

Fur trappers in Idaho's Lost Rivers region in the early 1800s

This essay begins by situating two rival nations, then it introduces five relevant commercial enterprises, and then it introduces four leaders of trapping expeditions. It finally reaches its main objective of delivering a narrative of events relevant to southern Idaho and, with increasing focus, to the Lost Rivers region. Readers may prefer to jump to Part IV, but when they find themselves wondering why various Scotsmen coming from the west were, on behalf of British companies, fighting each other over beaver in the present United States, they can consult Parts I to III. ¹

I. Two nations and their shared vacuity of governance

In the early 1800s, many peoples or nations claimed parts or all of the region around the Columbia River. The claimants with history on their side in southern Idaho were the various tribes of Native Americans, including the Shoshoni, Bannock, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce. Two other claimants were distant nations with no historical claims but great ambitions, the **United States** and **Great Britain**. Those nations had emerged from the War of 1812 with competing claims to the Pacific Northwest but little desire to renew hostilities. As a result, a stalemate in negotiations led to the Convention or Treaty of 1818, wherein the two nations agreed to ten years of joint occupation of what the US called the Oregon Country and Britain called the Columbia District. The territory in question was roughly modern southern British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, from the southern borders of Oregon and Idaho northward to southeastern-most Alaska, and west of the Continental Divide (Fig. 1). Renewed negotiations in the mid-1820s were no more successful than those of 1818, and the Convention was renewed indefinitely in 1828. The present international border was finally agreed upon with the Oregon Treaty of 1846. The result of the Convention of 1818 was that the Oregon country became a region with essentially no government, legal system, or enforcement of law for the twenty-eight years from 1818 to 1846.²

II. The five relevant commercial enterprises

The five relevant commercial enterprises are presented in order of their appearance in the history of southern Idaho.

The **Missouri Fur Company** (also known as the St. Louis Missouri Fur Company or the Manuel Lisa Trading Company) was formed in 1809 in St. Louis by trappers and traders that included William Clark (co-captain of the Lewis and Clark Expedition), Reuben Lewis (brother of Meriwether Lewis, the other co-captain of the Lewis and Clark Expedition), Manuel Lisa (a trader with many ties to Native American tribes across the Midwest, and Andrew Henry (who set up the Company's short-lived trading post in Idaho). The company was dissolved in 1824, and its successor company was dissolved in 1830, because they could not compete with the Hudson's Bay Company and the American Fur Company.³

The **Pacific Fur Company** was founded in 1810 by John Jacob Astor, a German immigrant to the United States. Astor had already founded the American Fur Company in 1808, but the subsidiary Pacific Fur Company's objective was to expand Astor's operations into the Pacific Northwest. That plan called for two parties to go in 1811 to the mouth of the Columbia River, one by sea around Cape Horn and one overland westward from St. Louis. The ship arrived first, and its crew built Fort Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia at present Astoria, Oregon. The overland party was more relevant to Idaho's history (see Section IVA), but the arrival of the first Astorians over the Pacific makes the name "Pacific Fur Company" quite appropriate.

Astor's plan for the PFC collapsed when the War of 1812 began. His partners at the newly built Fort Astoria realized that they were defenseless against the British-owned and more established North West Company (and against the British Navy), and they made the best of the situation by selling Fort Astoria and the rest of the PFC's assets in the Oregon Country to the North West Company. Fort Astoria was immediately renamed Fort George and was the headquarters for the North West Company and then Hudson's Bay Company on the lower Columbia until the HBC's construction of Fort Vancouver in 1824-1825.

The parent American Fur Company went on to become one of the largest and wealthiest businesses in the country, but Astor left the company in 1830, the company declared bankruptcy in 1842, and it ultimately ceased trading in 1847. Astor was the first multi-millionaire in the United States and, at the time of his death in 1848, he was the wealthiest person in the United States.⁴

