

JOURNAL OF A TRIP FROM FORT COLVILLE TO FORT VANCOUVER AND RETURN IN 1828

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Attention is also invited to the announcement that other portions of the Work journal will shortly appear: one covering a trip southward in 1834 in the Oregon Historical Society *Quarterly*; another describing a journey to the headwaters of the Missouri in 1831-32, by the department of history of the University of Montana.

WILLIAM S. LEWIS.

JACOB A. MEYERS.

[May, 1828.]

[Page 222.]

Tuesday 20th. Between 3 or [and] 4 o'clock in the afternoon left Colville with six boats for Okanagan, and encamped in the evening one pipe [from] the grand rapid.¹ We were detained some time at the rapid, repairing two of the boats that were broken. The cargo got wet; all the other boats were lightened and half the cargo carried, and the boats ran down at two trips.

We have only twenty men for the six boats, four men each for two of the boats, and three each for the other four, which certainly weak crews for such a dangerous part of the river, but instead of paddles the people use oars by which they do more work with less labor. Our lading consists of 70 packs of furs, 2 kegs [castorium], 12 bales of leather, 8 bales of [barley meal from the crop of 1827] 2 do [corn meal] 10 do saddles, 1 cage 3 young pigs for N [new] Calidonia, 1 do cask [cage] for Nez Perces, 6 Indian lodges, provisions for the voyage, and which with the other baggage makes

¹ Thompson's Rapids, now Ricker Rapids.

24 pieces per boat, and myself and La Bontes² wife, & two children passengers. Everything was ready to start at an early hour, but Chatefaux's³ boat, which was not finished [page 223] gumming, till the afternoon. Cloudy mild weather.

May 21. Embarked at daylight this morning, and continued our route without any delay whatever, except a short [stop] for breakfast, till a little before sunset, when we encamped below the big [stone]⁴ a little above the little Dalls, [Makhim Rapids] which is a [good] days work for so few men. The current is very strong, and sent us along at a rapid rate, but the water is not so high as last year; it is now in a good state, and none of the rapids dangerous. Notwithstanding the (long) time that were [was] taken gumming the boats, some of them are leaky, and two of them had to be gummed. Yesterday evening some of the people were employ[ed at that.]

May 22nd. Cloudy cool weather in the morning, very warm afterwards. Resumed our route at daylight,⁵ and arrived at Okanage [Ft. Okanogan] before breakfast, and found some of the people still not up. The Dalls were found good, and the boats shot down them without stopping. Received and examined the cargos, all in good order, and had them stand [stood] bye:—[Page 224.] and as the men had worked hard, gave them the remainder of the day, to rest, previous to commencing gumming the boats.

No news as yet of Mr. Conolly⁶ and his people, and had appointed the 24th as the date on which he was to reach Okanage. We expected that being so weakly [manned] it would have taken us also to that date to reach this—where as, we were only a day & a half. We arrived early, and came to find the people from Colville [hungry.]

Finding some salmon in store, it was served out to the people, and the barley and corn used, till Mr. Conolly's people arrived.

May 23rd.—Very warm in the middle of the day, stormy in the afternoon. Had three of the men employed making oars; all the others gumming their boats. Soon the N[ew]. C[aledonia] people arrived. One of the boats was in the water, and does not want much repairs, but the other two, being exposed to the sun, the gum

² LaBonte was an Astorian. See Irving's *Astoria*, Chap. xxxvii. His name appears as numbers 989, 820 and 623, respectively, on the lists of employees of the Hudson's Bay Company in America for the years 1821-1823, inclusive.

³ Probably J. B. Chalifaux, number 657 on the list for 1821; Andre Chalifaux appears as numbers 634, 505 and 407 for the years 1821-23.

⁴ About 3:30 A. M. The distance to Okanogan is about thirty-three miles.

⁵ Equilibrium Rock. See also the entry for August 12.

