

DAVID THOMPSON'S JOURNEYS IN THE PEND OREILLE COUNTRY

Pend Oreille County, the youngest in Washington (set off in 1911), perpetuates a peculiar distinction in nomenclature. The name is French; Pend d'Oreille until officially abbreviated. It originated when the country, and practically the entire Pacific Northwest, was an unexplored wilderness and the fur trade just finding its way across the barrier of the Rocky Mountains. David Thompson, a field-partner in the North West Company, after discovering the source of the Columbia River wrote (in September, 1807) about the Kootenai Indians "these people hunt in lands adjoining the Ear Pendant Indians." His report¹ was written in English but the information had come to him from trappers and hunters of mixed or full Iroquois and French blood who had already penetrated the water-sheds to the southward. These unlettered free-hunters had observed some trivial peculiarity of ornament or shape of the ears of the Indians living near certain rich camas grounds (north of Calispell lake) bordering upon a beautiful river which flowed from a large lake and called them the Pend d'Oreilles. Thompson later interpreted their native name as Kullyspell and so mapped it. Thus both the Indian and French speech became a part of the earliest history of Pend Oreille County, and its legal title is, technically speaking, a nickname.

The first white man known to have visited Pend Oreille County was David Thompson, fur trader; a very remarkable man, whose career has already been mentioned in this *Quarterly*. He it was who initiated commerce in the Pacific Northwest, excepting that from vessels along the coast. Traveling by way of the Kootenai River, with clerk (Finan McDonald), voyageurs, hunters and servants he arrived September 9th, 1809, at Pend Oreille Lake and began building a trading post called Kullyspell House a few miles southeast of Hope, Idaho. While this was going on, he made a ten days journey of exploration down the Pend Oreille River. He traveled on horseback along the north side of the river, where Indian trails usually ran. He kept a journal, which is now a valuable part of the archives of the Province of Ontario, Canada. The following entries have been copied from this journal. As his compass was broken at the start it is assumed that the courses were estimated and the dis-

¹ See *Oregon Historical Quarterly* for March, 1925.

tances certainly were. Close annotation cannot be made until the next of the series.

Thomposon made two other journeys down the Pend Oreille River, in April, 1810, and June, 1811, which will appear in the series to follow. The United States Geographic Board has displaced the name Pend Oreille from the river, which is now the Clark Fork from source to mouth but locally the name is still used from the lake to the Columbia.

Journal of David Thompson; Sept. 26-Oct. 6, 1809.

September 27 Wednesday A rainy cold Mornng & blowing cloudy Day crossed the Horses & sent those not wanted to the north Bay—2 Fish in the small nets, the other 2 have stood 2 nights, one of them set parallel to the Beach caught 11 Fish, the other tho twice its length, was set perpendicular to the Beach & caught nothing—At noon in company with Beaulieu an Indian lad with 4 Horses I set off to examine the Country below us, that we may if possible change our route to the Mountain Portage for the one we now practise is entirely open to the incursion of the Meadow Indians. We set off, but I did not take the Courses, as I wish to get first a good Idea of the Lake &c We took $\frac{3}{4}$ of a * (hour) to cross the Isthmus here we took the 4th Horse at 1*-12' PM round the Bay² then onward to the green Bay & Brook,³ where we camped in the beg. of this month. 3*-13' PM then to the farther end of the other great green Bay⁴ when we put up at 5 *-25' PM Killed a dwarf Goose there are many Cranes, dwarf Geese & Ducks, but the Marsh is so open they cannot be approached.

September 28th Thursday A cold cloudy morning. Wind northerly at 6*-50' AM set off upon taking out my Compass found by accident the Glass had fallen out& the needle lost, which I much regret especially as the weather is cloudy. We held on along the Lake till 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ A.M. having gone abt S 12M to the Head of the river, on a jog Trot all the way the Ground near the Lake is low & often muddy & wet, with high Hills a small distance within—plenty of water Fowl, but no shelter for the sportsman—For these 5 days past the leaves have been withering much on the Hills, half of them are already fallen off & those of willows &c are in the same state the Poplar Aspin, Birch, Alder &c are getting past yellow, & a few falling off. .at 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ AM we stopped to Breakfast & refresh our

² Arm of the lake fronting East Hope, Idaho.