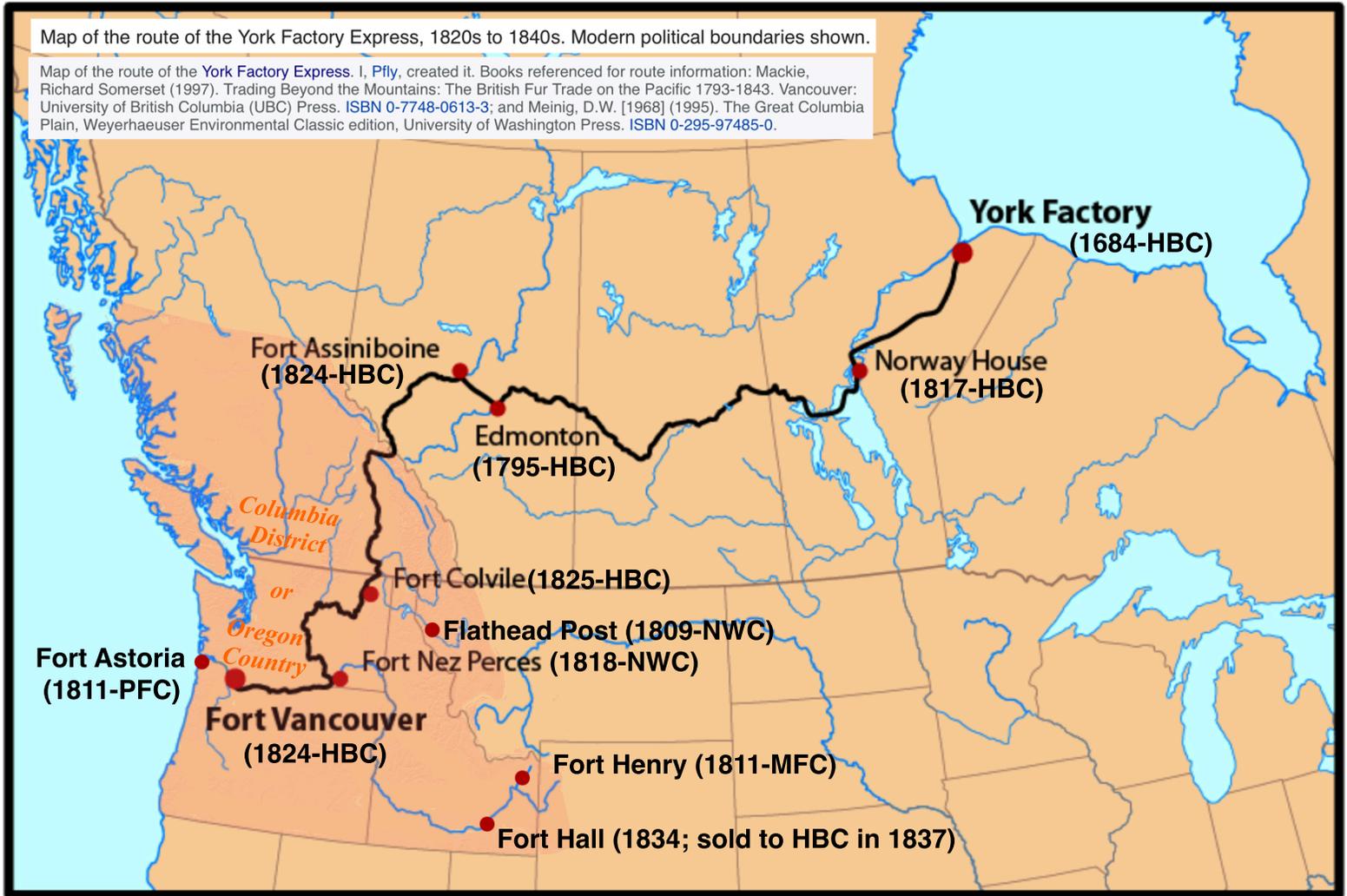
The **North West Company** was a fur trading business founded in 1779 and headquartered in Montreal. It competed against the Hudson's Bay Company in what is present-day western Canada, with increasing success. In 1818 it built Fort Nez Percés at the confluence of the Walla Walla and the Columbia, just downstream from the confluence of the Snake and the Columbia, near modern Wallula in eastern Washington. Fort Nez Percés became the departure point for many expeditions to southern Idaho.

The North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company competed for great wealth, and tensions between the companies increased to the point that forts were burned and more than a few people were killed in the Pemmican War between the two companies. In 1821, hostilities had become so extreme that the two companies were forced by the British government to merge, so that the North West Company was forcibly integrated into the Hudson's Bay Company. The North West Company thus, in some sense, survives today.⁵

The **Hudson's Bay Company** was incorporated by an English royal charter in 1670. A commercial enterprise, it nonetheless functioned as the *de facto* government in parts of North America for nearly 200 years. Until 1869, it owned the entire Hudson Bay drainage basin (except for the part lost to the United States) and thus owned much of modern Canada. Its trading in the early 1800s involved annual arrival of ships from Britain in Hudson's Bay, and transit of goods back and forth from there to the Oregon country over the York Factory Express, a 2,600-mile system of rivers and trails from Hudson's Bay to Fort Vancouver near the mouth of the Columbia River. At its peak, the company controlled the fur trade throughout much of British-controlled

Map of the route of the York Factory Express, 1820s to 1840s. Modern political boundaries shown.