⁶ Chief Trader William Connolly stationed at Fort St. James in New Caledonia. His name appears as numbers 45, 7, 7, on the lists for the years 1821-23.

was melted off them. The seams opened, so that it takes a considerable deal of labor, to put them in order. There are two other boats, which are so old and out of order, and so much decayed that [225] it is considered impossible to repair them so that they could be brought up the river again with any safety. Two of the men, Chatifaux & Pin,⁷ are both bad with sore eyes.

May 24th. Stormy weather warm in the middle of the day. The men finished gumming the boats, and had them in the water before breakfast. About noon Mr. Ermatage [Ermatinger]⁸ and a man arrived from above. Mr. Connolly & party are expected in two days.

May 25th. A storm of wind with a great deal of dust.⁹

May 26th. Fine weather, some gusts of wind. Mr. Conolly arrived at noon, his people are close too.

May 27th. Fine warm weather. Mr. Conolly's men arrived with Mr. Dear's¹⁰ in the forenoon, and the cargoes of the boats, 9 in number, made out, and everything arranged to start tomorrow. Two horses were killed, and given to the people with some barley for a treat.

May 28th. Fine weather, blowing fresh part of the day. Some time was spent in the morning gumming two boats that were a little leaky; that detained us till between 7 & 8 o'clock when the baggage [brigade] started. Nine boats, with Mr. Dear's [Page 226.] Mr. Ermat[inger] & myself, under the charge of Mr. Conolly. The cargoes amounted to 33 pgs per boat, via 228 [fur packs]¹¹ 7 bales of leather 6 do [castorium] 8 dit Saddles, 1 dit pamphlets, [book] 16 of gum, 6 lodges, with baggage. The men used oars in preference to paddles, and had as many as could work in each boat. The wind some time detained us, and the current was very strong. In the evening we encamped a little above the Rapids. The oars were far superior to paddles; the men do more work with greater ease.

May 29th. Overcast in the morning, and raining afterwards. Resumed our route at daylight, or a little before it, and put ashore

⁷ Joseph Pin, whose name appears as numbers 1138, 748 and 1029 on the lists for the years 1821-23

⁸ Frank Ermatinger, the well-known Columbian, often in the Spokane Country. He became chief trader in 1842.

⁹ See Ross Cox, vol. ii, p. 86.

¹⁰ Thomas Dears, a clerk, whose name appears as numbers 720, 582 and 82 on the lists for 1821-23. He was much about Spokane and Colville, having actual charge of the erection of the first buildings there 1825-26. He was placed in charge of Fort Connolly, New Caledonia, in 1831. Retiring, he settled at Ft. Thomas, Upper Canada.

¹¹ These fur packs weighed 90 to 100 lbs each, say 1½ tons. The crate of pigs, 2 kegs of grain or meal, 5 bales of leather, and 4 saddles have been left at Ft. Okanogan for the New Caledonia District, and 156 packs of fur, with some additional provisions and baggage have been added; 8 days provisions for the 22 men, as well as subsistence for the Colville men there, have been consumed by the time Mr. Work leaves Ft. Okanogan.

near the lower end of the Rapids to wait for one of the boats, Leas Prim,¹² who had followed behind; and in the meantime breakfasted. After which P. L. Etange¹³ the guide, who was in Mr. Conolly's boat embarked with Prim, when all proceeded, and ran down the rest of the Rapid, and continued their course. But Prim's boat, which remained behind, as the place was not dangerous, and the guide ahead [copy missing], and the boats did not stop till they reached Nupims [Nez Perces] in the afternoon, when [the furs, goods and provisions] [Page 227.] received and distributed among the boats, and everything arranged to continue our journey tomorrow morning. Late in the evening L. Etange [Lelange] their guide, arrived with another man, in an Indian canoe, with this unexpected intelligence, that when coming down the lower part of the Prists Rapids in the morning just after the other boats, when they struck upon a stone, broke their boat, and three of the seven men that were in her, Prim [Primeau] J. F. Laurent the [Bouthe] foreman, [and] Plussy [Joseph Plouff] the Sacrant [Ducant] were drowned, and the others very narrowly escaped. Some of the Indians assisted the survivors in getting some of the packs ashore, but how many would be saved, cannot yet be ascertained. Lacnant [Laurent]¹⁴ had been sick, and was very weak. The Guide [stated that] a gust of wind, and the people not pulling fast enough, is the cause of them not being able to clear the rock. Mr Cumatage and Mr Dear's were immediately sent off with two boats and 22 men to endeavor to move the bodies and to that may be saved from the water. I am to start early tomorrow morning on horse-back with two men, for the same purpose, by crossing to [Page 228.] the [north] side of the river, and straight across the plains. It is expected we will arrive before the boats, and prevent the Indians from carrying off any of the packs, if they be so inclined.

