago. If these men were properly interviewed, undoubtedly much valuable information could be obtained. We quote the following from the work of Ross, which is of local interest:

“The principal family of the Oakinacken nation bears the title or name of Con-con-ulps, being the name of the place where members of it generally reside, which is situated about nine miles up the beautiful stream of that name.”

This gives us the derivation of the name “Conconully” and the Indian name for Salmon creek is “Con-con-ulps” to this day, they call it by that name now, but the geography of Ross never is any too good as to exact location anywhere in his books, and when he says they commonly resided nine miles up the stream we are led to believe that either he or his publisher made a mistake, for the topography of the country nine miles up Salmon creek is an unlikely locality for Indians to be habitually camped.

Who-why-loff or “Red Fox” was the head chief of the Okanogans when the Astor men arrived. Ross has this to say of him:

“The old chief was a venerable and worthy savage; his influence was great over a wide circle, not only at home but abroad among the neighboring tribes. The Red Fox had been many times with his young men to the Great Salt lake as they call it, meaning the Pacific, the direct road to which across the mountains was almost due west to where they fall on the sea-coast in about the forty-ninth degree of north latitude. They take generally fifteen days to make the journey, sometimes more, sometimes less according to circumstances. Traffic is their object.”

CHAPTER V.

LATER HISTORY.

THE history of Fort Okanogan could be spun out indefinitely but it is of course impossible to go into any lengthy discussion of the same in this brief work. We will however attempt to set forth a few of the more important and interesting features that marked the course of events in subsequent years as the closing chapter of this narrative.

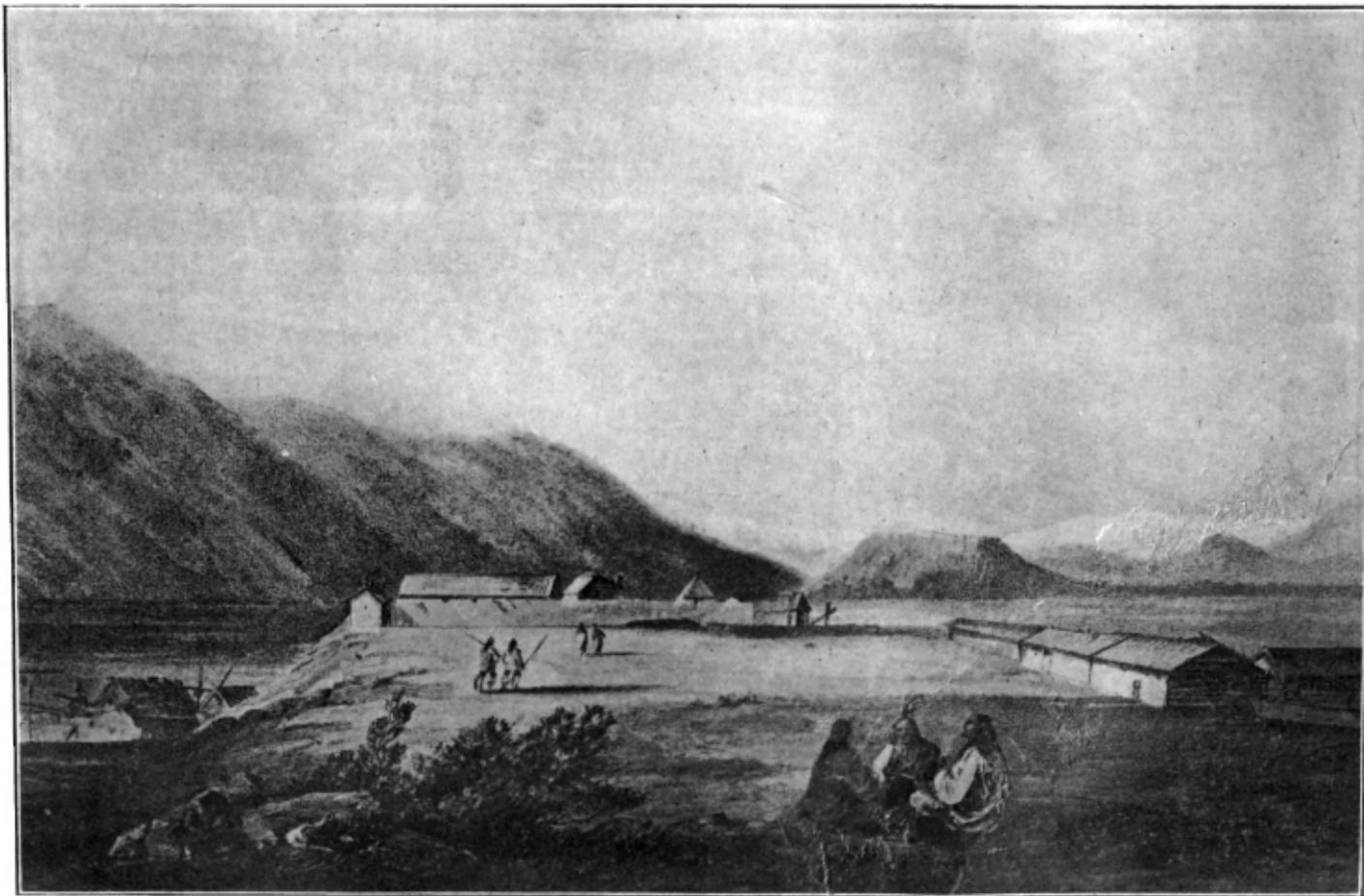
In 1821 the Northwest Company and the Hudson Bay Company, tired of the long and ruinous strife and struggle between the two organizations, by a mutual agreement entered into in London, consolidated the two companies together under the name of the latter, and from that time forward till its abandonment in the middle fifties, the trading establishment at the mouth of this river was a Hudson Bay Company post. That company in the old days was noted for the secretiveness of its operations, especially when in contact with American traders and we can derive but little light on the inside history of the fort from American sources, and Canadian lines of information must be followed up, and these have been but to a very limited extent available to the writer. Just when Fort Okanogan ceased to be a trading post of importance the author hereof is unable to definitely state, but certain it is that during the last fifteen or twenty years of its existence the place was reduced to a small establishment. Various causes brought about this condition which are too intricate and numerous to discuss here. The result is that the early history of Fort Okanogan is much more complete and definite than the later history. In fact we know but very little that is definite and reliable about the last years. Many travelers, however, visited the place through the thirties, forties and fifties and the general run of events can be fairly well traced. The history of the Okanogan country in the middle and latter fifties is fairly accessible and could be written quite complete with some research. General McClellan's expedition came through the Okanogan valley in 1853 and

