

## DOCUMENTS

### *General B. L. E. Bonneville*

The recent revival of interest in the career of General B. L. E. Bonneville and the probability of proof that his romantic western travels were really a part of the American Government's plan to hold possession of the Far West are bringing forward additional materials of pertinent historical value.

Since the documents, late in the General's career, were published in the January issue, pages 59-65, two other contributions have been received for publication in the present issue. One is a photostat obtained by Rev. J. Neilson Barry, of Portland, Oregon, and the other consists of a series of letters and reports copied from the records in the United States War Department by Anne H. Abel-Henderson, of Aberdeen, Washington. Mrs. Abel-Henderson is a well known educator. She was formerly Professor of History in Goucher College, Baltimore, Maryland, and at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts. She explains her acquisition of the Bonneville papers in a letter to the editor as follows:

#### *Introductory Letter*

I am inclined to think, judging from your remarks in the January issue of the *Quarterly*, that you may be interested in some copies of *Bonneville Papers* that I have had in my possession for several years. They include two or three letters that are in the nature of reports and are a portion only of the Bonneville material that was accessible in the United States War Department before and subsequent to my departure for Australia in the summer of 1921. I say *subsequent* to that departure on the authority of my friend, Dr. Howard Hamblin, who had been associated with me in the original research and who continued it after I went away. He is now dead; but, in December of 1922, he reported to me, in Australia, on the content of the *Bonneville Journal*, which he claimed to have discovered and to have identified with that to which reference is made in the Washington Irving letter of September 20, 1835. Dr. Hamblin awaited instructions from me before having the *Bonneville Journal* copied. It was, he said, exceedingly hard to read but showed conclusively what an

intimate knowledge Bonneville must have had of the country now embraced within the "States of Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado Wyoming, Utah, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and in parts of Washington, California, Nevada, and Arizona." He further said that "Bonneville's lieutenant, J. R. Walker, explored carefully, taking observations, in southern California, Nevada, Utah, and the north-west part of Arizona, and keeping a journal of the same during the years 1831, 1832 and 1833, or more than ten years before Fremont's exploration."

Such Bonneville material as I did have copied and have been able to locate among the vast mass of historical transcripts that I possess I am sending to you, hoping that you will be able to utilize it for the *Quarterly*. It seems scarcely to need editing, it being so largely self-explanatory; but I would like to call your attention to the evidence it furnishes as to the reputed ulterior object of the Bonneville travels.

Sincerely yours,

ANNE H. ABEL-HENDERSON, Ph. D.

*Bonneville Equipped to Start\**

New York City  
July 18, 1831

Major General Alexander Macomb,  
Sir.

I have the honor to report to you that I have now completed every necessary arrangement to enable me to collect information in the section of country lying west of the Rocky Mountains,

\* Following is a guide to Bonneville materials in the United States War Department:  
UNITED STATES WAR DEPARTMENT—ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE

Papers in the case of Benj. L. E. Bonneville, decd., late Colonel, Retired:

File Mark—2742 A.C.P., 1878: B 276—A.G.O.—'30; B 206—A.G.O.—'31; B 236—A.G.O.—'31; B 276—A.G.O.—'31; M 105—A.G.O.—'34; A 176—A.G.O.—'35; A 203—A.G.O.—'35; B 19—W.D.—'35; B 25—W.D.—'35; B 62—W.D.—'35; B 74—W.D.—'35; B 84—A.G.O.—'36; B 379—A.G.O.—'36; B 490—A.G.O.—'36; B 243—A.G.O.—'37; B 259—A.G.O.—'37; B 561—A.G.O.—'37; B 172—C.B.—'63; B 340—C.B.—'64; B 1118—C.B.—'64; B 1129—C.B.—'64; B 1690—C.B.—'64; A 667—C.B.—'65; A 522—C.B.—'65; B 398—C.B.—'65; B 1681—C.B.—'65; A 420—C.B.—'66—List of officers brevetted Brig. Genl. U.S.A.; but not recommended by the Brevet Board; B 1423—C.B.—'66; S 1448—C.B.—'67; A 5—C.B.—'69—List of officers dropped, dismissed, cashiered, or who resigned and were subsequently restored; 4573—A.C.P.—'78—Retd to 2 Aud. Sept. 30/78. L.B. 24/384; 224—A.C.P.—'81—Retd to Comr. Pensions, Jan. 15/81; 2098—A.C.P.—'85—Retd to 2 Aud. April 7/85. L.B. 37/524; 6452—A.C.P.—'88—Mrs. Bonneville for correction of Muster Papers—retd. to her Dec. 18/88. L.B. 45/169; 668—A.C.P.—'93; 6609—P.R.D.—'93; 32551—A.G.O.

The following are without file marks; but are filed with 2742 A.C.P. '78: May 21, 1831—Bonneville to Gen. Macomb; July 18, 1831—Bonneville to Gen. Macomb; July 29, 1831—Macomb to Bonneville; July 29, 1833—Bonneville to Macomb; December 16, 1834—John Daugherty to Major J. B. Bryant (copy); September 29, 1835—Report of Adj. Gen. Cooper in case of Bonneville; November 19, 1835—Report of Gen. Macomb case of Bonneville; December 9, 1835—M. S. Cerre to Bonneville; December 12, 1835—Macomb to Secretary of War.