May 30th. Blowing a storm the fore part of the day. The weather was so stormy, and the river so rough, that it was impossible to cross the horses without drowning them, and I could not start as was intended, for the Prist's Rapids¹⁵ where the accident happened. Yesterday we had the horses [ready to swim] across in the evening, I could not have got them before then; and to get

¹² Lewis Primeau, whose name appears as numbers 1205 and 1000 on the lists for 1821 and 1822.

¹³ Pierre Letange, whose name appears as numbers 990 and 804 on the lists for 1821 and 1822.

¹⁴ The name J. F. Laurent appears as No. 1085 on the list for 1821.

¹⁵ Priest's Rapids, so named by John Stuart of the Astor party and his party, who passed this point in 1811, from seeing an Indian priest performing some religious ceremony there. See *Franchere's Narrative*, pp. 276-277.

them after, would be of no use. The [packs] were all carried from the water's side into the fort. An Indian arrived from Spoken [old Spokane House] with letters from Mr. Kettra [Kittson]¹⁶ of the 25th Inst, announcing the death of Jac Finlay¹⁷ about 10 days ago. Nothing has happened at Coville lately, the crops are coming on well.

May 31st. Stormy in the morning, calm afterwards, a little rain in the evening. The furs all well covered with oil cloth.

June 1st. Dark cloudy weather. Mr Cumatinge & Dear arrived with the party at noon, they found all the furs, Oky [a k̄eg] of customs, [castorium, parflesh] [Page 229.] a bale of leather, and 3 pins [skins] of gum. Nothing was seen of the bodies of the three unfortunate men that were drowned. The old prist¹⁸ and his people behaved well. One of the old mans son came to the fort, and rceived in remuneration for his good conduct in the assistance given in saving the furs.

The after part of the day was employed drying the furs, repairing the boats, and getting everything ready to start early tomorrow morning. The brown [beaver] skins seem not to be much injured, but the small furs will be a good deal the worse of this wetting; fortunately there were not many.

Monday 2nd. Cloudy most of the day. Left Walla Walla at sunrise, this brigade consists of 9 boats, provisions and baggage. We were nearly three hours ashore drying the wet furs, that were not sufficiently dry yesterday. Some time was also lost going ashore to trade provisions. The wind also considerably retarded our progress; nevertheless, we encamped in the evening, a little above Day's River. A horse, some salmon and boats [roots] were traded from the Indians during the day. Mr. Black¹⁹ is of such [Page 230.] a disposition that he would not give them a horse after a great deal of coaxing he offered them a colt but it was so small that it would not [suffice] for the people, and would not be accepted. However, he gave us, the bags of corn and a little [barley] *Tuesday 3rd.* It was a little calm in the morning, and we embarked, but a little after sunrise, we had to put ashore at Day's

¹⁶ William Kittson's name appears as numbers 938, 754 and 551 on the lists for 1821-23. He was an adopted son of George Kittson, and served with the Canadian chasseurs in the War of 1812-13. He entered the employ of the North-West Co. in 1819 as an apprentice clerk under Alex. Ross. See *Fur Hunters*, vol. i, p. 207. He was assigned to the Flatheads in 1850, and died about 1843, probably at Vicotria, B. C.