there was much travel through the valley in the late fifties and early sixties by the placer miners going north to the "diggin's" on the Caribou and elsewhere. It was one of these parties of gold seekers going north that encountered the well known Indian fight in McLaughlin's canyon. The party was following the old Hudson Bay Company trail. We strike, however, a long period prior to about 1883 when the history of this section is pretty much of a blank. There appears to have been no one in the country at the time, except "Okanogan Smith" and a few more old time cattle men and miners on the Fifteen Mile Strip. The result is that the pioneers of our later period knew little of the old order of things which had disappeared many years before they came, and the same general ignorance of those early times has continued down to the present, however, there has all along existed more or less faint and fragmentary knowledge of those remote days and the same has always been a local theme of interest frequently mentioned and discussed, but definite and reliable information has all along been lacking. But this old-time fog of oblivion has within the last year or two been to a large extent dispelled in the general awakening of interest in "Old Oregon" which has brought forth old publications and records that have lain long in obscurity and by the light of which we are now able to retell the long forgotten story with accuracy and precision, and the bringing back of the memories of the old regime in this centennial year of its advent in this region seems very much like conjuring up the phantom legend of "La Chasse Gallerie" as the spirits of Ross, David Stuart, Cox, Thompson, Alexander Henry and the rest come back from the past to be with us this summer in our celebrations of the events of one hundred years ago among these scenes and along these rivers we now call ours, but which they then called theirs.

To those who wish to inform themselves in regard to the early history of this region we will refer them to the following books: "Adventures" and "Fur Hunters of the West," by Alexander Ross; "Adventures on the Columbia, Including the Narrative of a Residence of Six Years on the Western Side of the Rocky Mountains,"

by Ross Cox. This book was published in 1831 and is now out of print and is listed as a scarce work. "Franchere's Narrative," by Gabriel Franchere, written about 1825. This book is in print. The "Henry and Thompson Journals," by Elliott Coues. This is a splendid new work that has just made its appearance. "Chritendon's History of the American Fur Trade." This is also a very recent work. In Hudson Bay House, London, there is said to be the daily journals kept by the factors at Fort Okanogan for many years, but these, of course, are not obtainable except at great cost and expense. "Couquest of the Great Northwest," by Agnes Lout; Washington Irving's "Astoria," Dunn's "History of Oregon." The works of Ross, Cox, Franchere and the "Henry and Thompson Journals," by Elliott Coues, are the most valuable and should be in the school libraries of Okanogan county that the rising generation may become familiar with the history of this section, for it certainly deserves attention, as it is rich in incident and had a great influence upon the ultimate acquisition of all this section as part of the territory of the United States.

THE END.



OLD FORT OKANOGAN

From copy of picture in possession of Washington State Historical Society (U. S. Photographs, No. 6). This is the Hudson Bay Company post that succeeded the Astor establishment at the mouth of the Okanogan river.

Apr 6 '36

1147

Feb 3 '37

7813

Dec 28 '39

5505