³ Pack River.

⁴ Near town of Kootenai, Idaho.

Horses $\frac{1}{4}$ M down the River⁵ The River is here abt 350 to 400 yds wide very easy Current & shoal near the shore & its sides are fine covered with Grass & the woods at $\frac{1}{2}$ PM we again set off soon after the sun appearing I take the Courses to be from where we started abt SW 2M S 30 W 1M S 25 W 6 M S 60 W 4 M S 75 W 1 M N 35 W 2 M mid of Co put up⁶ at 5* 35' PM having trotted all along with very little delay Abt $4\frac{1}{2}$ PM our Baggage got partly wet by the Horse going into the Riv & swimming a few minutes, which wetted all our dried salmon we dried it in the evening at night cleared & I observ'd merid altde of Aquilae $100^{\circ} 26'$ Good Killed 1 dwarf Goose & 3 Partridges many swans, Geese, Ducks & Cranes abt the head of the River & all along hereto except the Swans the River always 350 to 400 yds wide with very easy Current the woods of Poplar, Aspin, Cedar, different Firs, & Fir Pine with a few White & Red Pines Plane & Alder & a variety of Shrubs &c many fine grassy Points & Bays all along the River & the Grass every where quite green, havg spung up since the water has lowered. Latde⁷ $48^{\circ} 9' 4''$ N $8^{\circ} 22' 8''$ Decn.

Sept 29th Friday A cold Night & foggy cloudy mornng Killed 2 Duck & boiled the inwards. At $8\frac{1}{2}$ AM set off & finished the Course of yesterday then went west 5 M N 80 W 2 M to the Falls⁸ which are in 2 Channels separated by an Isle of Rock in which is the Portage of abt 20 yds seemingly good & safe fished abt 20' but got nothing held on N 70 W 1 M when at $11\frac{3}{4}$ AM I stopped to observe sun Merid Altde Lt $78^{\circ} 9'$ tolerable good tho much flying misty Clouds refreshed our Horses & took a meal Rain then coming on we camped & the Rain soon became tolerable heavy. shaved, wrote off my journal &c &c Ther 64 + Rained all the evening Beaulieu 3 Mergansers Latde 47-51-22 N Decn 2-48-17

Sept 30 Saturday A rainy night & cloudy drizzling weather all day At 7 Am set off & went on down the River keeping mostly in the woods, which are of fine Red Fir, many Trees abt 3 fms round, and a chance one a little larger but the common size is about 1 to 2 fms, much gummy white Fir, but very few of the real white Fir plenty of Fir Pine &c but no Cedar or Birch Poplars & Aspins in places along the River the Ground is very dry & finely hilly but very much of it level & the high Hills seemingly distant, but we cannot see to any distce on account of the bad weather. this pre-

⁵ Near Dover, Idaho.

⁶ A few miles east of Priest River, Idaho.

⁷ This observation in 1809 checks very closely with the United States Geological Survey of the present day.

⁸ Alburni Falls.

vents me also knowing the Course tho I estimate it at N 70 W 20 M or 18 M⁹ having from 7 AM to noon kept always on a jog Trot except in a few places & the Road has been in general good—at Noon we came to where the River seemingly falls into wide marshy Ground, here we saw the Tents of a few Indians we went to the woods & made a Fire to refresh ourselves & bait our Horses our Indian Guide called to them & they crossed him, abt an Hour after 6 Men 2 Women & 3 Boys came to us. the oldest man according to custom made a speech & a Present of 2 Cakes of Root Bread abt 12 lb of Roots & 2½ dried Salmon with boiled Beaver meat. I gave them all 6 Inches of Tob to smoke & each man 2 In of do. to the old man 4 In a Steel & 2 Flints for which they were very thankful they tell me there is plenty of Beaver all about them, but they cannot wick(?) them except with Sticks & Snares having neither Axe nor Chissel among them the Spokanes & another Tribe are ill they say & cannot do any thing. I enquired of the Road before me. they say there is only another Fall to go to the Columbia of which they drew the Chart. this was good news to me, who expected to have heard of abt 1½ day's march of Falls & no navigation among them as the Lake Indians had informed me but they inform me the Road thereto is very bad for Horses. I requested the loan of a Canoe & one to guide us to which they readily consented & we are to go the Morrow please Heaven who I hope will prosper our voyage. our Horses will stay here under the Care of our Lad & be ready for our Return.