¹⁷ Jacques Raphael Finlay who established Spokane House, the first white settlement in the State of Washington, in 1810. See sketch of his life by Mr. Meyers, vol. x of this Quarterly, pp. 163-167, July, 1919.

¹⁸ Probably the identical old Indian priest mentioned in note 15, *supra*.

¹⁹ Samuel Black, an old North-West Co. clerk made chief trader under the Deed Poll of 1821; stationed at Spokane 1825; Nez Perce 1828-30; made a chief factor in 1838; and killed near Kamloops by Wanquille in 1841.

River²⁰ with the wind, where we remained all day. A few Indians encamped here, from whom a few salmon were got, but nothing worth while, to give the people, to [save] the provisions.

June 4th. Blowing a storm all day, so we could not stir.

June 5th. Blowing all night, but calm a little after sunrise—when we embarked, but were again stopped by the wind. We breakfasted; after a little while it became calm, and we proceeded and made the and afterward proceeded to the Dalls and made the portage to the rocks with boats. Here we encamped early, and there would not have been time to get to another convenient encampment. Traded enough salmon to serve the people for nearly two days. There are not many [Page 231.] Indians about the Dalls now; the most of them are out on the plains collecting roots.

June 6th. Embarked early this morning, made the lower Portage of the Dalls, had to put ashore to gum one of the boats, afterwards proceeded down the river. Reached the Cascades in the afternoon, made the portage with all the goods, and got the boats halfway across. Part way they were towed, and part carried. When the men left the boats they pulled up on the beach. We could get few salmon from the Indians, because the fort has entirely spoiled the trade, none can be got now at any kind of a reasonable price.

June 7th. Had the boats brought to the lower end of the portage, which detained the people a considerable part of the morning. In order to save time, we breakfasted before we started; we then proceeded, and reached Vancouver, where we arrived in the evening. It was however too late to get the packs carried up the Fort.

June 8th. Fair weather. All the packs carted up to the Fort, and the rest of the cargo remained.

June 9th. Cloudy in the morning, fair weather afterward. Employed a party to examine the furs; we were not able to finish the whole of them, as few of them were a little wet, but had sustained no damage.

June 10th. Busy at the furs, but we had to stop on account of the rain. Some of the New Caledonia ones are not yet opened.

June 11th. The weather prevented us from doing much to the furs today.

July 23rd. This morning the Ireland [Inland] brigade left Fort Vancouver, and encamped a little below the Cascades. We had a sail wind a while in the afternoon.

²⁰ The John Day River of today.

The brigade consists of 9 boats 54 men including two Indians. These are passengers Mr. Conolly who commands the party, Messrs [Francis] Cumtage, [J. M.] Yale, [Thomas] Deace, and myself [John Work]. The boats are heavily laden, besides provisions. The cargoes were delivered and the boats loaded and moved up to the upper end of the place yesterday evening, when the men got their provisions for the voyage, which consists of corn²¹, fish, and grease.

July 24th. Cloudy weather, with fine breeze. Continued our route early in the morning, and were employed the whole day, getting to [Page 233.] just a little above the Cascades. The water is very low, and it was very difficult dragging the boats. The line broke, and one of the rudders; so considerable time was lost fixing them. Part of the cargo had to be carried, both at the New Portage, and at another place below the Cascades. The Indians at the Cascades are taking plenty of salmon, but would give us none—a superstitious idea, that if our people, who had been at war, would eat of the salmon, they would catch no more. Had we been in want of provisions, we would have [kept] ourselves without caring; but that not being the case, we did not take any; though we told the Indians we would do so if we chose.

July 25th. Embarked at daylight, and had a fine sail wind all day, and early this evening reached the lower end of the Dalls, when we encamped, it being too late to reach the Portage. The Indians here are taking plenty of Salmon, and gave us a few for the people, making no objections about the men having been at war.

