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FUR TRADING: FORERUNNER OF INDUSTRY IN ARIZONA

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FOREWORD

This publication by Robert L. Blomstrom, is based on the author's unpublished doctoral dissertation, *The Economics of the Fur Trade of the West, 1800 - 1840,* on file at the University of Colorado.

The Bureau of Business Services has selected this monograph as its contribution to the territorial centennial celebration of 1963. It has been said that one of the best ways to evaluate the future is through a careful analysis of the past. The early history of the area now the state of Arizona, that is presented here, has not been subjected to critical economic appraisal prior to this time. Dr. Blomstrom relates the story of the first Americans to exploit the natural resources of this area. The activities of the trappers seeking beaver furs over one hundred fifty years ago have left their imprint on modern day transportation, communication and trade.

Those persons interested in the early history of Arizona will find this publication most rewarding.

As the state of Arizona moves into its second fifty years of statehood and its second hundred years since becoming a territory, the Bureau offers this backward glance into the past.

We wish to express our appreciation to Dr. Blomstrom for making this material available to us for publication.

RALPH C. HOOK, JR., Director
Bureau of Business Services

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By Robert L. Blomstrom

Long before the territorial days of Arizona, the Spanish and the Americans alike recognized the wealth of natural resources which lay in the mountains and deserts of the Southwest. The story of the early explorations of the Spanish padres and the Spanish mining activities in Arizona and Sonora, Mexico are generally well known. But the story of the first Americans to exploit the natural resources of the area that is now Arizona is less well known. While the Spanish looked for precious metals, the Americans looked for fur . . . primarily, beaver fur.

While beaver fur was the principal objective of the trappers, the body of geographic and climatological information which these men gathered proved invaluable to the early settlers of Arizona and to those who moved on west to California.

Some of these men confined their activities to trapping beaver. Many extended their activities into commerce by transporting woven goods such as blankets and serapes from Santa Fe to California and returned with horses and mules. Others combined trapping expeditions with the movement of horses and mules from California to New Mexico. In the process of carrying out their expeditions these men ransacked every nook and cranny of the Southwest. They explored routes which were unfavorable to travel and discovered routes which would accommodate wheeled traffic. The ever-critical sources of water were catalogued in their minds, and they learned to both know and predict the actions of the Indians with considerable accuracy.

The wealth of information which these men gathered prior to 1845 made them invaluable when the population started to move west. They counseled and guided settlers; they acted as scouts and advisors for the Army; they supplied geographical information to the railroads; and they acted as Indian agents for the government. The services of such men as Kit Carson and "Old Bill" Williams are familiar stories. These men were typical of those produced by the fur trade.

The fur trade of the trans-Missouri area is usually associated with the activity which occurred in the Missouri River Basin, the Valley of the Green River in Wyoming, the area around Salt Lake, and the Pacific Northwest. Less well known, generally, is the fur trade of the Southwest. It developed more slowly than the northern trade for two reasons. First, the Spanish, who were in control of the Southwest until 1821, would not allow Americans in the area. Even after 1821 the Mexican government put severe restrictions on the trappers through licensing provisions and tariffs. Second, the fur of the Southwest was generally of poorer quality than that gathered in the North, and the beaver producing areas were more limited.

It should be understood that the fur trade of the Southwest did not develop independently. Even if one looks at the fur trade of the entire trans-Missouri area, it was not a peculiar development of the West. It was an integral part of the history of America. Scarcely had the French

and English discoverers set foot upon the continent when the possibilities of riches to be derived from the harvesting of furs became evident.

Hiram M. Chittenden described these possibilities as follows:

> North America, above those latitudes where a semi-tropical climate prevails, was, at the time of its discovery, the richest and most extensive field for collecting fine furs upon the face of the earth. The conditions encountered here seemed to have been especially prepared by nature to facilitate the exploitation of this particular species of wealth.[1]

In addition to the supply of raw materials, the traders also found a large labor force available. They were quick to introduce the Indians to the products of Europe and thus develop new wants in the natives. The Indians found that it was relatively easy to satisfy these new wants by exchanging furs for the highly desirable Euporean goods.

However, shortly after the Revolutionary War, our new government recognized its obligation to protect the Indians of our new country from the unscrupulous practices of the traders. To accomplish this objective, the government factory system was installed and legislation was passed which established certain licensing provisions covering the private traders. Congress passed an act in 1796 which provided for the establishment of government-operated stores, or factories, which were to be located at various points within the Indian Country. In addition, the act provided that licenses to trade with the Indians would be issued by the government to individuals and companies through the Indian Service, and that such licenses would be granted only to persons of good character. It was these licensing provisions which were responsible for the earliest fur-hunting expeditions along the Gila River.

The fur trade of the West developed slowly during the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, and was closely associated with the territorial acquisitions of the United States and the government exploration of this newly acquired land. In 1803, the government received title to that vast tract of land known as the Louisiana Purchase and in 1804, the historic Lewis and Clark expedition was dispatched to find an all-water passage to the Pacific Ocean and to collect various scientific data concerning the country through which it passed. Glowing reports of the vast treasure chest of furs which existed in the area quickly attracted several fur companies and a number of private traders. Closely following the Lewis and Clark expedition, Zebulon Pike was dispatched to explore the Arkansas River to its source. He was also to explore the region of the headwaters of the Rio Grande River. The results of this expedition were very disappointing. Pike and his men were incarcerated in the Santa Fe jail by the Spanish and later expelled from the country. Development of the northern trade awaited the conclusion of the War of 1812, and the southwestern trade had to await the successful conclusion of the Mexican Revolution against Spain in 1821.

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[1]Hiram M. Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, Stallo Vinton (ed) (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1935), p. 86.

The Importance of Beaver

Beaver was the universal quary of the fur trappers. Skins of the average grade were used in the manufacture of the high-crowned men's hats which were the fashion in Europe. The finer skins were sold to furriers throughout the world and were in great demand for use in making or trimming both men's and women's garments. Chittenden made the following comment concerning the importance of beaver.

> The great importance of the BEAVER in the life of the hunter and trapper arose almost entirely from the commercial value of its fur, which is one of the finest that nature produces. At this early period in particular, it was in great demand. An average price was four dollars a pound, and as the little animal carried from one to two pounds on its body the premium for its destruction was from four to ten dollars, according to its size and the prevailing price of furs.[2]

The prices to which Chittenden referred were the prices which beaver commanded in the St. Louis market during the 1820's. Since the trappers themselves rarely disposed of their furs in the St. Louis market, a mountain price was established.

Until the early thirties, beaver prices in St. Louis varied from four to six dollars a pound, depending on the market. The price for beaver delivered in the mountains was based on the rule of thumb of half the St. Louis price, but the mountain price became standardized at three dollars a pound for prime skins. Those skins which were damaged or taken during warm weather commanded a lesser price. The trappers who disposed of their furs in the North sold them to fur companies who either maintained trading posts or brought pack trains of merchandise to predetermined places in the mountains to trade for the furs. Those who disposed of their furs in the South usually sold or traded them to the American traders in Santa Fe.