403 A.G.O. '35—Officers of 7th Inf. protest against restoration of Bonneville—No charge—(These papers not found)

as promised in my letter to you dated at Washington City the 21 May last. I have provided my self with a telescope, sextant & horizon, compass to determine the variation of the needle, thermometer, microscope, pocket compass, case of instruments and patent lever time prism to assist me in my observations. Barometers are so clumsy and so easily broken, that I do not contemplate taking any,—I have also examined every work that is likely to yield me any information respecting that country, Humbolt's McKensie's and Clark's Journals.

Having now no further business to detain me here, I am, therefore anxious to leave this city, for the west as soon as possible, taking Pittsburgh—by the canal—Cincinnati and St. Louis in my route to Fort Osage. As it is impossible for me to say where I shall be at any time, you will, I hope, excuse me if I request instructions and passports may be sent to me at this place previous to my departure. Tomorrow I shall go to spend a few days at West Point, in order to practice the taking of a few astronomical observations and will return to this city about the 27 inst. My object in calling for passports is fearing that in some of my distant excursions I may meet with defeat or other misfortune and have to take refuge in the Mexican territories. I would dislike to create groundless suspicions. If passports from the United States State Department will prevent that it is all I want. I have given to Lieut. G. Cooper your aide de camp a description of my person. I expect to leave Fort Osage 200 miles up the Missouri, as soon as the spring opens sufficiently to supply horses with food, and remain the fall, winter and spring in that country—and return to St. Louis about the month of October following.

I have the honor to be General,

With profound respect,

Your mo. Obedt. Servt.

B. L. E. BONNEVILLE

Capt. 7 Inf.

*Satisfactory Progress*

Franklin, Dec. 5, 1831

Sir,

I have the honor to report myself on furlough from 3d of April last. My place of residence is generally in St. Louis Mo. where any communications will reach me. I have the pleasure to

say that all my preparations for the Rocky Mountains, progress much to my satisfaction.

I have the honor  
to be Sir,  
Your Obdt. Svt.  
B. L. E. BONNEVILLE  
Capt. 7 Inf.

To Colonel Roger Jones  
Adjutant General.

*Time to Take Possession of Oregon*

Crow Country  
Wind River  
July 29, 1833.

General,

This country I find is much more extensive than I could have expected, as yet, I may say I have actually visited, only, the heart of the Rocky Mountains, or in other words the head waters of the Yellow Stone, the Platte, the Colorado of the West, and the Columbia. I have therefore remained. I hope I have not trespassed too much upon your goodness, to explore the North of the Columbia in the Cottenais Country and New Caledonia, to Winter on the Lower Columbia, and going to the south west towards California on my return, which, will certainly be in the course of next fall. I would not have presumed this much, were I not aware how desirous you are of collecting certain information respecting this country, and my return at present could have afforded but half a stay which would have been laughable in the extreme. I have constantly kept a journal, making daily observations of courses, country, Indians &c. in fine of everything I supposed could be interesting. The information I have already obtained authorizes me to say this much; that if the Government ever intend taking possession of Oregon the sooner it shall be done, the better, and at present, I deem a subalterns command equal to enforce all the views of our government, although a subalterns command is equal to the task, yet I would recommend a full company, which by bringing provisions to last till June, could then live upon the Salmon which abounds there during the summer and fall, & farming for themselves for the next year could subsist themselves well. Five men there would be as safe as an hundred either from the Indians who are extremely peace-

able & honest, and from the establishments of the Hudson Bay Company who are themselves too much exposed by their numerous small posts ever to offer the least violence to the smallest force. They have a trading post at the mouth of three or four men to oppose all trading vessels, another above, *Vancouver*, which is strongly built, and capable of a garrison of one hundred & eighty men, here they have farms, mills &c &c every convenience of old settlements, manned by half breeds, Indians and some Canadians, but they are generally distributed in trapping companies who frequently remain absent a year. Walla Wallah a post still higher up, on the left bank of Columbia, handsomely built, but garrisoned by only 3 to 5 men, may easily be reduced by fire or want of wood which they obtained from the drift. Colville another post upon the North Fork, is also feeble, 3 to 5 men there to keep up a connexion and trade. The returns from Vancouver, Walla Wallah & Colville, do not exceed 3000 skins, which may be considered trifling for their expense, but from New Calidonia to the North of Columbia, and from towards the Californias their returns are immense; these are the countries I have not yet examined and now am so anxious to visit. As to the cultivation of the bottoms of the Columbia, the lands are of the best, the timber abundant, but it is deluged at the rise of the river, but Multnomah, it is named here the Wallamet, runs through one of the most beautiful forests and extensive vallies in the world, wheat, corn & tobacco country. The Hudson Bay at present have every advantage on the Americans. Woolens at half price, flour and tobacco they raise, horses they obtain from their Indians at \$1 prime cost, shells they fish for, and their other articles of trade reaching them by water in the greatest abundance and at trifling expense, compared to the land carriage of the Americans, that the latter have to avoid their rencontre by every means in their power, not on the Columbia, but even on the Colorado, the Headwaters of the Arkansas, the Platte, the Missouri; they even speak of making a Fort on the Big Horn to oppose the American Fur Company. So you see, the Americans have to as it were to steal their own fur making secret rendezvous and trading by stealth. The History of the country is this, first the Hudson Bay entered it in 1810 trapping & trading generally employing between 90 & 100 men, gradually increasing to their present number of about 280 men. The A. M. Company about 1816 sent Immel & Jones in the west 30 men,