Map of the route of the York Factory Express. I, Pfly, created it. Books referenced for route information: Mackie, Richard Somerset (1997). Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific 1793-1843. Vancouver: University of British Columbia (UBC) Press. ISBN 0-7748-0613-3; and Meinig, D.W. [1968] (1995). The Great Columbia Plain, Weyerhaeuser Environmental Classic edition, University of Washington Press. ISBN 0-295-97485-0.



en.wikipedia.org/wiki/York_Factory_Express#/media/File:York-Factory-Express

Fig. 1. Map showing the path of the Hudson's Bay Company's "York Factory Express" in black and various companies' trading posts and headquarters with red dots. The original map is from Wikipedia's page on the York Factory Express, and the original caption is shown. Fort Astoria, Fort Henry, Fort Hall, and Flathead Post have been added. The Columbia District or Oregon Country (the UK and US expressions, respectively) is overlain with red. Note that the HBC was not a factor in the Oregon country until after its assimilation of the NWC in the early 1820s.

North America. In 2020 it remained a publicly traded company with department stores across Canada.⁶

The Hudson's Bay Company became relevant to the Oregon country when the HBC assimilated the North West Company in 1821. Sir George Simpson was a governor of the HBC controlling the company's activities in the Oregon Country, and his main strategic goal was to prevent American encroachment there and thus to protect HBC trappings grounds to the northwest in modern British Columbia. To accomplish that goal, he sent fur-trapping brigades into southern Idaho with the explicit mission of trapping the beavers to extinction, so that American trappers like those of the American Fur Company would have no reason to come into the Oregon country.⁶

The **Rocky Mountain Fur Company** was founded in 1822 in St. Louis, Missouri, by Major Andrew Henry (much earlier of the Missouri Fur Company) and General William Ashley. Its partners and/or employees included Jedediah Smith, Jim Bridger, and William Sublette. The RMFC was dissolved in 1834 in the face of stiff competition from the American Fur Company and because of declining fur prices as Europeans lost interest in beaver hats, perhaps as the Little Ice Age came to an end.⁷

III. Four leaders of trapping brigades

The North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company organized their efforts into "brigades" that typically consisted of a Euro-American leader, one or more Euro-American adjutants, a crew of trappers who were largely men of both European and Native American ancestry, and the families of those trappers. These people led rough lives, traveling on horses or walking across a landscape with at most Native American trails for roads, eating whatever they hunted or found, camping wherever the landscape allowed, subject to loss of their horses to mismanagement or thievery, and wintering in the most forgiving canyon they could find. The leaders faced the challenge that the participants (and the leaders themselves) depended on each other greatly for their survival, but none of them would have been in a trapping brigade in the wilderness if they had been well-socialized people.⁸

Donald McKenzie (1783 Scotland – 1851 New York) began his career as a clerk for the North West Company in 1801 but in 1810 became one of Astor's original partners in the Pacific Fur Company. He was a member of the PFC's party going overland from St. Louis to Fort Astoria by way of southern Idaho and, as that party fell apart, he led the detachment that reached Fort Astoria first. He was one of the partners who sold the PFC's interests to the North West Company, earning Astor's enmity, and eventually he went back to work for the North West Company. He built Fort Nez Percés in 1818 for the NWC, and in 1819 to 1820 he led a trapping brigade into the Lost Rivers country. He seems to have been a good leader and was trusted by Native Americans as a negotiator, but he is a frustration to historians because, despite a brigade leader's obligation to keep a journal, he produced at best scant records of his adventures. In his old age he began writing a memoir, but his wife burned his papers and he never resumed.⁹

Alexander Ross (1783 Scotland – 1856 Manitoba) joined the Pacific Fur Company in 1810 and was a member of the PFC’s party going by ship around South America to Fort Astoria. When the Fort was sold to the North West Company in 1813, he joined that company. With McKenzie, he built Fort Nez Percés in 1818, and he was in charge of the fort thereafter while Mackenzie led brigades into the Snake River country. After the HBC’s assimilation of the NWC, in 1824 he led an HBC brigade into the Lost Rivers country. He was not assigned a further brigade, seeming because he was not an effective leader in the field, but he was an enthusiastic writer, producing two books, *Adventures on the Columbia* in 1849 and *The Fur Hunters of the Far West* in 1855.¹⁰