Risks in the Trade

There was good reason for the price differential between St. Louis and the mountains. The risk attendant to transporting the furs from the mountains was great. If transported by water, there was always the danger of losing the furs because of a boat wreck. Regardless of whether the furs were transported by boat or over land, there was the ever-present threat of Indian attack. Most tribes of Indians were predisposed to steal anything that was not heavily guarded. Horses were one commodity that was always in jeopardy. In the North, the Crows held the enviable reputation among Indians of being the most accomplished horse thieves in the mountains, and the Blackfeet probably ran a close second. In the South, the Comanches held a comparable reputation. To the Indian, this practice was an accepted way of life; an accomplishment which garnered wealth to the individual and tribe alike. To the fur trader, this accomplishment presented a dreaded hazard. The loss of horses meant the loss of the means of transportation of furs to the market. The furs themselves were also an object of theft after the In-

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[2]Hiram M. Chittenden, *op. cit.*, p. 807.

dians found that they could be resold. To transport furs from the mountains to St. Louis meant the successful completion of a trip roughly two thousand miles in length through a country full of savages, who were seeking every opportunity to relieve the trader of his horses and furs. It is no wonder that General Ashley, a prominent trader of the Missouri River Basin, offered to pay a dollar a pound for transportation to anyone who would guarantee safe delivery of his furs in St. Louis.[3]

In addition to the risk to property, the lives of the trappers were in constant jeopardy. There was the constant threat of attack by hostile Indians, and the large bears which inhabited all the mountains of the West were a constant threat to the lives of the trappers. Estimates of the loss of lives are quite sketchy and incomplete. Only meager records of some of the large trading companies survive, plus individual accounts set forth in the few remaining journals of the trappers. One interesting fact stands out in bold relief. The accounts in the literature of loss of life from the elements are practically non-existent.

The Method of Trapping

Although the terms "spring" and "fall hunt" were universally used throughout the trade, the beaver were not hunted in the manner used for buffalo, deer, and elk. No firearms were necessary. Beaver were taken by trapping, and the trappers became quite expert in the use of traps. Each steel trap weighed approximately five pounds and was equipped with a chain about five feet long. These traps were valued at between twelve and sixteen dollars in the trade. Chittenden described the trapping process as follows:

> The trapper, in setting the trap, wades into the stream so that his tracks may not be apparent; plants his trap in three or four inches of water a little away from the bank, and fastens the chain to a long stick, which he drives into the bed of the stream at the full chain length from the trap. Immediately over the trap a little twig is set so that one end shall be about four inches above the surface of the water. On this is put a peculiar bait, supplied by the animal itself, castor, castorum, or musk, the odor of which has a great attraction for the beaver. To reach the bait he raises his mouth toward it and in this act brings his feet directly under it. He thus treads upon the trap, springs it and is caught. In his fright he seeks concealment by his usual method of diving in deep water, but finds himself held by the chain which he cannot gnaw in two, and after an ineffectual struggle, he sinks to the bottom and is drowned.[4]

Trapping activities were limited to the fall and spring months, for it was only during the cold months that prime skins could be gathered. During the summer months the fur was of such poor grade that it was not worthwhile to kill the animals. In addition, the beaver discarded the lodging habit during the warm months and scattered over the country,

[3] Dale Morgan, *Jedediah Smith* (Indianapolis: Bobbs–Merrill Co., Inc., 1953), p. 230.

[4] Hiram M. Chittenden, *op. cit.*, p. 809–10.

feeding on grass and trees and bushes with tender bark. The general association of the southern areas of the United States with warm weather led the trappers to overlook this source of fur for some time. And it was generally conceded that beaver which came from the South was inferior to that of the North. This difference in quality was reflected in the market.

As soon as possible after the animal was killed, it was skinned and the carcass, with the exception of the tail, was discarded. Trappers ate beaver only when nothing else was available, but beaver tail was considered to be a great delicacy and was always saved. The next step was to prepare the skin for storage. George Frederick Ruxton, who was a participant in the trade, described the process as follows:

> The captured animals are skinned, and the tails, which are a great dainty, carefully packed into camp. The skin is then stretched over a hoop or framework of osier twigs, and is allowed to dry, the flesh and fatty substance being carefully scraped (grained).[5]

Furs were then carefully folded with the hair turned inward and packed into bundles, or bales, weighing approximately one hundred pounds. The furs were compressed by means of a crude press and tied with wet rawhide thongs. As the thongs dried, they contracted, further compressing the pack and becoming almost as hard and inelastic as our modern iron bands.

Organization of the Trade

Over the years of development of the trade, a definite pattern of organization evolved. As part of the organization structure a distinct and strong class stratification emerged. These class distinctions were well established with clearly identified rights and privileges prevailing in each. This class stratification was much more firmly established in the Missouri trade than in the trade of the Southwest, but certain aspects of the organization appeared here also.

The bourgeois and the partisan (French designations) were the names applied to the highest levels of management within the trade. The bourgeois (booshway, as he was called by the Americans) was practically always a partner in the venture. The partisan typically directed the field operations of the trapping party. Most of the large trading companies hired trappers. The company furnished the trappers' equipment and paid them a yearly salary. In return, all the furs taken by each individual belonged to the company. These men were called engagees.

In contrast to the engagees was the class of free trappers or freemen as they came to be known in the trade. These men were not bound to any company. They traveled where they pleased and moved at will among the mountains. They owned their own outfits and depended upon their own skill at hunting and trapping to provide their income. As a group, these freemen were the elite of the trapping fraternity. They

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[5] LeRoy Hafen (ed.) *Ruxton of the Rockies* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), p. 229.

were also the undisputed spendthrifts of the group. Rare, indeed, was the free trapper who retired from his years of arduous toil with more than a few dollars for his troubles. Occasionally these men attached themselves to the parties of one of the large companies, but more often they traveled in groups for protection.

Sometimes these groups traveled together only for the protection that numbers could provide. Under this arrangement, each trapped on an individual basis and sold his furs as an individual. At other times, the free trappers set up a formal organization and elected one member to leadership. The leader might act as a partisan, the other members being bound to him in service. Under this arrangement, the furs taken belonged to the leader under certain financial agreements, and he disposed of them wherever he saw fit. Occassionally they traveled completely alone. "Old Bill" Williams, for whom Williams, Arizona and Williams Creek in that state were named, was typical of the men who preferred the solitude of individual endeavor to group activity. The trapping parties of the Southwest typically took one of the latter mentioned forms.

Early Trade of the Southwest

Relatively little is known of the early movements of the fur trappers in the Southwest. They generally moved in small parties and when they did enter the country south of the Arkansas, it was in violation of Spanish law. However, with the successful close of the Mexican Revolution, the attitude of the Mexican government toward Americans was reversed. Where, prior to 1821, the attitude had been one of suspicion and distrust, this now changed to one of encouragement. Americans were now encouraged to bring trading expeditions to the merchandise-starved population of the northern provinces, and members of these trading parties were allowed to trap in the area surrounding Santa Fe. General William James and Jacob Fowler both mention trapping activities in the journals of their Santa Fe expeditions. Ewing Young and William Wolfskill were trapping the Pecos in 1822.

Augustus Storrs, one of the early traders to Santa Fe, testified before a Congressional Committee in 1824 concerning the value of furs brought from Santa Fe in that year.

> . . . Agreeably, to this construction of the question, the returns at the lowest estimate, will amount to 180,000 dollars. They consist principally of Spanish dollars and bullion. Exclusive of this, furs taken in that country by Americans, have already been returned, amounting by actual sales, to 10,044 dollars.[6]

As further evidence of early trapping activity in the Southwest, James Baird made a complaint in 1826 to the Mexican authorities concerning illegal trapping activities. Baird had spent eleven years in Spanish jails as a result of an early trading expedition, but upon his release in 1821 had become a Mexican citizen. His complaint should probably

[6] Senate Committee Report, 18 Congress, 2 Session: copied in *Niles Register*, January 15, 1825. Reproduced in Archie Butler Hulbert (ed.), *Southwest on the Turquois Trail* (Denver, the Denver Public Library, 1933), pp. 77–98.

be construed as an attempt on his part to aid his adopted government. Baird's estimate of unlawful American trapping activities were stated in a letter to the government.