who remained about 5 years there totally defeated by the Blackfoot Indians on the Yellow Stone. Mr. Henry also entered it about the same time of Immel & Jones with about 80 men, built forts on the Big Horn on Lewis River and on the three forks of the Missouri, were also defeated by the Blackfoot Indians on three forks. In 1825 Genl. Ashley came in with about 50 men, met the Hudson Bay on Lewis' River, on the point of fighting with them, however took from them the Iroquois and their furs, subsequently himself was defeated by the Arapahoes on the Head water of the Colorado, and lost all his horses, 120 head. Ashley then sold out to his clerks Smith, Jackson and Sublette who raised their numbers to 130 men, who in 1830 themselves sold out to their clerks & best trappers, Fitzpatrick, Younger Sublette, Bridgers, Frap, & Jarvis who now remain in the country with about 80 to 90 men. Drips, Fontanelle, Pilcher, Vanderburgh & Benjamin came in a firm in 1824 with about 75 men, reached the Heads of the Platte there lost all their horses by the Arapahoes then cacheing the greater part of their merchandise and packing their men in the winter got lost in the deep snow finally dispersed. Drips, Fontanelle and Vandeburgh offering their services to the A. M. Co. Increased their number to 160 men, Gantt came up in 1831 with about 50 men, mostly afoot done little then retired to the headwaters of the Arkansas where I understand he has opened a trade with the Comanche, the Arapahoes & Shians. The above I think will give you a tolerably correct idea of the great quantities of furs must have been taken from the country in order to keep alive so many companies at such great expense in men and horses. This country may be said at present to be poor, but beaver increases so rapidly that any part permitted to rest three years is said to be as rich as at first. The companies therefore endeavor to ascertain each others hunting grounds and to conceal theirs and even their successes and disasters. Last Year Fitzpatrick's Company in their 2 years trapping sent down about 150 pack, 40 skins per pack; A. M. C. last year one years work sent down about 31 packs. This year A. M. C. & Fitzpatrick's appear to have each about 44 packs, and sustained great loss in horses taken by the Arickarees; again the same party lost 17 men by desertion taking each 2 horses & six traps.—As to the Indians, that the Pawnees reside on the Lower Platte in several bands, amounting to about 1200 warriors, they are well mounted, and war with the Crows. The Sioux, Shians and

Arickarees make their hunting grounds in the Black Hills, 2500 Sioux, 400 Shians, 160 Arickarees, they reside on the Missouri and wage war upon the Crows and Pawnees. They are extremely warlike and are well mounted. The Crow Indians range upon the Yellow Stone and headwaters of the Platte about 1500 strong in three villages, fight with the Blackfoot, and the Arapahoes. The Crows have good horses and I believe the best buffalo country in the world. The Arapahoes range upon the heads of the Arkansas and Canadian, are very numerous, fight also with the Shoshones. The Shoshones a poor unwarlike race, some few who have arms & horses venture to descend into the plains in villages, but they are generally dispersed by twos and threes into the mountains without horses, without arms but the stone point arrow, and depending upon their numerous dogs to take the mountain sheep, they are met with in almost every mountain running from everybody and are termed *Digere de Pitie* i. e. Worthy of Pity, they steal and kill whenever a good opportunity offers, their villages are generally more friendly tho dangerous to be met alone. They range about the Salt Lake. The Bannocks in Villages and about 400 warriors, mostly afoot live about the falls of Lewis' River, there during the summer months catching and drying salmon, and in the fall move up that river to the Great Plain, and hunt the Buffalo which they dry and return to their falls, unwarlike defend themselves from the Black Foot. The Flatheads 100 warriors with out 150 Nez Percez warriors detached from the lower Columbia, range upon the heads of Salmon River, the Recize Amere, and towards the three forks of the Missouri, the Flatheads are said to be the only Indians here, who have never killed a white man, they and the Nez Percez are extremely brave in defence, but never go to war, are the most honest and religious people I ever saw, observing every festival of the Roman Church, avoiding changing their camp on Sundays tho, in distress for provisions. Polygamy so usual among all Indians, is strictly forbidden by them. I do not believe that three nights pass in the whole year without religious meetings. They defend themselves from the Black Fook. Descend the Columbia waters. The great body of the Nez Percez and the large bands of the Pend 'Oreilles. Here horses may be said to abound, some individuals having from 2 to 3,000 head, upon which they live, together with roots. The Cottonais 200 warriors having the other day commenced a war with the Black Foot have been driven from their original grounds upon

the Northern Branches of the Columbia and have now joined the Flat Heads. The numerous hords of Indians upon the headwaters of the Missouri and its northern branches are in one term the Black Foot Indians, the Bloods, the Sarcies, the Piedgans, and the Gros Ventres of the Prairies are those most troublesome in these mountains. They are well mounted, abundantly supplied by the richness of their country in excellent shotguns and ammunition. They are extremely numerous. When the snow begins to fall bands from 3 to 400 men move with their families all afoot & packing dogs, locate themselves some bands in the Shoshone Country, some toward the Nez Perces &c. build stone forts then dispatch their most active men to steal horses & to kill their nearest tribes, and as the snow melts in the spring gradually retreat with their spoils to their own country, where the grass is found sufficient, bands of about the same size leave their families and move to the plains in all directions to kill & steal. The only security against these Indians is to fight from the bushes, in the plains 'tis most certain destruction. The whites are unsafe with any tribe except the Nez Perces & Flatheads, true parties of size are unmolested, save by the Black Foot but individuals must be careful of the Bannocks, the Shoshones, the Arapahoes, the Shians, the Pawnees, the Crow. As to the whites, they have their leader, a trader, his hired men, also what is termed free men, men who join or run away from other companies and going to the next, remains with it in the following manner; if they have horses & traps of their own, they agree to sell all the furs caught at \$4 per lb. purchasing all their supplies from that company; if they have no horses and do not wish to hire, they are then loaned horses & traps and are to sell their beaver and skinned at 4 to 5\$ each paying for their supplies and loss of traps.—And the great object of companies is to catch their men on their way to their rendezvous and treat or sell their credits with whisky, tobacco, &c.—In the winter the parts of the same company meet & pass the winter together, separating in the spring, and again meeting at some other place for their summer rendezvous, when the supplies from St. Louis are expected each company, generally having a place of its own rendezvous are certainly the scenes of the most extreme debauching & dissipation.