[*July*] *26th.* The whole day was getting the goods across the portage, and the boats only part of the way. The weather part [Page 234.] of the day was very warm. In the morning we were met by Morgen [Ogden]²² who with his party is on his way to Fort Vancouver. The rest of his party are off with Mr. McKay for some furs that were hidden in the plains. Mr C[Ogden] remained with us all day, and stayed over night. Three of our men are sick, disabled, and unfit for duty. Got plenty of salmon in the evening for the people.

July 27th. It employed the men before breakfast carrying the boats across the portage; we got them loaded, and after breakfast took our leave of Mr. Ogden, and proceeded under sail to the Chutes, when boats and cargo had to be carried. We got to the

²¹ Apparently flour from the Colville and Vancouver mills was not yet in use.

²² Peter Skene Ogden, the well-known Columbian, noted for his expeditions in Utah where Ogden City and Ogden River bear his name.

upper end of the Portage late in the evening; loaded the boats, and encamped for the night. It was very warm during the day, though it blew a storm, and the people were nearly blinded with driving sand. The Indians here had a few fresh Salmon, but we got some dried ones from them. One Indian lodge took afire and was burnt; and though it was on an island, and apart from where we were working, they came and demanded payment for the property destroyed, and in case of [Page 235] refusal, they would take it by force. We threatened them with severe punishment for their conduct, when they became quiet. However, as a boat had to return from above, it was deemed advisable to give them a little tobacco. [July] 28th. Clear warm weather. Embarked at daylight, and were employed all day with the poles. In the evening we encamped a little above Day's River. Two Indians, which were employed at the Dalls to work in place of the disabled men, left us this morning; they were not worth taking with us. Traded a few fish, and some dried Salmon, from some Indians, where we stopped for breakfast. An Indian was dispatched to Fort Nespus [Nez Perces or Walla Walla] with a letter.

[July] 29th. Continued our journey with the poles. Had a light wind, and got up the sail a short time in the evening; but the wind was too weak to be of much servise. We encamped in the evening a good way below the Island. Passed some camps of Indians during the day they had very few fish, and report that Salmon are scarce above.

[July] 30th. Embarked at daylight. After breakfast a fine breeze sprung up, when the sails were hoisted, and we had a splendid run the remainder of the day. Encamped late [Page 236.] in the evening a good piece above Grand Rapid. One of the sick men is again better, and able to do his duty, but the other two are still unable to work. Some other of the men are bad with severe colds, while some of them have sore hands from poling.

July 31st. A fine wind again, we proceeded under sail, and arrived at Nespuses at 8 oclock. The Nespuses outfit was delivered, and the remainder of the property distributed among 8 boats, as one is to be left. Mr McKay has arrived, he left his men yesterday. I found P[ambrum's] boys here, they are going off to Colville in two days; by them I wrote to Mr Kitter [Kittson] and sent six sickels so that he may be able to get on with the harvest. I also sent 22 [Ms. illegible.] as I understand he is short of that article. From his letter I understand that provisions are scarce—few salmon to be got, but the crops have a fine appearance. One

of Mr Black's men, Dubans, [Dubois]²³ was drowned a few days ago.

Aug. 1st. Left Nespurs at 7 o'clock, and encamped in the evening above the Yakaman River. The men worked with the poles all day, the weather very calm and warm. The river is unusually low for this season of the year. We have 8 boats, as deep laden, as when we left Vancouver, but as two more of the men are disabled, it will take 30²⁴ hours to Okanagan.

[*Aug.*] *2nd.* The weather very warm and sultry. Proceeded on our journey, and encamped in the evening at the White banks. From an Indian's information, part of the bones of one of our unfortunate men that were drowned in the Spring was found. We had them collected and buried. Mr. Conolly read the funeral service. There are few Indians on the river, and these are starving; they are taking no salmon.

[*Aug.*] *3rd.* Continued our journey at an early hour, and encamped in the evening at the lower end of the Prist's Rapid. The current during the day was strong. The water is very low. We found a lodge of Indians, from whom a few dried Salmon were obtained, they seem very scarce in the river.