> . . . And although it is known to me that for a year and a half past they, (the Americans) have clandestinely extracted a large quantity of peltry exceeding a $100,000 in value, I have kept still, knowing that this exploration had been made by small parties.[7]

The Wanderings of James Ohio Pattie

The Personal Narrative of James Ohio Pattie[8] is one of the few recorded accounts of the activities of the fur trappers in the area encompassing what is now the state of Arizona. This narrative, as will be shown later, reveals a great deal that does not appear on first reading. Since the narrative is written in the first person, it fails, in itself, to reveal that James Ohio Pattie was a member of several expeditions which were led by such famous men as Michael Robideau and Ewing Young.[9]

Sylvester Pattie and his son James Ohio left St. Louis June 20, 1824, with three other men and ten horses packed with trapping equipment, supplies, and trade goods. They intended to ascend the Missouri and trap near the headwaters of that stream. Only a quirk of fate destined the Patties for the Southwest rather than Missouri trade. When they arrived in Council Bluffs, the officer in charge demanded their license to trade with the Indians. They did not know that they needed one and therefore had failed to obtain this necessary article before leaving St. Louis. The officer, of course, denied them permission to proceed further.

At Council Bluffs, they met Sylvester Pratte, the son of General Pratte of the St. Louis trading house of Pratte and Chouteau. The young Mr. Pratte was about to start on a trading expedition to New Mexico and the Patties joined the party. The elder Pattie was chosen commander.

The apprenticeship as a mountain man, which the younger Pattie served on the trip, was short and complete. He survived attacks by the Arikaras, Crows and Comanches. He also became involved in one of the familiar tragedies in the trappers' lives. Pattie wounded a bear which had gotten in among the horses. The wounded animal made straight for camp and seized a luckless individual, who could not get out of the way. Reloading as fast as he could, Pattie ran close to the bear and killed it, but he was too late. The man was so badly injured that it was impossible to save his life.

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[7] Archivo de Gobernacion (Mexico), Commercia, Expediente 44. Reprinted in Thomas Maitland Marshall, "St. Vrain's Expedition to the Gila in 1826," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (Austin: the Texas State Historical Assn.), Vol. XIX, No. 3, January, 1916, p. 256.

[8] The following account is taken from James Ohio Pattie, *"The Personal Narrative of James Ohio Pattie,"* Vol. XVIII of *Early Western Travels 1748-1846,* Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.) (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1905) unless otherwise noted.

[9] Joseph J. Hill, "Ewing Young in the Far Southwest," *The Oregon Historical Society Quarterly,* Vol. XXLV, March 1923, pp. 1–35.

Intermittently trapping and trading with the Indians, the men made their way up the Arkansas, across the mountains to Taos, where they declared their merchandise and paid the "customary duties on them." They proceeded to Santa Fe, arriving on November 5, 1824, and promptly requested permission from the governor to trap the Gila River.

While the party was awaiting its license to trap, a large band of Comanches killed several ranchers in the surrounding hills, drove off herds of sheep, and captured five women. The governor quickly dispatched his troops to rescue the women, and Pattie, along with several other trappers, volunteered to go along. An ambush was set for the Indians in a narrow valley. The American concealed themselves along the sides of the valley. The Mexicans were supposed to close the gap as soon as the Indians entered the valley. Let Pattie tell of the rescue of the women:

> The first object, that came in sight, were women without any clothing, driving a large drove of sheep and horses. These were immediately followed by Indians. When the latter were within thirty or forty yards of us, the order to fire was given. The women ran towards us the moment they heard the report of our guns. In doing this they encountered the Indians behind them, and three fell pierced by the spears of these savages. The cry among us now was "save the women!" Another young man and myself sprang forward to rescue the remaining two. My companion fell in the attempt. An Indian had raised his spear, to inflict death upon another of these unfortunate captives, when he received a shot from one of our men, that rendered him incapable of another act of cruelty. The captives, one of whom was a beautiful young lady, the daughter of the governor before spoken of, both reached me. The gratitude of such captives, so delivered, may be imagined. Fears, thanks, and exclamations in Spanish were the natural expression of feeling in such a position. My companions aided me in wrapping blankets around them, for it was quite cold; and making the best arrangement in our power for their comfort and safety. This was all done in less time, than is required to relate it, and we returned to our post.[10]

The Indians retreated and then rallied. The Mexicans fired one volley and retreated. The Americans were finally successful in driving the Indians off, and after a heated argument with the Mexican officer concerning who was to escort the ladies to Santa Fe, they started for the city. The hostages, one of whom Pattie called Jacova, was the daughter of a wealthy rancher and the ex-governor of New Mexico. Both she and her father formed a warm attachment for the young trapper and expressed their gratitude in many ways over the years.

The day following the return of the trappers to Santa Fe, the governor issued a license which gave permission to the Patties "to trap in different parts of the country." Seven men were in the Pattie party when it pushed off for the Gila River on the morning of November 22, 1824. The route was down the Rio Grande.[11] Somewhere in the vicinity

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[10] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

[11] The Rio Grande was then known as the Rio del Norte and is so referred to in the early literature.

of Albuquerque, the Pattie party was joined by seven other hunters and the combined group continued on to Socorro, where it turned west to the copper mines of Santa Rita. The night was spent at the mines, and the following morning two Mexicans were hired to guide the party to the Gila. The trappers reached the river December 14, catching 30 beaver the first time they set their traps.

Shortly after reaching the Gila, the party broke up. The seven trappers, who had joined the Patties on the Rio Grande, pushed ahead, trapped the stream thoroughly and left a scant harvest for the Patties. James Ohio commented:

> They still kept in advance, trapping clean as they went, that we even found it difficult to catch enough to eat.[12]

Game was extremely scarce, and the Pattie trappers were quickly reduced to eating beaver to stay alive. By January 1, 1825, they were close to starving. The passing of the old year brought the men a temporary change in luck, for on this day they reached the San Francisco River, killed two turkeys and caught 37 beaver.[13] They trapped the San Francisco to its source and took 250 beaver pelts, which they buried as soon as they returned to the Gila.

Pattie and his men set out down the Gila looking for a fresh beaver stream and cursing, every step of the way, those who had deserted them. But as was characteristic of the trapping fraternity, vengeance was only upon their lips, not in their hearts. Four of the deserters stumbled into camp on January 22, half starved, and told how they had been attacked by Indians; one of the number was killed. The two other survivors came into camp the following day, one badly wounded. The Patties pleaded with these men to lead them in an attack against the Indians, but all the men wanted at this point was to get back to Santa Rita. They had had enough. So they were given three horses and enough dried meat to get them back to the copper mines. The Patties proceeded on down the Gila, where they found the man that the Indians had killed. After burying the unfortunate victim, the party was forced to leave the river because of an impassable canyon through which the river flowed. Below this canyon, though, they found virgin beaver country. Both the Gila and a stream which Pattie called the Beaver River were rich in fur. Pattie wrote:

> At this place we collected 200 skins; and on the 10th [March 1825] continued to descend the Helay [Gila], until the 20th when we turned back with as much fur as our beasts could pack.[14]

But the men were not to enjoy the fruits of their labors, for they were attacked by Indians who succeeded in running off all their animals. Although there were no casualties, the men were forced to cache their furs before returning to Santa Rita. They paused at the San Francisco long enough to determine that the skins, which had been left there, were safe. They reached Santa Rita on April 29.

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[12] James Ohio Pattie, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

[13] The San Francisco River is one of the initial forks of the Gila which joins it near Clifton, Arizona.