## Prices—at the Ms.

Furs vary from.....	\$ 3 to 5 per lb.
Skin trapping do.....	\$ 4 to 5 per lb.
Blankets .....	18 to 20 each.
Tobacco .....	2 to 3 per lb.
Alcohol .....	32 per gallon
Coffee .....	2 per tin cup a pint.
Sugar .....	2 do
Flour .....	1 do
Shot-guns from list—\$4 .....	40 each
Rifles from list—\$10.....	60 do
Horses \$20 to \$25 .....	120 to 250\$ each.

The customary price as a year's wages from 250 to 400\$. As to the prices and regulations of the Hudson Bay I know but little, but this summer, fall and spring I believe I shall be able to explain all their regulations of trade, &c. On the 30th of April I left Independence with 121 men & 20 wagons, on the 12 May crossed the Kansas, kept up the left bank, move up the Republican which I headed, having at first gone through a rolling country upon the Republican. I marched upon an elevated plain, then struck it a little west and in one day fell on the Platte, the 2d of June, here I found the river  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile wide, the banks 2 to 3 feet high, river about 4 feet deep but full of quicksands; the plains upon the banks of the Platte are from 3 to 5 miles wide and I marched to the forks 130 miles without a break or creek; at the forks I first found buffaloe 45 days from settlements, having gone up the south fork about 10 miles, I crossed the fork, the river below I measured  $1\frac{3}{4}$  mile wide in two places, general width  $1\frac{1}{4}$  mile, at the tongue of land and fell upon the north fork. Here the river plain is small, bluffs of immense size putting in to the river, finally reached the main branches of the north fork, named this south, *Laramies Fork* then began one of the most broken countries I ever beheld, frequently letting my wagons down the bluffs with long ropes 80 men to each wagon; at last we came to the main forks of the north forks, having cut the tongue of land to the north and in two days came to Sweet Water, which we ascended on the right bank to Wind River Mountains, having turned the mountains we struck a large sand plain, upon which we slept without grass or water, having traveled from Sunrise till nine o'clock at night. Next morning started again at daylight and at twelve o'clock had the satisfaction to fall upon the water of the

Colorado of the West, having ascended this river on the right bank forty miles we built a picket work, fell in with the Gros Ventres of the Prairies, Black Foot, about 900 warriors, had no difficulty with them. Here we remained to recruit our horses, then went a northwest course and on the 10th of November fell upon Salmon River where I again built two Log cabins and waited for my men. One of my parties 21 men among the horses was entirely lost, another of my parties of 21 men by the Shoshones lost 7 horses & 4 men, and another of my parties on the route through Horse prairie, of 28 men lost all their horses, but fighting from 8 a. m. till sunset recovered all but one, taken by the Blackfoot & four badly wounded. On the 28 November, some of my parties had returned, I then proceeded to the Flatheads & Nez Percez, where I intended to wait the arrival of the remainder of my parties. At last on the 25 December I waited with twelve men in search around the great Shoshone plains in the deep snow, but one animal froze to death, reached Lewis river on the 18 January. Here I found one of my men from Shoshone party, finding that not only the mountains were loaded with snow, and that my animals were weak, I determined to send for that party to join me immediately, which they did, having increased another of my parties in the Shoshone Valley. I started on the 19th of February with 18 men to join Mr. Cerre who I had left at the Flathead town, then I again reached on the 14 March, and on the 18th proceeded with 23 engagees and 14 Indians Nez Percez & Flatheads towards the Commanche Prairies laying on the route to the lower Columbia. On the 6 April came to the mountain which I found impassable and remained at its base till the 27 May at which time I succeeded in passing, losing 4 horses & two mules then continued to the west fall crossing, Nalade, Comache, Borsey and La Payette Rivers at last I found that living upon fish, horses & roots would not do, I then tried to cut the Mountain to the north 1st July, the great depth of snow forced me to seek another place. I at last reached the Forks of Salmon River on the 15th of July, here I waited four days for my parties, having found their path I took it and on the 29th found them, much to my surprise with the Pend Oreilles & the Cottonais, the Flatheads & Nez Percez having been driven from the country by the Black Foot, who that spring consolidated for that purpose, here I remained with those people till the 5th July. The Black Foot being at that time quite near, made me fear to cross the prairies

with my small party of 23 men. I therefore induced these friendly Indians by presents, to march upon the Black Foot towns and pretend to war, while I pushed across the plains, and on the 23d reached the valley of the Colorado, here I found so many buffaloe carcasses and these only skinned that I actually feared to approach the rendezvous and at night sent two men to examine it, had the satisfaction to hear all was well. I then continued and next day met all the whites in the country, and on the 25 started with Mr. Cerre to escort him to the Big Horn, which I expect will take me till the 10 August I will then proceed to the north-west towards to the north of the Columbia. The country upon the Lower Republican is rolling, becoming high level plain as you ascend, the country gradually rising to the west, the Platte runs through one of the most beautiful & level plains in the world, upon the north fork the country becomes much broken from Laramie Fork to Sweet Water is most horribly broken and difficult to pass, this country is termed the Black Hills, upon Sweet Water high hills are constantly in view but easily passed, travelling generally on the bank of the river in the sand. The Sweet Water leads into the Wind River Mountains, said to be the highest in the country about 2500 feet elevated above the plains, and constantly covered with snow.

