

DAVID THOMPSON'S JOURNEYS IN THE SPOKANE COUNTRY

During the years of 1811-1812 David Thompson, the astronomer and geographer of the North-West Company of Canada (fur traders) and a partner in the Company, upon five different occasions visited Spokane House, which by his orders, but during his absence had been built in the summer of 1810; and in so doing traveled through that part of the state of Washington now commercially tributary to the city of Spokane. Mr. Thompson made entries daily in a journal which is now among the archives of the Province of Ontario, Canada, the text of which, as far as relates to these particular journeys, has been copied for the writer by Mr. J. B. Tyrrell, of Toronto. It is proposed to present these parts of the original journal in series, with introduction and explanatory notes.

These are of interest and value as the first written record of actual travel by white men through that part of the state of Washington; also as indicating the importance of the general vicinity of the city of Spokane as a trade center in those early days by the convergence of Indian trails there; also as showing the actual residence of white men in that vicinity as early as 1810 and 1811, and prior to any settlement at Astoria, Oregon. David Thompson's connection with the Spokane Country (or as he often termed it the "Skeetshoo Country") has already been mentioned in this Quarterly (vi, 1) and in the Oregon Historical Quarterly (xii, 195).

David Thompson's first visit to Spokane House was in June, 1811, while on his remarkable trip that summer to the mouth of the Columbia River. With a small party of voyageurs he had crossed the Athabasca Pass of the Rocky Mountains during January; had passed the remainder of the winter at the west end of the Pass (Boat Encampment); in the spring had ascended the Columbia River, portaged over to the Kootenay River, descended the Kootenay to the mouth of Fisher Creek at Jennings, Montana, and there packed his trading goods on horses and proceeded by the Kootenay Indian road south to the Saleesh, or Flathead Country; and there built a canoe in which he traveled down Clark's Fork River and across Pend Oreille Lake, and down the river of the same name. On the 8th of June he had arrived at a camp of the Indians residing near and opposite to the Calispel River; a favorite place for Indians because of the abundance of camas in the meadows (known as the Root Plains) north of Calispel Lake.

Mr. Thompson called these the Kullyspell Indians, and included in their habitat the borders of Pend Oreille Lake, which he called Kullyspell Lake. A little over thirty years later Father DeSmet established a mission at this same place.

The melting snows caused very high water that June of 1911, and the low lands were all inundated. Mr. Thompson's camp on June 8th and 9th was near the present town of Cusick, Pend Oreille County, Washington. He at once sent two of his men, Boulard and Coté, with an Indian guide, to Spokane House to announce his arrival.

Beginning with June 10, 1811, Mr. Thompson's Journal reads as follows:

[1811]

June 10th.

Monday. A rainy mornng. At 8 a. m. ceased & we loaded & went up abt. 1½ m. to the Woods where we camped¹ on dry ground, went a shooting, killed 2 Ducks & a Bittern, the last is larger by half than those on the east side of the Mountain, with fine blue wings & Body, brick coloured Breast. Hoole & Chas. Loyer² came to see us in the evening.

June 11th.

Tuesday. A very rainy morning & day. Traded Roots & a horse & colt for the Men, as the Roots alone gave a violent Cholic. Waited for the Men & Horses.

June 12th.

Wednesday. A misty morning but fine day, traded a few Roots & abt 9 a. m. Mr. Finan McDonald,³ Boulard, Coté & a Spokane Ind. arrived with 10 horses, also Martin with 3 Horses. Abt. 10-2/3 a. m. set off to go to the end of the Lake,⁴ from whence we set off, the Pt. of Woods on the No. Side, as beg. of the Root Plains bears N. 18 W. 1 M. our Co. N. W. ¾ M. down the River, we now turned out of the river & went over inundated Ground S. 10 W. ¾ M. S. 3 W. 3½ M. 11.5 a. m. to 2.0 P. M. but waited for the Bon Vieux say 5', we then put up to arrange the Goods, of which we arranged to major part for the Horses &c.

¹Near the present town of Usk, south and up the Pend Oreille River from Cusick, Washington. A wooded ridge extends southerly from here to Calispell Lake.

²Free hunters and North West Company voyageurs. Jacques Hoole was a full-blooded Frenchman, and is mentioned at length by Ross Cox, Columbia River (ed. 1832), p. 171.

³A clerk of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in the Columbia District continuously from 1807 to 1826, when he returned to the Saskatchewan District; for a detailed account of him consult Ross Cox, pp. 164-68. He was David Thompson's principal assistant, west of the Rocky Mountains.

⁴The southeasterly end of Calispell Lake; here the canoe was laid up.

June 13th.