[14] James Ohio Pattie, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

Young Pattie promptly went to Santa Fe, stopping briefly to visit Jacova and her father. The merchandise, which had been left in Santa Fe, enabled the Patties to buy the horses necessary to retrieve the buried furs. The expedition to retrieve the furs was a bitter disappointment. When James Ohio reached the cache on Beaver River, he found it had been broken open and all the contents stolen. The cache on the San Francisco was intact, however, and these furs were brought in safely. The rewards for the dangers and hardships which the trappers had suffered amounted to only two hundred skins—roughly $1200.

After James Ohio returned, the two Patties spent several months at the mines, resting, working, hunting, and making peace with the Apache Indians, who continually raided the livestock of the mines and killed the inhabitants. Shortly thereafter, Sylvester Pattie leased the mine for a thousand dollars a year and fortune seemed assured.

But James Ohio was not cut out for the sedentary life of a mine operator. He seemed to feel "an irresistible propensity to resume the employment of trapping." The invitation to join a party of "french trappers" was enough to lure James Ohio to the wilderness. The party left the copper mines January 2, 1826.

The year 1826 saw increased trapping activity on the rivers of Arizona. More Americans were trying their luck on the Gila and the Salt. T. M. Marshall has reviewed the documents of Antonio Narbona, governor of New Mexico in 1826, to discover the identities of some of the individuals involved.[15]

Ceran St. Vrain brought an expedition of about one hundred men to Santa Fe from Missouri in 1826. Concerning the division of the party after reaching Santa Fe, Marshall wrote:

> At Santa Fe or Taos and probably the latter, the expedition was divided into four parts no doubt for the convenience in trapping on the various streams. Williams and Ceran St. Vrain led one party of twenty-odd, Robideau and Pratt one of thirty-odd, John Roles a third of eighteen and Joaquin Joon [Ewing Young] one of similar size. Having organized the four parties made for the uninhabited regions of the west to trap on the Gila, San Francisco, and Colorado Rivers.[16]

Charles L. Camp in his *Chronicles of George C. Yount* has established that the party of "french traders" which Pattie joined at the copper mines was the one led by Miguel Robideau. George Yount accompanied Ewing Young.[17]

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[15] Thomas Maitland Marshall, "St. Vrain's Expedition to the Gila in 1826," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 3, January 1916, pp. 251–260.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 25. Williams was probably "Old Bill Williams." St. Vrain was the later partner of the trading party of Bent and St. Vrain. Robideau was a member of the famous fur-trading family of St. Louis. Pratte was the son of one of the partners of the mercantile firm of Pratte & Chouteau of St. Louis, and Ewing Young made history as a fur and horse trader throughout the Southwest and Pacific Coast areas.

[17] Charles L. Camp (ed.) "The Chronicles of George C. Young," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 1, April 1923, p. 10.

After leaving the mines, the Robideau party, with James Ohio Pattie among them, descended the Gila to the spot where Pattie had lost his horses and furs the previous year. Here they met the Indians who had attacked the Patties the year before, and young Pattie recognized one of the horses which had been stolen by the Indians during the attack. Pattie demanded the return of his property, and the show of strength which the trappers presented was sufficient to persuade the chief to return three horses and one hundred and fifty beaver skins. A pipe was then smoked and a treaty established. Following this good fortune, the trappers continued down the Gila to its junction with the Salt, a short distance below the present site of Phoenix, Arizona, where they camped with a village of Maricopa Indians.

Pattie immediately became suspicious of the Indians, believing it was their intention to rob and kill the trappers if the opportunity should present itself. Robideau refused to listen to the warning and Pattie, with one companion, moved his camp some distance away and kept a close watch. True to Pattie's expectations, the Indians attacked about midnight, and he and his companion made a hasty departure. Robideau was the sole survivor among the trappers who had remained in the village. Pattie found him the following morning, badly wounded and suffering from fever.

Shortly after dark that night, the three discovered the fires of a camp. Leaving the wounded Robideau, Pattie and his companion crawled silently up to the camp to reconnoiter. One can imagine their surprise to find that this was the party of American trappers led by Ewing Young. Pegleg Smith, George Yount, and Milton Sublette (all well known names in the fur trade) were members of this party.[18]

Upon hearing the story of the massacre of Robideau's party, the trappers prepared to revenge the death of their comrades. Twenty-six men crept upon the village and decoyed a large number of the Indians into a trap. According to Pattie, one hundred and ten Indians were killed that day.[19]

Following this victory, the trappers turned up the Salt River. The party divided at the forks, one part trapping the Salt to its source. The balance of the men worked their way to the sources of the Verde River. After a successful hunt, the trappers were united at the confluence of the Salt and the Verde. Following this reunion they trapped slowly down the Gila to the Colorado, near Yuma, Arizona.

The party, under Ewing Young, now turned north up the Colorado and embarked on one of the most amazing journeys of the American fur trade. Camp summarized Pattie's account of the trip as follows:

> Pattie's route took him back to Santa Fe by way of the south rim of the Grand Canyon (March 28), the country of the Shoshones (April 16), the "chief village" of the Navajos, possibly on the San Juan River (April 23), the Continental Divide (May 1), the South Fork of the Platte (May 7), the Big Horn River (May

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[18] Joseph J. Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 16–19.

[19] James Ohio Pattie, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

31), the Yellowstone, Clarke's Fork of the Columbia (June 1), the headwaters of the Arkansas (July 1), the Rio del Norte (July 20), the "chief village" of the Navajos again—"50 miles from the Rio del Norte"—and thence to Santa Fe on August 1—time four months, distance over 2100 miles—better than 16 miles per day and trapping part of the way! It seems incredible.[20]

Cleland remarked that:

> All in all, the expedition had traversed some thousands of miles of wilderness, lost nearly a third of its number in conflicts with different Indian tribes and brought back perhaps twenty thousand dollars worth of beaver skins.[21]

But fortune was not to smile on Pattie for long. Upon reaching Santa Fe, Don Manuel Armijo, the newly appointed governor of New Mexico, accused the Americans of trapping without a license, and confiscated the furs.[22] So Pattie returned to Santa Rita empty handed, where he found his father in good health. The next few months were occupied in hunting and a trading trip to Mexico.

Fortune had, however, smiled on the elder Pattie, and he had developed a profitable trading business at Santa Rita in addition to his mining activities. In order to have sufficient merchandise to carry on his trading activities, he dispatched his confidential clerk (a Mexican) to Santa Fe to purchase a stock, sending thirty thousand dollars along with him. The Mexican never returned and the fortunes of both Patties vanished.

In order to recoup their losses, they turned to the field of endeavor which seemed to have the most promise. In the fall of 1827, they joined a party of trappers headed for the Gila and Colorado. The elder Pattie was elected to lead the group.[23] However, a large number of the men became dissatisfied with Pattie and the party split, one group going up the Colorado and the Patties going downstream. Trapping and fighting intermittent skirmishes with the Indians, they floated down the Colorado in boats which they had made, until they were caught in the tidewaters at the mouth of the Colorado. Trapping was excellent and prospects bright until they were faced with the necessity of transporting their furs back. Since their horses had been previously stolen by Indians, it was impossible to transport the furs. The decision was made to cache the furs and travel to California by foot; then retrieve the furs on the way home after horses had been obtained.

They now started across the fierce waterless wastes of southern California. As they progressed, their thirst mounted until the eight men were nearly mad. One attempted suicide, and two elderly men, Sylvester Pattie and Isaac Slover, lay down to die.[24] At last the other members of

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[20] Charles L. Camp, *op. cit.*, pp. 12–13.

[21] Robert Glass Cleland, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

[22] For a full account of the circumstances surrounding this confiscation see Josiah Gregg, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–24. Also see Robert Glass Cleland, *op. cit.*, pp. 218–224. Although the others lost their furs, Milton Sublette apparently reached the United States with his share.