I have not measured these mountains, 'tis mere supposition. In the same bed of mountains rises the Yellow Stone, the Columbia, the Colorado and the Northern Platte. They are extensive and extremely difficult to be gone through, and are always turned. The general course I travelled to head Sweet Water was about west north west & estimated by me at 1050 by the windings of the route. From the forks of Horse Creek of the Colorado to the head of Salmon River the route lays generally through a country easily passed, with the exception of two mountains which must be gone over. One is low, the other must be passed upon the river, and upon a cornice of the mountain from which horses fell from every party, descent perpendicular 270 feet high, course to the Salmon N. West 350 miles, here again begins a bed of mountains lying North & South from the extreme North to a great distance to the south, about the big Salt-Lake, then again from the southern bank to no person knows where, however, this much is known, that every river even all the creeks run through the Gannison or Column of blocks of limestone, greenstone trap. To the north a little east lays immense plains; to the south a little

east on the Great Shoshone plains. To the south a little west lyes immense plains of sand, without water, without grass. To the west is a rough broken country and west of north is the Cottonais country, remarkable from the great quantity of wood, and its difficulty of passage. The Black Hills are the primitive class of minerals, Granite, mica, slate, Hornblende and Limestone, without organic Relics. Yet occasionally I would observe immense beds of red sand rock, some places saw Slate, Coal, Iron Ore, in one place only I found small quantities of greasy quartz and Balcore slate. As we ascended the sand rock and clay prevailed, which existed upon the heads of Sweetwater, where began an immense region of lime rock, filling every mountain and lava every plain, in one of which, sixty by fifty miles is filled with large crevices about 15 feet wide and depth unknown without a drop of water or the smallest bunch of grass to be found. The rivers to the east of the mountain increase their size but slowly, upon the banks we find no wood to the north fork of the Platte, having to cook with buffalo dung, dried weeds, occasionally however we find the yellow or bitter cottenwood above this and through the Black Hills we have the sweet cottonwood, upon which we feed our horses in winter, and become extremely fat, above this and upon the western waters the bitter cottonwood prevails; upon the mountains the Pines and Cedars are abundant. The Thermometer with me varied about at sunrise through this summer at about 47° at 2 p. m. 72° once I saw it as high as 91° during the winter months in the vallies where we wintered. It stood generally about at 12 p. m. 26°. I left it and travelled across the plains, where the cold was much more severe. I find that at 25° my feelings were much as they would be in the states at 13° but the heat at 72° as oppressive as that of the states of 100°. Soil of the Platt & other rivers from the east are entirely unfit for cultivation those of the west are much the same till we reach the Bolzy a branch of Lewis River, the soils here are excellent but not extensive. The Buffaloe range from north and south, beginning about the Forks of the Platte, and extending to the line running from about the forks of Salmon River to the east of the Big Salt or Eutaw lake, then running so as to strike a little north of west & south of this line not a buffaloe can be seen; elk, deer, sheep, and bear can there be had for a small party to subsist, exploring some large sand plains where nothing can be found. The Big Salt Lake I have never seen, but am

told it has never been travelled around; five trappers once attempted to coast it, and were near dying from hunger & thirst. This much General, I have been able to collect in compliance with my promises, and I hope will be satisfactory when you consider, how extensive the country is, an individual in the states goes his 40 to 50 miles easily but here, where we have to feed the horses on grass and being closely tied up every night, requires time to feed morning, noon & night, makes our travelling very slow. I omitted to state that the horses here are generally about 14 to 14½ hands high stocky built, and upon which the Indians will gallop all day. The mode of traveling here, is this. The Indians in villages at 8 a. m. raise camp, the chief leads upon a fast walking horse, the whole, men, women & children follow, the women with the lodge poles, & baggage, while the men ride totally unencumbered, at 10 or 11 a. m. the chief pitches his lodge; the camp is then formed extending along the river or creek, making for each lodge a small brush pen to secure their horses from their enemies; besides planting an 18 inch stake into the ground with a cord attached to the horses fore foot. In the morning the horses are turned out at clear daylight; making their camps a journey about 8 miles long. The whites traveled much in the same way, making however longer journeys.

In the course of a few days I shall be on my route to the Cottonais country, and round by the lower Columbia to the south. On my return about the last of June I shall meet Mr. M. S. Cerre, and if you shall have any instructions for me, shall be glad to receive them, either to join any party that might be sent, to comply with any other commands in this country, or to return to the States.

I have the Honor  
to be, General,  
With every consideration  
Your most Obedt Svt.  
B. L. E. BONNEVILLE  
Capt. 7 Infy.

To Major General Alexander Macomb,  
General in Chief  
U. S. Army.

*Irving Saw the Journal*

New York, Sept. 20th, 1835.

Dear Sir:

Capt. Bonneville, who has recently returned from the Rocky Mountains has had the kindness to show me his journal in which are a few small maps of various parts of those mountains. As these maps throw a light on the topography of certain portions of the country about which I feel some curiosity I am desirous of getting copies of two or three of them. Capt. Bonneville tells me it is possible the journal may be separated in your Department. If so I should take it as a great favor if you would have copied for me the map of the Wind River Mountains, and another containing Henry Fort and the upper branches of Snake River. There are two other maps illustrating the course of Snake river which I should likewise have, I ask these copies on the presumption that there will be no objection on the part of the department to have them copied, and perhaps published. Any expense incurred by their being copied I shall gladly repay.