Peter Skene Ogden (1790 Quebec – 1854 Oregon) was born into a family of lawyers but joined the North West Company in 1809. He became one of the most violent combatants in the Pemmican War between the NWC and the HBC, and he deliberately and brutally killed a man solely because the latter had traded with the HBC. As a result, the NWC transferred Ogden to its Columbia department in 1818 to get him out of reach of Canadian legal authorities who wanted to try him for murder. When the HBC assimilated the NWC in 1821, Ogden was unsurprisingly not included, but by 1823 the HBC hired him, and he went on to lead six expeditions from 1824 to 1830, including at least one to the Lost Rivers Region in 1827 to 1828. He was a hard but effective leader, and his journals suggest he was also a prescient hydrologist: his journal entry for November 16, 1827, at the edge of the Snake River Plain says “The waters of Goddin's and Day's River [the Big Lost and Little Lost] disappear at the entrance of this plain and take a subterranean route to Snake River”. As the result of his explorations to the south, the city of Ogden, Utah, was named after him.¹¹

John Work (originally Wark) (1792 Ireland – 1861 British Columbia) joined the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1814 and thus is the only leader of the four here who did not work for the North West Company before their service to the HBC. In August 1830, Work was appointed successor to Peter Skene Ogden in charge of the Snake country brigade, and he led two expeditions to Idaho in 1830-1831 and 1831-1832, the last such expeditions because Work reported that beaver had become scarce. Work was an effective leader, a relatively ethical trader, and the best keeper of a journal.¹²

IV. A history of fur trappers in southern Idaho and specifically the Lost Rivers region

IV A. *The Snake River 1810-1812*

The United States’ Lewis and Clark Expedition had crossed northern Idaho in 1805 and 1806, but southern Idaho remained unknown to Euro-Americans and to the nearest British interest, the North West Company. A member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, **John Colter**, explored the Yellowstone region in 1807-1808 and in doing seemingly crossed Teton Pass into Pierre’s Hole in modern Teton County, Idaho. The only legacy of his visit is a stone on which he appears to have carved his name and “1808”.¹³

The first Euro-American leader of a trapping into the region seems to have been **Andrew Henry**, who set up a fort for the Missouri Fur Company on the Henry’s Fork of the Snake River in the fall of 1810. The fort was about five miles downstream from modern St. Anthony and was

the first structure erected by Euro-Americans in Idaho. Henry abandoned the fort in the spring of 1811, but it was re-occupied briefly in late 1811 by the Pacific Fur Company's overland party. Memory of the fort persists in the name "Henry's Fork" for the headwater tributary of the Snake River (and thus of the Columbia River system) on which it sat.¹⁴

The Pacific Fur Company's overland party consisted of about 60 men led by **Wilson Price Hunt**, with Donald McKenzie serving as an adjutant more experienced in wilderness exploration. The party departed from St. Louis in late 1810 and wintered along the Missouri River north of modern Kansas City; the forty-year-old John Day came across them there and joined the party. In April 1811 they set off again up the Missouri. Near modern Pierre, South Dakota, they bought horses from the Arikara and made their way west, reaching Fort Henry in easternmost Idaho in September or October of 1811. Knowing that they were now in the headwaters of the Columbia, the men wanted to build boats and make an easy descent down the river to the Pacific. Hunt reluctantly agreed and set their horses loose, in retrospect a huge blunder. The river turned out to be un-navigable, and after loss of at least one of their men and two of their canoes, the expedition broke up into two or three parties and set out on foot on brutal months-long hikes down both sides of the Snake to the Pacific, suffering from starvation and dehydration as well as from the cold of the oncoming winter. Day fell sick, and he and his friend Ramsay Crooks were left behind along the banks of Snake. When Day recovered, the two proceeded onward, but along the Columbia they were stripped of their possessions and clothing by a native group and left to fend for themselves at the mouth of the modern John Day River. They eventually found a friendly Native American who saved them, and a Pacific Fur Company party eventually by chance came by boat along the river and picked them up.