[23] Charles L. Camp, *op. cit.*, p. 16. This is the party that was organized by George Young.

[24] Isaac Slover was a member of the Fowler–Glenn party which reached Santa Fe in 1822.

the party reached the mountains on the edge of the plain and found water. Improvising canteens from their powder horns, the men filled them with water and hurried back to the prostrate men who had been left behind. Fortunately, the water revived the two elderly men, Pattie and Slover, for they were able to join the rest of the party at the mountains. They met a group of Christian Indians from the mission of Santa Catalina on the headwaters of the San Quinten River in Lower California, and quickly headed for that sanctuary. If the trappers expected a warm welcome here they were sadly disappointed, for the ecclesiastical, as well as the civil authorities, considered all strangers as spies and enemies.[25]

Jose Maria Encheandia was governor of California in 1827, and the Pattie party met the same fate at his hands as had Jedediah Smith in 1826. The men were promptly made prisoners and later taken to San Diego for an audience with Encheandia. This interview left much to be desired for the Patties and their men. Encheandia stated that he considered them to be spies for the old Spanish and worse than murderers. He was shown the passport which had been issued by the governor at Santa Fe, "which he tore in pieces, saying, it was no passport, but a vile forgery of our own contrivance."[26] The entire party was established in the local prison. Young Pattie put forth every effort to obtain the release of his father and to get permission to return to the Colorado River for the furs which were cached there.

The weeks in prison proved too much for the elder Pattie. He had never fully recovered from the grueling experiences on the deserts of southern California, and this, together with confinement, bad food, and age, caused his death.

Finally Encheandia gave permission to retrieve the furs, but kept Pattie as a hostage to assure the return of the men. Again Pattie was to suffer bitter disappointment. By the time the men reached the cache, the high waters occasioned by the spring rise of the river, had overflowed the caches and destroyed the furs. The men were forced to return empty handed.

Pattie and his men gained their freedom in an unexpected manner. A plague of smallpox broke out in northern California and spread slowly south. Part of the medical supplies which the Patties had brought with them from the copper mines consisted of a supply of smallpox vaccine. Young Pattie had been instructed in its use by his father, who had vaccinated the inhabitants of Santa Rita. Encheandia was quite fearful of contracting the disease himself and was also under great pressure from the people to provide some means of combatting the disease.

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[25] Pattie's trip to Santa Fe is difficult to trace except as it ran up the Arkansas and across the mountains into Taos and Santa Fe. They probably followed much the same route as Becknell on his first journey, that is up the Arkansas to La Junta, Colorado, up Timpas Creek, then through Raton Pass to Santa Fe. From Santa Fe, the route led down the Rio Grande, U. S. 85, and west along New Mexico 180 to Santa Rita. Roads do not follow the Gila closely between Santa Rita and Safford, Arizona, but from this point to its mouth, U. S. 70 beween Safford and Phoenix and U. S. 80 between Phoenix and Yuma follow the river closely. U. S. 80 follows Pattie's route between Yuma and San Diego, California.

[26] James Ohio Pattie, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

Upon discovering that Pattie had the vaccine and the knowledge necessary to use it, Encheandia demanded that he be vaccinated. Pattie refused and used this unexpected advantage to bargain. He stipulated that the terms for his services were a year's parole for himself and his men, and a dollar a head for all those vaccinated. Encheandia finally acquiesced and Pattie set out upon his life-saving mission. According to Pattie, he vaccinated twenty-two thousand persons in all.[27]

However, this enterprise, like all of Pattie's undertakings, ended in financial failure. Rather than payment in silver as he had expected, he was tendered payment in land and cattle with some strings attached. Pattie produced the instrument by which payment was tendered as follows:

> I certify, that James O. Pattie has vaccinated all the Indians and whites on this coast, and to recompense him for the same, I give the said James O. Pattie my obligation for one thousand head of cattle, and land to pasture them; that is, 500 cows and 500 mules. This he is to receive after he becomes a Catholic, and a subject of this government. Given in the mission of St. Francisco on the 8th of July in the year 1829.
>
> JOHN CABORTES[28]

Pattie refused this payment, denounced both Church and State as unjust and whimsical, and left in a rage. He spent the next several months sailing up and down the coast on an American vessel until January 6, 1830, when he learned that a revolutionary movement against the government was taking shape. His hatred of the present government in general, and Encheandia in particular, made him, along with several other Americans, English, and Dutch, hasten to join the plot to overthrow Encheandia and his government. However, Pattie and the others soon became convinced that the revolutionary leader, Joachim Soles, was a worse blackguard and tyrant than Encheandia, and so switched their allegiance. The Anglos (all nationalities other than Mexicans or Spaniards), under the command of Captain Cooper of the ship "Rover," got their recent comrades in arms drunk by distributing liquor, locked them up and made ready to capture the insurgent general. The capture was completed and Soles was handed over to Encheandia, who expressed his gratitude by giving a dinner and offering each of the heroes Mexican citizenship as a reward.

It was at this time that John W. Jones, the American consul in California, arrived at San Francisco. Pattie told his story to Jones who advised him to carry his claim to Mexico. The long journey to Mexico City produced failure again. President Guerrero received him politely, agreed that he had been mistreated; but the depleted treasury of Mexico could yield nothing to pay him.

Impoverished and bitter, Pattie made his way to the old family home in Kentucky, by way of New Orleans, where he found his aged grandparents still living, but the balance of his family scattered. Cleland quotes William Waldo in summary of Pattie's life:

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[27] *Ibid.*, p. 283.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 287.

With the publication of Pattie's remarkable narrative by Timothy Flint of Cincinnati, the far-venturing Kentuckian drops almost completely out of sight. According to William Waldo, he was a student for a time at Augusta College in Kentucky. To this brief statement Waldo adds: "This man . . . left my camp in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and his sister, whom I met in Missouri eleven years after, said that was the last account she ever received concerning him. I suppose he perished in the deep snows or was killed by Indians."[29]

Ewing Young's Expedition of 1829

During the summer of 1828, Ewing Young outfitted a party to trap on the Colorado River. Young himself did not accompany this party but appears to have remained in Taos. The trappers reached the Salt, where they were attacked by Indians. The party was defeated in the battle and the victorious Indians confiscated the trappers' belongings. The party returned to Taos empty handed.

The following year, Young organized another party for the purpose of trapping in northern Arizona. He planned to trap across the northern part of the state to the Colorado River, then proceed to California and dispose of his furs. Because of previous troubles with the Mexican government concerning licenses, Young did not bother with that formality. He would deal with this detail later.[30] The party of forty-three men left Taos in August of 1829 and traveled north. Young let it be known that he intended to take the party to Missouri by way of the Arkansas. However, instead of crossing the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the Arkansas, he continued to the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado and there turned sharply southwest. Thus he evaded Santa Fe and the inquiring officials of that city.

Among the members of this party was young Kit Carson, undergoing his first real experience in fur trapping.[31] Three years previously Carson had run away from his employment as an apprentice saddle maker in Missouri. Lack of money to buy an outfit and lack of mountain experience had kept him from his dreams of being a trapper. He had been forced to content himself with odd jobs of driving freight wagons. By 1829, after saving enough money for the necessary outfit, he persuaded Young to let him go on the expedition. Carson's reminiscences provide much information concerning the journey.[32]

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[29] Robert Glass Cleland, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

[30] According to the law, a guia or license had to be obtained before any civil activity could be undertaken. A license had to be obtained to trade, to operate a store, to give a ball or take a trip. If the American could not obtain a guia, he found many ways to carry on just the same. Trapping under a trading license, having a Mexican in the party take out the guia or just hoping not to be caught until he could get his furs to a trading post on the Arkansas or elsewhere were common ways of avoiding the restriction.