I have the honor to be

Very respectfully

WASHINGTON IRVING.

Maj. Gen. Macomb

&c.

*Seeks Reinstatement in the Army*

Recd. 26 Sept.

Washington City

Sept. 26, 1835.

To the Honorable

The Secretary of War.

Sir,

I have the honor to report my return to this city, from a long and perilous tour of exploration beyond the Rocky Mountains, upon which tour I have used every exertion to collect information relative to that country and the tribes of Indians that inhabit it, together with maps and charts.

I set out upon my tour with the consent of the War Department, and was charged by General Eaton, then Secretary of War, with instructions to guide me in collecting information with which he considered it advantageous for the government to be possessed, during my absence and at a time when a report of my death by the Indians received general credence my name was stricken from the rolls of the Army.

The object of this communication, is, to request, that my name be restored.

I have the honor to be  
Very respectfully  
Your Obdt. Svt.  
B. L. E. BONNEVILLE.

*Partial Report to the Secretary of War*

Washington City,

To the Honorable

Lewis Cass,

Secretary of War.

September 30, 1835.

Sir:

In obedience to your orders I have the honor to report, that in August 1831, I received a furlough from the Commanding General of the Army, to expire in October 1833, with a view of proceeding to the mouth of the Columbia River, and exploring the tract of country between the settlements of the United States and the ultimate point of destination—I hereby have to remark that the lateness of the season, when my furlough was granted, absolutely precluded my leaving the settlements until 1st May 1832—thus in the very onset nine months of my furlough were consumed.—The plan of operations presented to the Commanding General was submitted to the Department of War, and approved & with my furlough received instructions to collect all the information in my power, touching the relative positions of the various tribes of Indians in my route, their numbers, manners and customs, together with a general history of the country through which I was destined to pass.—On the 1st May 1832 I departed from the Frontiers of Missouri with a number of men I had hired for that purpose—My route lay up the Kansas, the Main Platte, its northern branches and Sweet Water, and reached the waters of the Colorado of the West, in the latter part of August, 1832—Finding that this long journey had very much weakened my horses and that my men were yet badly qualified to feed themselves in small game, when they could scarcely do it among the buffaloe, I determined to travel north into the lands of the Nez Perces, Flat Heads, Cottonais and Pend' Oreilles, where I would find game for my men, and plenty of grass and bark for my horses and at the same time to become particularly acquainted with these several tribes.—As soon as the snow had disappeared in the spring 1833 I proceeded to the Big Horn River, by the south point of Wind River Mountains and continued down that river to where it became navigable—here I halted, made boats & hav-

ing engaged a Mr. Cerre with several men to proceed to the States and gave him a report for the Commanding General, stating that the shortness of my leave of absence made it impossible for me to accomplish the objects contemplated at starting, within its limits, therefore requested its extension—at the same time reporting the progress I had made. This report cannot now be found in the Office of the Adjutant General; but Captain Cooper recollects such an one was received.—As the application for an extension was made several months anterior to the expiration of the furlough already obtained—having scarcely commenced collecting the information desired and believing there would not be the least difficulty in obtaining a further extension of furlough, I determined to prosecute the object originally intended and proceeded down the Big Horn which runs nearly north giving the advantage of latitude so high, that I could easily cross over the heads of the Yellow Stone, to the northern branches of the Columbia, and winter near the Sea—and that in the Spring I could return upon its Southern branches—which plan I attempted to execute; but finding so much hostility on the part of the Black Foot, that it was impossible to advance without continued fighting and severe loss in men and horses. As several battles had already been fought with these Northern tribes, I found it absolutely necessary for me to retreat by the south point of the Wind River Mountains, by doing which I reached the Bannock's late in the winter, 1833, and my men passed the remainder of that season with them. Constantly intent upon getting to the lower Columbia, I left my party with the Bannocks tribe and on the 25 December 1833 started with three men down Snake river in order to ascertain the best manner of entering the vast wilderness still to the west, leaving instructions with the party in my rear to descend Snake River the moment the winter broke up and meet me in my ascent. In obedience to these instructions the party started, but finding that I did not arrive at the point proposed, after tarrying until they had exhausted every means of subsistence, they determined to abandon the route, and returned above the Bannock tribe, to the buffaloe ground, where I overtook them on the 16th June 1834—once when I learned they had relinquished the prosecution of their route under the belief that my party of three men and self had been killed & they had so reported. Knowing that Buffaloe were generally plenty upon the heads of Black-Foot and Portneuf Rivers I determined to go there and make meat sufficient to subsist my party on its descending the Columbia.—



Upon this route I fell in with Mr. Cerre 28th June 1834, the gentleman to whom I had eleven months before entrusted my communications to the General in Chief, which he informed me, he had delivered, and that the general appeared perfectly satisfied with my Report and also with my determination to persevere in the course I had adopted, and pursued, that owing to his remaining longer in New York, than he had originally contemplated, he was prevented returning to Washington and consequently had left the former city without bringing an extension of my furlough or any communication whatever from the Dept. of War.—Highly gratified at the verbal report of Mr. Cerre of the flattering expressions made by the General in Chief, I was inspired with renovated ardor for the enterprise I had undertaken being now determined to accomplish it at all hazards. Previous to putting this intention into practice I had prevailed upon Mr. Cerre to take charge of my letters and reports to the General in Chief, General Eustis and other gentlemen, which although he had now become attached to the American Fur Company and felt some delicacy in doing, he did promise to forward them to their various addresses, upon his reaching Council Bluffs.—These letters owing to causes impossible for me to explain, I regret to state, never reached their destination, which appears to have been the fate of most of the communications made to the States & which it was next to an impossibility to accomplish without employing persons expressly for that purpose.