Donald McKenzie's group was the first of the overland party to arrive in emaciated condition at Fort Astoria on January 18, 1812. The main party arrived on February 15, and Day and Crooks got there in May. The result of this trek relevant to Idaho was that trappers, and most notably McKenzie, now understood the path of the Snake River (or "Lewis's River") across southern Idaho. McKenzie may not have had fond memories of the Snake itself, but he would return to explore its tributaries and surrounding valleys, including those of the Lost Rivers region.¹⁵

IV B. Southern Idaho 1814-1820

An abortive excursion into Idaho was made by **John Reed or Reid**, a fur trader formerly of the Pacific Fur Company who set up a post at the confluence of the Skam-naugh River (later Reed's and now the Boise River) with the Snake River in 1813 or early 1814. However, he and two other men were killed there in January 1814, and his only reward was that the Skam-naugh was called "Reed's River" before being called the Boise.¹⁶

The North West Company's construction of Fort Nez Percés just downstream from the confluence of the Snake and Columbia in 1818 established a launching point for trapping expeditions into southern Idaho. In September 1818 a brigade led by **Donald McKenzie** left the fort and, like many later expeditions, did not go up the Snake River itself but instead crossed the Blue Mountains into southwestern Idaho. After reaching the mouth of the Skam-naugh (now Boise) River, he began a huge loop to the southern headwaters of the Snake in northwestern Wyoming. In making this venture he found "great quantities of red deer, wolves, foxes, raccoon,

marten, black foxes, badgers, grizzly bear, mountain sheep and goats, eagles, vultures, and other birds. He noted that all were comparatively tame and often ran but a short distance at the firing of a gun.” This trip included a pass along the Little Wood River, and it may have been on this trip that McKenzie’s party fell sick and gave the Malad River its name. McKenzie and his party then returned to Fort Nez Percés, probably early in 1819.¹⁷

IV C. The Lost Rivers Country 1820-1832

The indefatigable McKenzie soon left Fort Nez Percés in the spring of 1819 but took a new route, going by boat up the Snake rather than over the Blue Mountains. He succeeded and reported that it was a viable if challenging route, but neither he nor his successors tried it again, instead using the land route over the Blue Mountains. On this trip he was re-supplied by, and offloaded his furs to, a party led by William Kittson, an NWC clerk, so that McKenzie could go longer from Fort Nez Percés. On this expedition (if not earlier), McKenzie entered the valley of the modern Big Lost River, and in honor of Thyery Goddin, the scout who seemingly first encountered the river for the party, that river was called “Goddin’s River”. The expedition spent the winter of 1819-1820 in the modern Little Lost. It was there that John Day, the American trapper after whom two rivers, two towns, and a national monument in Oregon are named, died on February 16, 1820, and thereafter the valley was known to trappers as “Day’s Defile”. It was also there that McKenzie hosted a peace conference of the local Shoshoni, Bannock, and Nez Perce to end their conflicts and thus allow more development of the fur trade. McKenzie’s wintering site of 1819-1820 became a much-used location: Ross camped there on June 2, 1824; Ogden on March 31, 1825 and November 11, 1827, and Work on December 2, 1830.¹⁹

McKenzie’s party headed west in the spring of 1820 and from the present location of Arco used the route to the west through the Camas Prairie long popular with the Shoshone and later used by Goodale’s Cutoff. They returned on July 10, 1821, with a catch even bigger than that of the preceding year, and without the loss of a single man. At that point Donald McKenzie came to the end of his five-year contract and retired from leading brigades.¹⁹

In 1822, Michael Bourdon led an HBC brigade into the upper reaches of the Salmon.²⁰ In 1822 or 1823, an HBC brigade led by Finnan MacDonald encountered a Blackfoot band in the headwaters of the Missouri, and a battle ensued in which several combatants on both sides were killed. That and McKenzie’s retirement seem to have led to a two-year hiatus in Lost Rivers activity. That pause ended when **Alexander Ross** led a brigade from Saleesh House, also known as Flathead Post, in western Montana in February 1824 to enter southern Idaho from the northeast. Ross’s brigade came through Lemhi Pass over the Beaverheads into Idaho and thus into the Lemhi River Valley in late April. They soon went downstream to the Salmon, and then moved up the Salmon River.²¹

By May 9, 1824, Ross’s brigade was in the Pahsimeroi Valley, and by May 12 they were near the divide between the Pahsimeroi and Little Lost. Ross went on to report seeing “a little farther on the three knobs so conspicuous for being seen,” the Big Southern Butte and Twin Buttes roughly fifty miles away on the Snake River Plain. However, they turned back north that day and by the night of the May 13 they were back down on the Salmon. After fruitless explorations up the Salmon beyond Challis, they turned south and on May 29 they came over