Thursday. A very fine warm day. Arranged the rest of the Goods, & at 8 a. m. set off, we held on abt. S. 20E. by the ☉⁵ 2½ M. to a Lake on our right, this Lake⁶ is obliquely more than ½ M. of the last Co., we went along the Lake abt. South by the ☉ 5 or 6 M. to 11¼ a. m., when we stopped to bait the Horses, & carried all the Goods over a Bridge across a narrow of the Lake⁷ abt. 30 yds. wide. At ¾ P. M. set off & held on abt. S. 10 or 15 W. by the ☉ 5½ M. sharp walkg. to 3 P. M. when we crossed a Brook⁸ of 12 yds. ∞ belly deep of the Horses, and Weir, here are 7 Tents of Kullyspels, they are making a Weir for small Fish, we went abt. ¼ M., crossed another Brook⁹ of 6 yds. ∞ from small Lakes at the foot of the high Banks, these Brooks run into the Skeetshoo River, we now went up high, but easy Banks & camped at 3½ P. M. as there is no water near us. Co. say S. 30 W. 1¼ M., the Country all day has been hilly, but fine tolerable clear woods, the Soil rocky & sandy, much Grass in places & plenty of shrubs of the willow kind, few Orrenials & those of the Chevrail.

June 14th.

Friday. A fine warm day. After trading a few furs &c. set off at 7 a. m. & held on abt. S. b. W. South to S. S. E. to South—Say South 9 M. walked smartly, trotted & Galloped over fine ground to Beaulieu's Brook¹⁰ at 10 a. m. here we baited the Horses till 11 a. m. when we again set off & held on abt. South 6 M. to the River¹¹ we then turned off abt. S. b. E. 1½ M. to the House¹² of the N. W. Co'y. Thank Heaven for our good safe journey, here we found Jaco¹³ &c. with abt. 40 Spokane Families.

⁵This character (a period within a circle) is used to represent the sun, and another character, similar to the figure eight written horizontally, for the word "across."

⁶Probably a beaver-dam lake bed which has since been drained lying between Calispel and Sacheen Lakes, Pend d'Oreille County.

⁷Narrows at the southwesterly end of Sacheen Lake; a bridge there to-day.

⁸West branch of Little Spokane River flowing from Horseshoe Lake, Pend d'Oreille County, into Eloika Lake, Spokane County, also mapped as Beaver Creek.

⁹Now mapped as Hemlock Creek and emptying into the "brook" just mentioned.

¹⁰Now called Dragoon Creek, Spokane County. Beaulieu was a French-Canadian freehunter and voyageur; name also spelled Boileau; first name not identified. He crossed the Rocky Mountains in 1807-08 with David Thompson. James Birnie of Astoria and Cathlamet and an officer of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company for many years, married a Boileau, probably a daughter of this man.

¹¹The Spokane River about a half mile below confluence with Little Spokane River.

¹²Spokane House; trading post of the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company until 1826.

¹³Jacques Raphael Finlay, the clerk in charge there; an "intelligent sauteur," according to David Thompson.

June 15th

Saturday. A very fine day. Obsd. for Longde. & Latde.

Latde by \odot LL. M. A. Aug. 14th

Mean Latde. $47^{\circ} 47' 4''$ N.¹⁴

Longe. 117. 27. 11 W.

Varn. 21° East.

June 16th.

We got a few Carp from the Spokane Indians & I arranged the Goods to be left here for the Trade. Gave a small supply to each of the White Hunters & traded Roots &c.

Sunday. A very fine day. We got abt. 40 small black carp from the Indians—our Horse Meat now done.

Stated in narrative form, Mr. Thompson was encamped on June 10th and 11th on a low ridge of dry ground a little south and east of Usk on the bank of the Pend Oreille River, state of Washington; a mile down stream was a point of woods—also unsubmerged—which marked the edge of the bottom or meadow lands bordering the Calispell River southward to Calispell Lake. On the morning of the 11th, Mr. Finan McDonald (clerk) arrived with the pack animals and was at once sent back to the southerly end of the Lake, while Mr. Thompson, with Hoole as a guide (Hoole was between eighty-five and ninety years old and seems to have gone by the nickname of Bon Vieux) proceeded by canoe to that point, it being always the habit of fur traders to transport goods by water just as far as possible. From the loading place at the Lake Mr. Thompson proceeded south, possibly along the east side of Davis Lake, but more probably along an old lake bed that has since been drained, and came to Sacheen Crossing; to the west of Sacheen Lake the country was and still is more or less swampy, and filled with small ponds. Crossing to the higher ground, Mr. Thompson turned southwest to the waters of the Little Spokane River north of Eloika Lake, Spokane County, crossed over to the hill lands beyond and camped for the night before getting further away from water. The next day he proceeded on south, near or through Deer Park and across Dragon Creek, to the Spokane River and the trading-post of the Northwest company there. The trail used was noted by Mr. Thompson as the "Kullyspell Road."

The richness of the streams for beaver trapping is evidenced by the presence of French-Canadian freehunters, the blood of some of whom had descended to the families of well-known citizens of Wash-

¹⁴The U. S. Weather Bureau records show the city of Spokane to be in Lat. $47^{\circ} 40'$ and Long. $117^{\circ} 25'$. Spokane House was very close to nine miles north and five miles west of the center of the city of Spokane.

ington and British Columbia. It may be remarked that Usk takes its name from the river and town of that name on the west coast of England, and that Sacheen is said to be the corruption of a similar name in Upper Canada. Cusick was named after the original land owner at that point.

T. C. ELLIOTT.