Having supplied my party and self each with a load of dried meat, I proceeded West North West over the Portneuf and Cassia Mountains and fell upon Snake River early in July 1834—Kept down the Valley of that river for several days, then left it taking a course West South West over the Wyee and Green River Mountains, so as to fall low down upon the Columbia, which I did about thirty miles below Walla Wallah a trading post of the Hudson Bay Company, to which place I repaired in order to procure provisions. On my arrival aid of every species was not only refused, but the settlers used all their influence with the Indians, not only not to trade with us but to hold no intercourse whatever. Here I became acquainted with the Shoshones, the Lower Nez Perces, or Salmon eaters, the Skyuses, the Walla Wallah and Torellican tribes—Notwithstanding the unkind reception of the traders I continued down the Columbia, subsisting on horses, dogs, roots & occasionally a Salmon, until I reached the vicinity of Mounts Hood and Baker, both of which are visible

from the Pacific Ocean. I now discovered that if I advanced much farther, the snow that was then falling in the mountains would soon prevent my retreat from this impoverished country and that in the spring I would not have a horse left—as it would become indispensably necessary to slaughter them for subsistence.—I consequently took a south course and entered the mountains of John Day's River, gradually turning my course towards the mountains of the Upper Country, which I reached the 15 November 1834, my men and horses completely exhausted. Shortly after this moving slowly up Bear River, I fell in with a village of Shoshones and determined to unite with them to pass the winter. About the 10th January 1835 we came upon a village of Eutaw Indians, that had been caught there by the snow, as the two tribes were at war, I used all my influence and a treaty of peace was made between these two tribes—and all united for greater safety from the Black Foot tribes continually prowling for plunder & delighting in bloodshed.

Believing now that I had fully executed the order of the General in chief and that from my maps, charts and diary I would be able to furnish the Department of War, with every information desired, respecting the Rocky Mountains and the Oregon Territory I therefore congratulated myself with the pleasing anticipation that in the spring I should be able to leave this cold and solitary region for the more genial one of society and civilization.—Accordingly, so soon as the snows had melted away I moved eastwardly to the Popo Agie river, where I lay to give my horses flesh and good hoofs for the long rout of returning home, which I did by the head of Powder River and its mountains,—arriving at Independence Missouri the 22d August 1835. Imagine then, upon my return to the settlements, what must have been my mortification, when instead of the approbation I expected for my exertions and enterprise, I learned my name had been dropped from the rolls of the Army and the consequent loss of my commission which I held dearer than life.

Raised at the Military Academy, I became as it were identified with the Army; 'twas my soul, my existence, my only happiness and at a time, that I was exerting every nerve to win the approbation of my superiors—I find myself branded as a culprit—'tis mortifying indeed—My character as a soldier has been fair too long—to believe my superiors will hesitate one moment to restore me my character and my rank.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Very respectfully,

Your most obdt. svt.

B. L. E. BONNEVILLE

Late Capt. 7 Regt. U.S. Infy.

*About a Longer Furlough*

St. Louis 9th Dec. 1835.

Dear Sir

In 1833 I was charged by you with a letter addressed to Gen. McComb, which I have delivered myself to him; the letter was not read in my presence, but on returning to Gen. Mc. that same evening he then told me that your letter had given him great satisfaction. He asked me several questions relative to your expedition; such as has Capt. Bonneville taken any observations on his rout, does he keep a minute of his travels, did he go into Oregon, where was he to go when you left at the Big Horn, when will he return to the U. States, &c. In answering the latter, I told him that it was impossible for you to return in due time to comply with your furlough; but you expected to be permitted to remain in the mountains a longer space of time so as to be able to give a general satisfaction—I stated to you in July, 1834, at the Little Lake that it was more than probable that Gen. McComb should have written to you had I returned through Washington, & that a longer absence should have been granted you.

It may be that Gen. McComb told that your furlough should be continued for a longer time; but I cannot say positively that he did. However I confess that it was my impression at that time, as well as at present, the Government was satisfied that you should remain some time in the mountains for the sake of acquiring information.

The above statement is to the best of my knowledge.

Nothing more for the present, but remain your

Most Obedient Servt &  
friend,

M. S. CERRE.

*Claims to Have Done His Duty*

Washington City

Decr 7th 1836.

To the Honble Lewis Cass

Secretary of War,

Sir:

Referring to the memorial of a portion of the officers of the 7th Infantry, I cannot but express my regret at this ungenerous act—I scarcely could have believed, had I not seen it. In answer to it I will state a few facts.—I went to the mountains under instructions to perform certain duties, unable to finish them in the given time, I reported the fact, stating what I had done and expected next to do,—and as soon as I conceived I had accomplished it I returned—before, I could not, without becoming an object of ridicule in the whole Army—That my report was received is acknowledged, and to get it into the possession of General Macomb, I especially employed Mr. Cerre, and paid his expenses from St. Louis to this city, that it might be delivered in person and he became the bearer of the reply.

Why I did not receive a written answer either for or against my request, is what I have heretofore attempted to explain.—That my report at that time was deemed satisfactory by Genl. Macomb, is what can readily be established without going beyond the limits of this District. If satisfactory, in what could it be so, unless it be in the approval of what I had done and what I was still doing—which is nothing more nor less than granting the indulgence requested and to continue the duty I had been required to perform.