Willow Creek Summit and descended into the valley of Goddin's River (the Big Lost River), with Goddin presumably in the lead. Having seen more game in the Pahsimeroi, they left a small party in Goddin's and crossed over Doublesprings Pass into the Pahsimeroi Valley again, up the Pahsimeroi, and into the valley of the Little Lost River, near Hawley Mountain and Bell Mountain. On June 7th the party went up Wet Creek and over Pass Creek Summit back into the drainage of Goddin's River, camping that night near modern Leslie. Reunion with the small detached party ultimately required going down-valley to the Snake River Plain, where Ross went to see the Three Buttes. They then went back up the valley, camping on June 11 near modern Mackay. From there they went up the path of modern Trail Creek Road, and on June 16, 1824, they crossed over the top to the valley of Trail Creek. The rest of the summer was spent in a huge excursion across the Camas Prairie to modern Boise and back, and then up over Galena Summit to Stanley and from there down to modern Challis and Salmon again. On the way back, a detachment of the brigade encountered an Euro-American trapping party led by Jedediah Smith, and despite his misgivings Ross let the Americans accompany the brigade back to Flathead House, both giving aid to the enemy and giving the latter a glimpse of the HBC's workings.²¹

Ross's performance was disappointing to the HBC, perhaps in part because of the Jedediah Smith incident, and he was replaced with the more indomitable **Peter Skene Ogden**, whom William Kittson and Charles McKay would serve as adjutants. Ogden's "Snake country expeditions" encompassed a much wider area that included parts of California, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming. It was to Ogden that Simpson delivered in 1824 the explicit charge that although "if properly managed no question exists that [the region] would yield handsome profits [because it was] a rich preserve of Beaver", in fact Ogden and the HBC "should endeavour to destroy [the beaver] as fast as possible" to keep trappers from the United States out of the "jointly occupied" (i.e., hotly disputed) Oregon country.²²

Ogden, Kittson, and McKay left Fort Vancouver on the Columbia in August 1827. In Idaho they went east on the Shoshone-McKenzie-Goodale track through the Camas Prairie to the Lost Rivers country. Leaving McKay with a detachment on the Salmon or lower Pahsimeroi, Ogden came down the Little Lost and, after pausing at the mouth of the Big Lost River valley on November 16, 1827, dashed across the Snake River Plain to the Snake and the Portneuf. The winter of 1827-1828 was so harsh that Ogden feared that the McKay party had not survived. The parties were indeed not reunited until May, and by then so many horses had died and/or been used for food that transporting furs down the valley was a great challenge. Nonetheless, the brigade reached Fort Nez Percés on July 19, 1828, with a load estimated to the been more than three thousand beaver skins.²³ One outgrowth was Kittson's production of a map showing, in the context of their many expeditions, the Lost Rivers country in more detail than seen ever before and for decades thereafter (Fig. 2).

In August 1830, **John Work** was appointed successor to Peter Skene Ogden as leader of the Snake country brigade, and in the following two years he led two expeditions. In the first, he led his brigade roughly 2,000 miles into what is now eastern Idaho, northwestern Utah, and along the Humboldt River in Nevada, where Ogden had gone. In the Idaho segment, he came east across the Camas Prairie in September 1830, and lost three men to an attack by the Blackfeet. He



Fig. 2. A small part of William Kittson's map of the Hudson's Bay Company's expeditions to the Snake River country in the 1820s. This snippet shows the Lost Rivers country's three rivers as they were known to the fur trappers: Goddin's River (the Big Lost River), [John] Day's River (the Little Lost), and Burch Forks (Birch Creek). The "River Malade" is today's Wood River, and the "Trois Monts" are the Big and Twin Buttes of the Snake Plain. The dotted lines show schematically the path of Ogden's brigade in the late 1820s. The Hudson's Bay Company stamp was elsewhere on the large map but added here.

proceeded across the Malad River country, and in October to December his brigade made a circuit through Goddin's and Day's valleys (the valleys of the Big Lost and Little Lost Rivers), reaching "the fountains (the Thousand Springs below Willow Creek Summit) on October 20, 1830. Around December 15, 1830, they departed the area and crossed the Snake River Plain.²⁴

The furs returned from Work's first expedition were profitable but disappointing, and Work recommended cessation of the annual Snake country brigades. One more brigade was nonetheless dispatched, and so Work went up the Clearwater and into Montana's Flathead country in late 1831. He then came south, much like Ross in 1824, and over the Beaverhead Mountains into the Lemhi and Salmon River Valleys. From April 9 to 30, 1832, his brigade made its way from Willow Creek Summit into "the land of the fountain" (Thousand Springs) and down "Goddin's Defile" (the valley of the Big Lost River). They wanted to go out over Trail Creek Summit and later perhaps over Pass Creek, consistent with the NWC/HBC tendency to prefer to get out of Goddin's Defile, but weathered prevented them from doing so. They proceeded down-valley and finally went up "the Masky" (Antelope Creek) on April 30 and crossed over into the drainage of "the Sickly River" (specifically into the east fork of the Little Wood River, in the Malad drainage). From there they took the customary path west. The returns from the expedition were minimal, both because of the HBC's eradication program and the trapping by Euro-Americans, and in an 1832 document Simpson recommended that the HBC withdraw from the Snake country, which it did.²⁵