[31] This account of Young's first expedition to California is taken from Kit Carson, *Kit Carson's Own Life Story*, Blanche C. Grant (ed.) (Taos, New Mexico: B. C. Grant, 1926), unless otherwise noted.

[32] Edwin L. Sabin, *Kit Carson Days* (New York: The Press of the Pioneers, 1938), p. 45.

The trappers cut across the northwestern corner of New Mexico to Zuni, then on to the headwaters of the Salt River, which rise in northeastern Arizona near the border of New Mexico. Here on the head of the Salt, Young encountered the same Apaches who had attacked and defeated his trappers in 1828. Burning with a desire for revenge, Young set an ambush for the Indians by hiding most of the men amidst the camp gear. The Indians fell for the ruse. The temptation of a lightly guarded treasure of packs, mules, munitions, and supplies was too much. They attacked and were met by rifle fire of the hidden trappers. The outcome was twenty dead Indians and no casualties to the trappers.

This battle cleared the way for trapping; the party trapped unmolested down the Salt to its confluence with the Verde River. At this point, the group turned northward and trapped the Verde to its source north of Prescott. Young then split his party. He dispatched twenty-two men for Taos with the furs that had been gathered, and retained twenty-one men to continue to California with him. Kit Carson remained with him.

The men camped on the head of the Verde for three days drying meat and casing deer skins with melted tallow to make bags in which to carry water. They then set out across the wastes of northern Arizona, skirting the Colorado Plateau. Their water supply was soon exhausted, but the men struggled on across the dry desert until the mules, half crazed by thirst, finally led them to a spring. They rested at the spring for two days before pushing on to the Colorado River, a four day dry march. Their trail followed approximately the route of the Santa Fe Railroad of today. They reached the Colorado River below the Mohave villages, near Needles, California.

Young and his men were the first whites to approach the river from the east. The Patties had ascended the Colorado from the south in late summer of 1826. Jedediah Smith had come from the north in October of the same year. The Spanish fathers had come from the east in the previous century. But these were the first whites to travel the full route across northern Arizona.

From the Mohave villages, Young and his men struck westward, following in the footsteps of Jedediah Smith. They reached the dry bed of the Mohave River and traveled up it two days before finding water. This was the river which Smith had named the Inconstant. Thomas Farnham, an early western traveler, described the river well when he wrote:

> This is a very singular stream. It may be said to run southwestardly about two hundred miles and empty into the Colorado. But on all its length it does not run two miles without entirely disappearing in the sand. So that it presents to the traveler a long line of a little rippling lakes, from two to two and a half feet deep, at one time sunken among hard flinty hills or piles of drifting sands and at others gurgling through narrow vales . . .[33]

[33] Thomas J. Farnham, *Life, Adventure and Travel in California* (New York: Nafis and Cornish, 1848), p. 318. However, the Mohave does not empty into the Colorado River, but disappears in the Mohave Sink far short of the river, as is said in Edward Sabin, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

No wonder Smith named the river Inconstant.

From the Mohave, the men crossed Cajon Pass and traveled to the mission of San Gabriel near Los Angeles. Young was well apprised of the experiences of Smith and the Patties, so did not tarry long enough at the mission to be detained by the military. One day of rest and trading was sufficient, and the men pushed northward, taking a wide detour around the pueblo of Los Angeles. They moved northward through the central valley of California to the San Joaquin River. Here they found signs of beaver, and also signs of trappers. Soon they met Peter Skene Ogden and his party of trappers from the northwest. The two parties thereafter trapped amicably together during the spring of 1830, although trapping was not as good as it had been in previous years. In a letter dated March 10, 1831, Ogden wrote:

> I was not so successful in my last year's trapping as the year preceding, although I extended my trails by far greater distance to the gulf of California but found beaver very scarce.[34]

Summer overtook Young's party on the San Joaquin River, and the party prepared to camp for the summer and await cold weather when beaver fur would again be worth taking. While the trappers were engaged in loafing and hunting, the Indian overseer from the mission of San Jose approached them to enlist their aid in capturing a group of Indians who had run away from the mission. The overseer had made an earlier attempt and failed. Being bored with inactivity, the trappers were only too glad to be of help. The prospect of a good fight was always a welcome diversion for the mountain men. The Indians were soon found and after a day-long fight, the runaways were captured and sent back to the mission.

Young now had an opportunity to market the furs which had been taken. He boldly walked into the mission, presented his passports and requested permission to sell his furs. Permission was granted, and the sale made. With the proceeds of the sale, he bought horses from the mission, which he intended to drive back to New Mexico.

However, no sooner were the horses back at the camp on the San Joaquin, than they were stampeded and driven off by a band of renegade Indians who drove them some hundred miles into the mountains. The Indians considered this a safe distance and paused to have a feast of horse flesh. They had underestimated the trappers, for these men were not content to let that many horses slip from their grasp, and they immediately set out to retrieve the animals. The trappers arrived at the Indian camp in the midst of the feast. Rifles barked, Indians died, and the trappers recovered their horses. They then started back to New Mexico.

Young's party, however, very nearly got into trouble in Los Angeles. This was the last town the party would pass until they got to Taos, and the men were due for a celebration before starting the long homeward journey. But the military had orders to arrest Young and his men for trapping without a license. The reputation of the mountain men plus

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[34] Edward L. Sabin, *Ibid.*, p. 910. Original with Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

their number discouraged an attempt to arrest them. The authorities reasoned that their job would be much easier if the trappers were drunk, and attempted to accomplish this by providing all the liquor the men wanted.

Captain Young quickly realized the danger and sent Kit Carson on ahead with the horses and supplies. Meanwhile, he gathered the intoxicated men and finally got them on the trail. The authorities followed, still giving away liquor, hoping to be able to stop the exodus. Providentially for the party and for no apparent reason, one of the trappers suddenly shot and killed another trapper. This brutal act so unnerved and terrified the soldiers that they fled in fear. Young hurried the men, who were now somewhat sobered, onward and out of the country. Young summarized his troubles and his plans in a letter to Captain Cooper, whom he had met while in California.

October 10, 1830

Dear Sir, I received yours of the 8th and am verry sorry that I did not see you I had Like to have lost all the french I have with me when I was in the settlement they were all owing me Large Debts and wishing not to pay them Mutinied they had Concluded to all remain in this Country but the Americans were too strong for them and forced them out much against their will an Irish Man and an English man in the rear had a falling out about some very frivilous thing and one shot the other dead of his horse and I could not stop to do anything with him. Left him Lying in the rode where he was kild. It was my Intention to return from Red River [the Colorado] in december and sell what Beaver I had on hand and By Mules but having this difficulty with my men, I cannot have any confidence in them If it was not for some young Americans that is Men of confidence I would not be able to get back to New Mexico therefore I must drop all Idea of a Mule speculation for this year I am going down Red River to the Mouth of the Hela and from there up the Hela to New Mexico every disappointment that a man could Meet with I Met with on this trip. Since I saw you in St. Joseph I have had my horses and Mule stole by the Indians I followed them and recovered my Caviard but five of My Best Mules they kiled to Eat. We kild ten or twelve of the Indians next Summer I will return to this country for the purpose of engaging in the Mule trade. I want to ascertain how Mules sell in Mexico before I engage in the speculation I have no idea of taking Mules to the United States except there is a peace Made with the Comanses [Comanches] Indians.

Nothing more at present
But Remain
Yours Respectfully
E. Young[35]

Captain Young retraced his trail to the Colorado and then as outlined in the letter, trapped down the Colorado to tidewater and back

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.