Octr 1 Sunday A night of small Rain & morning of do. We got ready & went down to the water Edge with our Baggage. the Canoe brought was old & nearly useless we asked for another, which was lent us, but before we had gummed &c &c it was 9 AM when we set off with an Indian to conduct us in a small canoe havg left part of our Baggage. we went down the River till 11½ AM when we put ashore to gum our Canoe which was very leaky & had wet much of our things. this took us nearly an Hour at 20" PM again embarked & went on always drizzling Rain At 1¾ PM it became heavy & we were obliged to put up the River hitherto is fine & Current very easy, but as we descend the width is contracted & the velocity augmented very many Fowl but cannot get a single shot at them.

⁹ About twenty miles below Newport on the north bank of the river. Here he borrowed a canoe to proceed in.

Octr 2nd Monday A cloudy Day. At 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ AM set off & ran down a steady sometimes a swift Current till 9 AM. I asked our Guide if we were near the Falls but he informed us he had never passed in a Canoe We found we had no time to go any great distance & therefore began our Return¹⁰ as we shall have barely time to get to McGillivary's River before the Canoes arrive.¹¹ the sun now at times showed itself by which I take the Courses to be up the River S 15 E 3 M + 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ M this last is easy Current S 25 E 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ M S 50 E $\frac{1}{2}$ N 80 E 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ M 3 PM passed most of the strong Current S 60 E $\frac{1}{2}$ M S 30 E $\frac{1}{2}$ M South $\frac{1}{2}$ M end of Co where we camped last night Co S 60 E 1M SE $\frac{3}{4}$ M S 25 E $\frac{3}{4}$ So 1M 5 PM S 20 W $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{2}$ M S 60 W 1M $\frac{1}{2}$ of Co gone put up at 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ PM the sun set somewhat clear by which I think the Courses are as well as can be expected in such cloudy weather. From where we turned abt this Mornng the Co of the River below may be estimated at N 20 W 8M to the foot of a Range of broad, high woody snowy Mountains which turns the River to the So of them running about WNW—since the 26th of Sept much snow has been always on the top of the Mountains & Hills even of Hills not above 600 feet high & the Mountains are literally loaded with Snow as it was in the depth of winter the woods of the River is mostly Red Fir & well wooded interspersed with Larch & Fir Pine &c with Poplars & Aspens near the River but no marks of Beaver, or indeed of any Animals whatever Killed 3 dwarf Geese & a Teal Duck. the Snow no doubt renders the Country in the winter very bad for Animals, otherwise there is plenty of Provinder.

Octr 3rd Tuesday A rainy night, cloudy misty morning but no Rain tolerable fine weather & saw the sun at times. At 6.50 AM set off having gummed the Canoe &c finished the Co of last night & went S 30 W $\frac{1}{2}$ M S 20 W $\frac{1}{2}$ M 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ AM the the Long Reach Co by the sun S 10 W 3 M + 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ M end of Co Obsvd sun merid altde of Lt 74-40 $\frac{1}{2}$ G but flying Clouds Co S 15 W 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ M to the Indian Camp at 1 PM we had set Beaulieu ashore to kill Geese &c which made us lose much time. When arrived we found our Lad had gone off with one of my Horses to the Green wood¹² Indians we were therefore obliged to wait at 4 PM he arrived We killed 7 Geese & 2 Teals the Indians gave us a good Chevreuil & some Salmon which thank Heaven makes us rich A rainy night

10 Turned back from near Cusick, Washington.

11 This means he had agreed to meet Jas. McMillan near Jennings, Montana, at a certain date, bringing trading goods from Fort William, Lake Superior. He kept the appointment almost to the day.