The extent to which Euro-Americans continued to trap in the region is unclear, in part because companies like the Rocky Mountain Fur Company did not have the HBC's institutional dedication to journals and archives.²⁶ Furthermore, whereas the NWC and HBC would keep records of money or goods paid for furs, American companies like the Rocky Mountain Fur Company would have kept records less because they paid Native Americans for furs with alcohol.²⁷ As noted above, Ross's brigade encountered a party led by Jedidiah Smith in the Pahsimeroi in October, 1824, and he let them travel with him to Flathead House, and the same party left Flathead House with Ogden's brigade later that year. William Sublette brought a Rocky Mountain Fur Company party into the Lost Rivers country in 1828, a venture including a clash in the Birch Creek Valley with the Blackfoot in which Joseph Cote was killed, leading to the name of "Cote's Defile" for that valley. Work's journals certainly report many American trapping parties, whom he envied a bit because those parties did not include the trapper's families. A party for the American Fur Company explored Stanley Basin in 1831. Captain Benjamin Bonneville in 1832 or 1833 explored the Salmon near the modern city of that name but found few beaver, perhaps a testimony to the HBC's thoroughness. The American trappers' Rendezvous of 1832 was held at Pierre's Hole in modern Teton County, Idaho, attracting hundreds of participants. It degenerated into the Battle of Pierre's Hole in which at least twenty-six Gros Ventres were killed, including some women and children, and roughly a dozen traders and allied Flatheads were killed. Of the sixteen runnings of the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous from 1825 to 1840, that of 1832 was the only one in Idaho (and barely so, geographically).²⁸

IV D. Results

The results of fur trapping in the Lost Rivers region and more broadly in southern Idaho range from the spectacular to the irrelevant. Spectacularly bad was the deliberate destruction of the valleys' beaver-based ecosystem, reducing if not eliminating the many species of plants, fish, birds, and mammals in that ecosystem. Spectacularly bad was the effect of damage to the ecosystems, and other effects, on the Native American populations of the region (the Blackfeet seemingly agreed strongly). Spectacular if short-lived was the number of beaver hats in Europe and the quantity of wealth accumulated by the Hudson's Bay Company and John Jacob Astor.

"Irrelevant" characterizes the impact of the fur-trapping movement on the later human history of the region. The trapper's names of rivers and valleys (e.g., "Goddin's River", "Day's Defile", "Cote's Defile") were soon forgotten. More significantly, the geography of the rivers, valleys, and mountain ranges was forgotten or sequestered. As a result, maps of the region published in the 1840s to 1860s left the Lost Rivers country completely blank, and maps into the late 1800s were still not as good as Kittson's map sitting deep (in the opinion of some, hidden) in the archives of the Hudson's Bay Company in London.

More significantly, the protagonists of the era did not accomplish their goal of keeping Euro-Americans out of the Oregon country. Both the Hudson's Bay Company, with its attempt to eliminate beaver as an attraction for American trappers, and the Native Americans, with their various forms of resistance to Euro-American encroachment, vastly underestimated the tsunami of Euro-American population that would sweep west in the 1800s to cover the landscape with stagecoach lines, ranches, farms, mines, towns, schools, churches, railroads, highways, cities, nuclear reactors, and national monuments.

1. Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series item 246 on “Lemhi – Lost River Fur Trade” was, unlike this document, written by an expert. However, its three pages may not provide the context needed by non-experts.

2. From Wikipedia pages and from Donald B. Cole, 1968, *Handbook of American History* (New York, Harcourt Brace and World, 337 p.)

3. Entirely from Wikipedia pages.

4. Entirely from Wikipedia pages.

5. Entirely from Wikipedia pages.

6. From Wikipedia pages and from the Dictionary of Canadian Biography’s pages about George Simpson and Peter Skene Ogden.

7. Entirely from Wikipedia pages

8. The published journals of Ross and Ogden are the principal basis for these thoughts. The last sentence may sound like some familiar place.

9. From the Dictionary of Canadian Biography’s page about McKenzie, and from a note in Rich’s preface to Skene’s journal (cited below).