[*Aug.*] *4th.* Cool pleasant weather in the morning, but very warm afterwards. It took a considerable portion of the day to get up the Prist Rapid. Some time was spent gumming the boats, when we again proceeded, and encamped in the evening a little above the Rapid. Messrs Cumatage [Ermatinger] and Yale who were expected would be at [Page 238.] Okanagan, are nearly so with their horses by this time, and now encamped on the opposite side of the River.

Aug. 5th. Very warm weather, it is really hot passing over the burning sands. Lost some time this morning crossing the horses—in the evening encamped in the evening, a little below Roscal Rapid.²⁵

Aug. 6th. Continued our journey, and encamped early, and got the boats just above Stony [Rock] Island, the boats are lighted, and the cargoes carried, to Rend Rapids.²⁶ The weather very warm, though occasionally blowing a little. Very few Indians in the River, and Salmon very scarce. Another man left work with a sore hand.

²³ Andre Dubois appears as number 619 on the list of 1823-24; Francis Dubois appears as No. 569 for the same year.

²⁴ It took them nearer 100 hours, as the journal later shows.

²⁵ Qualque Rapids.

²⁶ Cabinet Rapids.

Aug. 7th. Warm sultry weather. Passed Pirtanhouse²⁷ River in the afternoon. We were detained some time mending one of the boats that were broken; had sail wind a little in the evening. Traded some Salmon from the Indians.

Aug. 8th. Had a good breeze, and sailed most of the day. The wind though warm was a great relief from the scorching heat we experienced three days past. Encamped in the evening a little above Clear Water River.²⁸ A man from Okanagan met us in the evening, with two horses from there.

Aug. 9th. Cloudy, but very warm weather. In the morning, Mr. Conolly and I left the boats, and proceeded on horseback to Okanagan, where we arrived about nine oclock in the morning. Four of the boats arrived late in the evening, the others are a little behind.

Aug. 10th. Arrived early in the morning, when the boats were unloaded, and the different outfits separated. When I distributed the Colville goods, amounting to 123 furs [bales] besides provisions and baggage.

Besides the above cargo, we had a dozen or more passengers with their baggage. Six men per boat, some of them are from Okanagan. One of the men was sent to Colville, being unable to work, he sent another man in his place.

Aug. 11th. Went to boats²⁹ early this morning, but it was near 8 oclock before they got through gumming, when we proceeded up the river, and encamped for the night a little above the Dalls. The current is very strong, nevertheless we got on well.

Aug. 12th. Continued our route, this morning passed the Dalls, and encamped in the evening a little below the Big Stone.³⁰ We lost some time gumming Charlie's boat [Page 240.] The boat had to be lighted at a place near the Dalls.

Aug. 13th. Continued our route early, and encamped a little above Spellium River.³¹ Some more time was lost gumming. Met a family of Indians going down the river, but they had no Salmon worth mentioning.

Aug. 14th. Continued of journey early, and encamped a little below Semapoolish³² River. One of the men not able to work

²⁷ Piscouse or Wenatchee River.

²⁸ Chelan River.

²⁹ This was some distance from Fort Okanogan, see Ross Cox's N. W. Co. Fort on the Okanogan River in 1816.

³⁰ See the entry for May 21, 1828; also Symond's *Columbia River* (1883). The stone is now known as Equilibrium Rock.

³¹ Nespelim River of today.

³² Sanpoll River.

with a sore hand. Chatfaux is also complaining of his hand, but does not give up working yet.

Aug. 15th. Embarked early, and went ashore a little above Stony Island³³ so to gum two boats. We had to carry part of the cargo to one of the portages below the Island. Chatfaux is from work with his hand, and walking along like a gentleman. Met Robinson³⁴ our housekeeper [horsekeeper]³⁵ it is some time since he left the Columbia, and has little news.

³³ Hell Gate.

³⁴ Robidoux, numbered 1082 and 1084 on the lists of 1822-23.

³⁵ Horsekeeper. The horsekeeper had probably had orders to come down to the mouth of the Spokane River, and there await Mr. Work's arrival. Work probably proceeded to Colville on horseback and so finished this journal.