12 No tribe of this name known west of Rocky Mountains.

Octr 4 Wednesday A night of heavy Rain, but very fine day hearing of some Indians wishing to see me & that would arrive by noon, I waited them at 11 AM 4 men arrived they made me a present of a Horse & a few Roots they smoked a few Inches of Tobacco, all I had left they seem to be of the Spokane Tribe, with one that is yet more distant At 1 PM having procured a Saddle from the good Old Man, we set off our Co is abt S 15 E $2\frac{1}{2}$ M + $2\frac{1}{2}$ M keeping the woods as pro Map then Co SE 2 M passed the Fish weir of the Summer, now dry So S 70 E 1M to the River NE $\frac{1}{2}$ M slippery along the water Edge to avoid a Bog in the woods the Co S 80 E 8 M S 70 E 1M at $5\frac{1}{4}$ PM put up¹³ near where we camped for rain & I obsd sun merid altde fine cloudy evening Killed 6 dwarf Geese & 1 large Goose thank Heaven Our Provisions are now 15 Geese 1 Chevreuil 1 small Beaver, abt 50 lbs of Salmon & as many of Roots &c. By the star Aquilae the Course we have come for a distce passed is not more than SSE this must be noticed, & the observations will perhaps correct this, but it must fall entirely in the last 5 miles perhaps in only 2 miles.

Octr 5th Thursday A fine Morning for the Season, but had several small Showers all night At 6.50 AM set off & held on to the place I obsd say $1\frac{1}{4}$ M or 1 M the Co abt S 30 E this rounding a Point of the River then to the Falls¹⁴ say 2 Miles Co is I think abt S 50 E from thence at 8 AM we went S 70 E 4 M to the River then SE 4 M $\frac{3}{4}$ M gone came to the Rivulet of 25 yds wide¹⁵ 3 M gone to our Campt whene I obsd Aquilae the Co S 35 E 1M 10 AM this brought us to the Rock where we wet our things but we avoided it this time by going up the high Bank Co to 11 AM is I think about N 70 E as we frequently see the sun 4 M stopped at 11* 8' to refresh our Horses this is directly opposite to the Skeet shoo Road & River¹⁶ but perhaps the Co of this part & from the Lake is best taken on the out going At 50 PM set off & held on at 3* 20' PM came to where we baited on the outgoing. I [think] the distce we have come is abt 10 miles & the Co abt East, especially the latter part of it We then went thro a point of woods & to the wide part of the River, our Co N 50 E $2\frac{1}{2}$ M abt $\frac{1}{2}$ M short of Co we were obliged to put up with heavy Rain at $4\frac{3}{4}$ PM, having lost full 20' after a Chevreuil in the River, which escaped us. The Ground is quite soaked with the late & continual Rains. Great numbers of

13 Nearly opposite Newport, Washington.

14 Alberni Falls.

15 Priest River.

Cranes mostly all gray, a tolerable number of Swans, plenty of dwarf Geese & a few flocks of Ducks Teal & Stock but cannot be approached saw the sun the greater part of the afternoon. Killed 1 large Goose. In the 10 M Course there are 3 great Points especially one of Cedar & Maple which lie about N 10 E & S 10 W.

Octr 6th Friday A cloudy misty morning. At 7 AM set off Co+ $\frac{1}{2}$ M then open out on the Lake. Co to a large Point, the one this Side of the Rivulet, is abt East 5 M but we have to go round a deep Bay to a Point abt N 50 E 2M then to the other Point S 70 E 3 M then to the House Point about S 40 E 6M having rounded the Bay to the gravel Point we baited at 10-35 AM from hence the Co to the Point we left is abt West $1\frac{1}{2}$ M. Obsvd Merid altde of sun Lt 72-32 $\frac{1}{2}$ Good. At $\frac{1}{2}$ PM set off & at 3 PM arrived safe thank God We found all well Mr. McDonald has traded abt 2 Packs of good Furr in my absence mostly from the Pointed Hearts,¹⁷ of whom there are abt 44 men several women & Children here. they have abt 110 Horses & have traded 3 of them with us Rainy Evening Lat 48-16-55N. Decn 5-11 5

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¹⁶ Indian trail to Spokane and Hoodoo Creek.
¹⁷ Coeur d'Alene Indians.