10. From the Dictionary of Canadian Biography’s page about Ross. Ross’s trip with the PFC’s overseas party in 1810-1811 was an interesting one, according to the DCB: “In September the party sailed for the Pacific northwest coast aboard the *Tonquin*. The voyage was a stormy one, as much the result of the abrasive character of the captain, Jonathan Thorn, as of the weather of the south Atlantic. The vessel made a short stop at the Falkland Islands to take on water, and Ross was among the group of eight or nine passengers left behind by the captain when the *Tonquin* lifted anchor on 11 December. Only after struggling for several hours against a rough sea in a boat designed for half their number did the party succeed in rejoining the vessel. According to Ross, the rescue had only been made possible by one of the PFC partners, Robert Stuart, who forced the captain at gunpoint to turn back for the boat.”

11. From the Dictionary of Canadian Biography’s page about Ogden, and from his published journal.

12. From the Dictionary of Canadian Biography’s page about Work.

13. National Park Service document on Colter’s Hell and Jackson Hole: “III. John Colter, the Phantom Explorer—1807-1808”.

14. From Marker No. 40 of the Idaho Pioneer Trails and Landmarks Association in St. Anthony, Idaho, as viewed at www.waymarking.com.

15. From Wikipedia pages about Wilson Price Hunt, the Pacific Fur Company, and Donald Mackenzie and from the Dictionary of Canadian Biography’s page about McKenzie. Day’s arrival at Fort Astoria is from a National Park Service document about the John Day Fossil Beds. As of January 2, 2020, Wikipedia’s PFC and WPH pages disagreed on the date of arrival at Fort Henry, and the PFC page mistook a “Donald Stuart” for Donald McKenzie as the leader of the forward detachment that reached Fort Astoria first.

16. Entirely from Wikipedia pages about Reed.

17. From the preface of Rich, E.E., ed., 1950. “Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Country journals, 1824-25 (and 1825-26)”: The Publications of the Hudson’s Bay Record Society XIII, accessed via https://archive.org/stream/ogdensnake/ogdensnake_djvu.txt . Rich mostly draws on Ross’s *The Fur Hunters*. The note about the Little Wood River is from ISHS Reference Series 86 on “Route of Alexander Ross, 1824”. Wikipedia and the Dictionary of Canadian Biography were in January 2020 of no use regarding Mackenzie’s 1818-1821 expeditions into the Snake River country.

18. Footnote for further use.

19. From Rich (1950) , Ross’s journal, and Ross’s *The Fur Hunters of the Far West : a Narrative of Adventures in the Oregon and Rocky Mountains*. Vol. I, pp. 280-281. Day’s Defile is also recorded by a historical marker along Highway 33 east of Howe. McKenzie’s conference is detailed in *Fur Hunters* vol. I

pp 249-257, the subsequent camping there is provided in Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series 246 *Lemhi – Lost River Fur Trade*.

20. From Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series 444 *Idaho Fur Trade*.

21. From Elliott, T.C., 1913, *Journal of Alexander Ross – Snake Country Expedition, 1824: The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, Vol. 14, p. 366-385; Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series Number 86: *Route of Alexander Ross, 1824*. Revised July 1990; and Ross, Alexander, 1855, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West : a Narrative of Adventures in the Oregon and Rocky Mountains*. Vol. 2, London, 290 pp. The Lost Rivers portion of the expedition is described in more detail in a Railsback document titled “Alexander Ross and Thyery Goddin in the Lost Rivers country in 1824”. Smith’s presence at Flathead House is from in Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series 246 *Lemhi – Lost River Fur Trade*. Readers should be warned that Ross had a bad habit of calling the three buttes of the Snake River Plain the Tetons.

22. From the Dictionary of Canadian Biography’s page about Ogden.

23. From Elliott, T.C., 1910, *The Peter Skene Ogden Journals: Editorial Notes*. *Oregon Historical Quarterly* v. 11, p. 355-360, and from Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series 242 *Exploration and Settlement of Salmon River*.

24. From Elliott, T.C., 1912, *Journal of John Work, Covering Snake Country Expedition of 1830-31: Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, v. 13, pp. 363-371.

25. From the Dictionary of Canadian Biography’s pages about Work, and for the details in Goddin’s Defile from Lewis, W.S., and Phillips, P.C., 1923, *The Journal of John Work*: Cleveland, The Arthur H. Clark Company, pp. 140–150.

26. Sadly, no footnote needed!

27. From the Wikipedia page on the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

28. From the Wikipedia page on Pierre’s Hole and the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous. Item about Stanley Basin and Bonneville are from Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series 242 *Exploration and Settlement of Salmon River*. Smith’s presence at Flathead House and Sublette’s activity in Cote’s Defile are recorded in Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series 246 *Lemhi – Lost River Fur Trade*.

Bruce Railsback, 2020