

A TRIP TO YELLOWSTONE AND THE OREGON COUNTRY IN 1834

A century ago this year my great-grandfather, Wm. Marshall Anderson, made a trip on horseback from Kentucky to Yellowstone and the Oregon Country. A native of Kentucky, he was the nephew of the great John Marshall. Leaving Louisville in March, 1834, he went to St. Louis where he had hoped to join the dragoons of the Pawnee-Pic expedition commanded by his relative Gen. Atkinson. Although he had a letter to General Dodge too, this did not work out. On General Atkinson's advice he accepted the invitation of the famed fur-trader Capt. Wm. Sublette to accompany him to the Rocky Mountains.

The party left St. Louis April 26, 1834, for a rendezvous near Lexington, Missouri. Wm. Anderson had named his horse "Blackhawk" because of the participation of his brother Robert in the Blackhawk campaign. Later Robert Anderson commanded Fort Sumpter, was a Union General, and founded the National Soldiers' Home in Washington, D. C. Wm. Anderson was much impressed by the fertility of the valley between St. Louis and Independence which he said was "now the very verge of civilization." He described the recent Mormon strife there.

On May 7, 1834, the party camped on the Kansas river at General Marston G. Clark's Indian agency. He and Wm. Anderson talked of mutual friends and relatives. Now far out on the Great Plains, the group crossed the Platte and headed for the Black Hills. On June 1, he wrote, "This day we laid the foundation log of a fort on Laramee's fork." He and Captain Sublette each wanted to name it for the other. They compromised, both being named William, and so Fort William was christened. He said in his little leather-bound journal, "From the top of the Black Hills I got my first view of the Rocky Mountains—the snow-covered mountains. My eyes have been fastened on them all day."

In the Rockies they met trappers who had been away from civilization for from three to twelve years, bringing the freshest news in three years to one band of French and American trappers of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. On June 14, 1834, Wm. Anderson raised the first American flag seen in that part of the Rockies, to the cheers of the fur-men.

Wm. Anderson met Nez Percés and Flatheads as they came into Sublette's camp in what is now the state of Idaho, to trade. One

chief was very friendly when he heard Wm. Anderson was a relative of the explorer William Clark, and embraced him, telling him of his boyhood recollections of the great expedition. Wm. Anderson's blonde hair was much admired by the Indians. The same Flat-head chief who remembered Clark gave Wm. Anderson a grizzly skin, complete with head and claws.

June 18, he wrote, "Capt. Wyeth of Boston who left the settlements ten days before us, came into camp this evening. He is on his way to the mouth of the Columbia River, where he expects a vessel, freighted with merchandise to be exchanged for furs, salmon, etc. I have declined an invitation to accompany him, although his return trip by way of the Sandwich Islands is a strong temptation. I think I am far enough away from home for this time."

"Mr. Edward Christy of St. Louis has just arrived from Fort Vancouver, bringing with him a considerable number of Snakes and Nez Perces." Fifteen hundred Indians were encamped around Sublette to trade. Sublette met an old friend "Rotten Belly," a Nez Perce. Both had been wounded together in a fight against the terrible and hated Blackfeet, the brave being shot in the belly.

Wm. Marshall Anderson noted that all the mountain tribes had a similar name for Americans, it being the native word for "long-knife," "sword," or "big-blade." He described Indians, buffalo herds and hunts, scenery of mountain and plains, and the fur trappers and traders of the remote Oregon Country of one hundred years ago.

My grandfather, General T. M. Anderson, for whom Mt. Anderson in the Olympics is named, served at many frontier army posts before commanding Vancouver Barracks, Washington, from 1886 to 1898. In 1898 he led half of the forces that captured Manila, being the first American general to command an army overseas.

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