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up to the Gila. The men then trapped up the Gila and proceeded to the copper mines at Santa Rita.[36]

But Young had had one sad experience in taking beaver into Santa Fe and he still had no trapping license. To overcome this obstacle, he hid the furs in the mines, proceeded to Santa Fe and obtained a license to trade with the Indians on the Gila.[37] Under this guise he safely brought in his furs. He had two thousand pounds of fur (about $8,000).

The Journey of Antonio Armijo 1829-30

The vast area encompassing what is now the states of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, and California, had seen the wandering of the Spaniards much earlier than the period with which we are concerned. The travels of Father Kino in southern Arizona in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are well known.[38] Father Escalante made his grand tour in 1775,[39] and Father Garces traveled in the area in the years 1775-1776.[40]

Additions to the body of geographical knowledge compiled by the Spanish padres had come from both the Spanish and American fur hunters who operated in the area. However, the desire on the part of the Mexican government to establish trade with California led to the search for a direct route between northern New Mexico and California.

Armed with this knowledge of the area northwest of Santa Fe, scant though it was, and miserably lacking in detail, Antonio Armijo launched the first all Mexican trading ventures to California.[41] The party, consisting of 31 men, left the village of Abiquiu, north of Santa Fe, November 7, 1829. Their pack animals were laden with handwoven blankets and serapes which they intended to trade for mules in California.

The route led northwest through the Chama Valley for a short distance, and then turned west to Large Canyon, which the party followed to the San Juan River. Crossing the San Juan, Armijo led his men northwest, crossing the Animas and LaPlata Rivers near the Colorado-New Mexico border. Upon reaching the Mancos River, Amijo turned southwest along this river to its junction with the San Juan near the

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[36] When the mines were abandoned by the Patties, they were purchased by Robert McKnight of the McKnight, Baird, Chambers party of 1810 and were being operated by him at the time.

[37] Young's route across northern Arizona is traced in travel by U. S. 66 from the head of the Verde River to the Colorado River. No roads follow either the Salt or the Verde Rivers. From the Colorado, Young followed along the route pioneered by Jedediah Smith. The return up the Gila had been previously traced by Pattie.

[38] Francis C. Cummins, *The Story of the Spanish Missions of the Middle Southwest* (Santa Ana, California: The Fine Arts Press, 1934).

[39] For an account of these journeys see Herbert S. Overback, (ed.), "Father Escalante's Journal with Related Documents and Maps," *Utah Historical Quarterly* Vol. XI, 1943, No. 1–4.

[40] Elliot Coues, (ed.), *On The Trail of a Spanish Pioneer; The Diary and Itinerary of Francisco Garces* (New York: F. P. Harper, 1900).

[41] The description of Armijo's journey is taken from Leroy Hafen, *The Old Spanish Trail* (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1954), pp. 156–70, in which the original journal is reproduced. Armijo's diary may be found in A. B. Hulbert, *op. cit.*, pp. 282–89. The originals are in the Registro Official del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1830.

"four Corners" (the junction of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah).

The party then crossed northern Arizona in a zigzag route, sometimes in Arizona and sometimes in Utah until it reached the Colorado. After considerable searching, the group found a way to descend the walls and ford the stream. The men had arrived at the Crossing of the Fathers, the site where Fathers Dominques and Escalante had crossed in 1776. Continuing the general westward course, they reached the Virgin River and turned south in the footsteps of Jedediah Smith, along the northern bank of the Virgin River.

In order to avoid traveling the additional miles southward to the Mohave villages as Smith had done, Armijo turned westward through the present city of Las Vegas, Nevada, and across the deserts of southern Nevada and California. Armijo and his men reached the Amargosa River near the present village of Tecopa. Then, picking their way southwest, finding the scattered springs so necessary to life, they arrived at the Mohave River, where they found the trail which came from the Mohave villages. The trail to San Gabriel was now clear. Armijo was following the trail of Jedediah Smith—up the Mohave, across the San Bernadino Mountains by Cajon Pass and down the timbered slopes to the mission of San Gabriel.

The Mexican traders quickly disposed of their blankets and serapes. The Californians were glad to trade horses and mules, which were of relatively small value, for the woven merchandise from New Mexico. Upon the completion of trading, Armijo drove his animals back to New Mexico by the same route he had come.

Armijo seems to have been the first entrepreneur to organize an expedition for the express purpose of trading for horses in California. At least, he demonstrated the practicability of driving large herds from California to New Mexico. However, the Americans were quick to seize upon this sort of venture and combine it with trapping activities.

It is probable that Ewing Young's decision to drive a herd to New Mexico was based on knowledge of Armijo's venture.[42]

William Wolfskill's Expedition of 1830-31

William Wolfskill first came to Santa Fe with the Becknell expedition in 1824. He made several trapping and trading excursions to the San Juan, the Rio Grande, and the Gila between 1824 and 1830 and engaged in general trading activities, but little was recorded of these episodes.

During the winter of 1830-1831, Wolfskill led a trapping party to California by a new route.[43] Charles Camp wrote:

> He will always be remembered as the leader of the expedition of 1831 from New Mexico to California along a new route through Southern Utah and Nevada.[44]

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[42] Practically nowhere do current highways coincide with Armijo's route.

[43] The discrepancy in the dates of the two quotes results from the fact that the pary departed in late 1830 and arrived in California in 1831.

[44] Charles L. Camp, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 37.

Wolfskill led the party and George Yount was second in command. H. D. Barrows, Wolfskill's son-in-law, summarized the trip thusly:

> Last of Sept., 1830, the party with Mr. Wolfskill at its head, left Taos for this then far off Territory of California. They came by a route farther north than that usually adopted by the Spaniards in traveling between California and New Mexico—their object being to find beaver. They struck the Colorado just below the mouth of the Dolores, at the head of the "great Canon," where they crossed; entering the Great American Basin, striking the Sevier; thence southward to the Rio Virgin, which they followed down to the Colorado; thence descending the Colorado to the Mohave [Desert]; where they hoped to obtain some provisions of which they were in want, and also to find beaver. From there, they took across to the sink of the Mohave river, through the Cajon Pass to San Bernadino, and finally to Los Angeles, where they arrived in February, 1831. Here the party broke up—being mostly without means. Some fitted out with what guns, etc., there were left, and went hunting otter on the coast. Very few of the disbanded party had any intention of stopping in California permanently. But they must do something, to enable them to get away. Mr. Wolfskill, with several others, went to work and build a schooner, at San Pedro, with which to hunt otter among the neighboring Islands. With this schooner, which they called the "Refugio," they went down as far as Cerros or Cedros Island off the coast of Baja California. They had indifferent luck. . . [45]

Roughly, the route ran in a northwesterly direction, probably through the Chama Valley, then skirting the San Juan range in southwestern Colorado, turned again northwest to the junction of the Delores River and the Colorado River north of Moab, Utah. From here, the route ran westward, across the Green and into the high Wasatch range and the Sevier River. High in these mountains the men were immobilized by a violent winter storm. After the storm subsided, the travelers pursued a southwest course to the Virgin, then down this river to the Colorado and the Mohave villages. They followed the trail of Jedediah Smith to the Mohave River, through Cajon Pass and on to Los Angeles.

LeRoy Hafen, noted historian of the West, summarizes the course of the Wolfskill-Yount party as northwest from Abiquiu to the San Juan River and along the Escalante trail to the Delores, then along the general course of this stream to the Colorado. The crossing of the Green would be at or near Greenriver, Utah. High bluffs to the north, and deep valleys to the south of this town, tend to pretty well fix the site of the crossing. From here they followed the route that was to become the Old Spanish Trail—that is, northwest through Castle Valley, over the mountains near Salina Canyon to the Sevier. At the forks of the Sevier, if they had taken the right hand fork and gone up Clear Creek as Jedediah Smith had done, they would have avoided being stalled in the blizzard. Once out of the mountains and on the Virgin River, the trail

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[45] Charles L. Camp, *op. cit.*, p. 37. H. D. Barrows, son-in-law of William Wolfskill, published the adventures of the trip as recounted by Wolfskill in the *Wilmington* (California) *Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 49, October 20, 1866.

followed that of Jedediah Smith to the Colorado, then west across the desert, over Cajon Pass to Los Angeles.[46]

Hafen observes that,"The entire length of the Old Spanish Trail from New Mexico to California had now been traversed. The Wolfskill-Yount party was the first to go the complete distance over its general course."[47] Once in Los Angeles, the party rapidly disintegrated, and all pretenses of trapping were abandoned. The men of the party were directed to return to New Mexico. Wolfskill entered into agricultural pursuits; and Yount engaged for a time in hunting sea otter, at which he was successful. After a few weeks he returned "with seventy-five skins that brought him the snug sum of two thousand dollars and . . . on the island of Santa Barbara he took ten sea elephants and otter in great abundance."[48] Yount turned to ranching and received a land grant in the Napa Valley where he remained until his death in 1865.

Young's Second California Expedition

During the summer of 1831, Ewing Young and David E. Jackson, former partner in the firm of Smith, Jackson & Sublette, formed a partnership for the purpose of trading for mules in California.[49]

The caravan, belonging to the firm of Smith, Jackson & Sublette, reached Santa Fe in the summer of 1831. The death of Jedediah Smith on the trail and the dissatisfaction of Sublette with business in Santa Fe led to a dissolution of the partnership. Jackson immediately entered into a partnership with Young for the California venture. On August 29, 1831, Jackson left for California with ten companions and proceeded via the Presidio of Tucson and the Colorado River.[50] He was to buy mules and have them ready for the trip to New Mexico when Young arrived. Young was to trap down the Gila, up the Colorado, and across into California where he would sell the furs. The proceeds from the furs would buy more mules, and the entire mule herd would be driven to New Mexico to sell to the traders who would take them to Missouri.

The expedition was a heart-breaking failure. The catch of beaver was disappointingly small. The traps were of Mexican manufacture and failed to work correctly. The malfunction allowed the beaver to escape after the trap was sprung.

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[46] LeRoy Hafen, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–53. U. S. 84 traces the route of the Wolfskill–Yount party from Abiquiu northwest through the Chama Valley in New Mexico. The route to the San Juan River is uncertain, but in all probability the party went up the Los Pinos River and turned west near Durango, Colorado. Wolfskill's route is now followed by U. S. 160 west from Durango to Greenriver, Utah. From this point Wolfskill led his men across to the Sevier River striking it in the vicinity of Salina, Utah. In all probability, U. S. 89 pretty well follows the route to the Virgin River and Utah 15 along this river. Once on the Colorado the party followed Jedediah Smith's route into California.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

[48] Charles Camp, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

[49] Robert Glass Cleland, *op. cit.*, pp. 235–45.

[50] John E. Sunder, *Bill Sublette, Mountain Man* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), pp. 99–100. Taken from Jackson and Sublette Letter of Attorney, August 23, 1831, Sublette MSS.

Jackson, too, had met with disappointments. Instead of the 2500 horses and mules which he had hoped to obtain, he had been able to obtain only 500 mules and 100 horses. The partners encountered more trouble as they drove the horses and mules back to New Mexico. When they reached the Colorado, they found the river swollen from the spring rise, and a number of the animals were drowned in the attempt to swim the river. Jackson continued on to Santa Fe with the remaining animals and Young returned to California.

After an unsuccessful sea otter hunt, he retired from trapping and went to Oregon, where he organized a cattle company, built a saw mill and drove horses from California for the use of the settlers.

SUMMARY

The change of attitude on the part of the Mexican officials at Santa Fe which came with the successful conclusion of the Mexican Revolution in 1812 opened the doors of trade to the American traders. No longer were the Americans imprisoned, but they were now welcomed and even encouraged to bring their goods into the merchandise-starved northern provinces of Mexico.

With the arrival of the Becknell, James, and Glenn parties in Santa Fe during 1821, trade was opened and the foundations were laid for a prosperous commercial intercourse which lasted for many years. Each of the three leaders had a hand in pioneering that great commercial ribbon—The Santa Fe Trail. However, to Becknell, who led the first wagon train to the Southwest, must go the credit of opening the Santa Fe Trail. The glowing success which most of the early traders experienced and the predictions of riches to be gained from trade with the Mexican provinces led Senator Benton of Missouri to begin agitation for the formal establishment of a "road" to Santa Fe. His efforts ended successfully with the negotiation of treaties with the Indian tribes of the area and the survey of a road between Missouri and Santa Fe. In 1825, the survey was made under the guidance of George C. Sibley, chairman of the Santa Fe Road Commission.

If we can say that the road to Santa Fe was opened by those interested primarily in commerce, we can also say that the routes westward from Santa Fe were the ones that came into being as a result of the activities of the trappers. Santa Fe, for these adventurous souls, became only a stopping point and a supply center before pushing westward into the wilderness.

While the trappers were not as welcome in New Mexico as the traders, they were tolerated; and in some cases, even encouraged to trap, as long as they would take a specified number of Mexican nationals in the parties and teach them the art of beaver hunting. The extreme northern part of the provinces, in the mountains of what is now Colorado and Utah, had been clandestinely trapped for a number of years by the trappers who found their way into the region by way of the Missouri, the Platte, or the Arkansas; but the southern streams were virgin territory for the trappers.

As was the case in the upper Missouri region, the ever-extending search for beaver led to the establishment of routes of communication. The period 1820 to 1830 saw the establishment of the southern routes from Missouri to California just as the northern routes were pioneered in the same period.

From 1821 to 1823, the fur trade in the Southwest was largely confined to the Rio Grande and its tributaries. The trapping activities of the men who accompanied Becknell, James, and Glenn extended into practically every tributary of that great river. Ewing Young and William Wolfskill began their trapping careers on the waters of the Pecos in the fall of 1822. The whole San Luis Valley in Colorado had been trapped in 1821 by Glenn's men, under the leadership of Jacob Fowler. Hill estimated that, "In all there were upwards of a hundred men engaged in the trade during this period."[51]

The years 1824-1826 saw the advance into and exploration of the drainage of the Colorado River. By 1826, parties under Sylvster Pattie, Ewing Young, Michael Robideau, George Yount and others had traversed the course of the Gila to its confluence with the Colorado. In the process, they had discovered and trapped practically every tributary of that river as well as those southern tributaries to the Green. Hill estimates of this period that, "The number of American trappers engaged in the business during this period reached into the hundreds, and the beaver fur that was caught brought the trappers more than a hundred thousand dollars."[52]

The next phase in the ever-westward quest for beaver embraced the years 1826-1832. This period saw the opening of the trappers' trails to California. Men such as Pattie, Jackson, Young, Armijo and Wolfskill pioneered trails from the New Mexico settlements to California.

This period also saw the climax to the fur trade in the Southwest. The attention of both Mexicans and Americans, largely, turned from trapping to trading. The trails pioneered by the trappers now saw caravans of merchandise going to California, and herds of horses and mules returning to New Mexico. Some trapping continued, but these trappers were mostly outfitted and dispatched from the trading posts which had been established on the Uinta and Arkansas Rivers.

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[51] Joseph J. Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 4.