That I started as a trader and acted as such, is what I never attempted to conceal. Genls. Scott, Eustis and even Genl. Macomb assisted me to become one, as their letters now in my possession will show. The whole army knew it. It was deemed more proper for me to go as such, and without expense to the Government furnish them with such information as they believed useful and interesting to the country; than for the Government to be at the expense of hiring men for that purpose, and of making presents to every Indian nation they should meet. That I have particularly attended to the duties pointed out in my instruction, I think will be admitted by the report of General Macomb in which he distinctly states that I have collected every information called for in my instructions—His Excellency the President, who has as yet seen merely the first part of my labours, I am induced to believe and hope approves of what he has read—As to that part of the memorial stating I could have returned, I agree,—for I firmly believe that with four or five men I can go to and come from the mountains, at any time the grass will nourish my horses—and with the same number of men, though I may be at times driven from my route, can ultimately circulate through every

part of them—thus much I have acquired by my residence in the mountains— —That Mr. Sublette came from the mountains in the spring of 1834—I am ignorant of. I never met that gentleman there—But that I prolonged my stay in that country, beyond the period necessary to obtain the information required is an error—for the moment I found my public labours completed, I left my people, my company, and every thing there, in the hands of agents and came myself to deliver my report— —That my claim has been thought founded in justice, may be inferred from the fact, that Genl. Macomb communicated to me, thro' his aid de camp, as the result of a conversation between himself and the Secretary of War, that I would be nominated to the Senate, and therefore advised me to make myself easy on that subject—Under these impressions, I cannot believe a memorial from a few interested officers, totally unacquainted with the circumstances, will ever be permitted to stand to my prejudice— —Mr. Cerre could readily prove the delivery of this report, and General Macomb's approval, I believe this gentleman to be in the mountains—yet the possibility of an expected return has induced me to write and to ascertain that fact, which a few days will determine.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your most obt. servt.

B. L. E. BONNEVILLE

Late Captn. 7th Infantry.

---

*Bonneville's Official Eulogy*

Rev. J. Neilson Barry, of Portland, Oregon, has obtained from the Library of Congress a photostat copy of the following extract from the official publication of the United States Military Academy at West Point for the Academy's annual reunion, June 13, 1878. That the eulogy is twice official is shown by the Academy's publication credit for the article to the *Army and Navy Journal*. As the files of these publications are not accessible in the Pacific Northwest, this eulogy is reproduced in full.—

THE EDITOR.

BENJAMIN L. E. BONNEVILLE.

NO. 155. CLASS OF 1815.

Died June 12, 1878, at Fort Smith, Ark., aged 85.

General Benjamin L. E. Bonneville, who recently died at Fort Smith, Ark., was born in France in 1793. His father emigrated to this country sometime during or shortly after the French revolu-

tion, and settled in New York City. He has been described as a kindly old gentleman, possessed of a happy temperament, great simplicity of heart. He was an excellent scholar. Washington Irving tells us that often would he be seen in summer weather seated under one of the trees on the Battery or on the portico of St. Paul's Church in Broadway, his bald head uncovered, his hat lying by his side, his eyes riveted to the page of his book, all unconscious of the passing throng or the passing hour. The son inherited to a very great degree the *bonhomie* of his father, and to this he added the love of the life of the *voyageur*. In 1813 he received an appointment as cadet at the Military Academy, graduating in 1815. In those days no class standing was established, neither was the term of the course fixed. Young Bonneville was the 155th graduate of the institution, and among his classmates were the late Colonel James Monroe, General Samuel Cooper, General Leslie, and Professor Charles Davies. All of the class are now gone, and those just mentioned have passed away within a few years.

The last war with Great Britain had just closed, and in the partial reorganization of the army young Bonneville fell to the corps of Light Artillery, but in 1819 he was transferred to the Eighth Infantry, and in the more extensive reorganization of the army in 1821, he was retained as First Lieutenant of the Seventh Infantry, and he was promoted to captain in 1825. After serving at various posts in the West for several years he was again seized with his old desire to explore the great West. At that time the country west of the Mississippi was "the great American desert," a perfect *terra incognita*. It is true that a few enterprising men had carried on a traffic in furs and peltries for some years, and there was a great rivalry between the company of which John Jacob Astor was at the head, and the Rocky Mountain company, the head of which was our esteemed friend, Robert Campbell, of St. Louis, the Hudson's Bay company and the American (Chouteau) Fur Company. All of these companies had kept large parties of trappers in the field, engaged principally in trapping the beaver.

In 1831 Captain Bonneville made an application to be permitted to explore the great West, and a letter was received in reply from Alexander Macomb, Major-General commanding the Army, dated 'Headquarters of the Army, Washington, August 3, 1831.' It authorized him to be absent until the month of October, 1833,

it being understood that the expedition was to involve the Government in no expense, and was to devote himself to obtaining information of service to the Department, and was to report at every opportunity.

Armed with this letter Captain Bonneville proceeded to St. Louis, and having organized a party of 110 experienced trappers and lumbermen, he left the Missouri River at the old post of Fort Osage, on the 1st day of May, 1832.

Captain Bonneville had provided himself with the best outfit that his means would afford. He had some wagons, but he had to depend on pack animals principally. He had a few astronomical instruments, sufficient to enable him to determine his latitude, and longitude, and he had a plentiful supply of the trinkets which were at that time so much prized by the Indians; for the Captain's idea was not only to explore the country, but to find new and profitable trading grounds, and he went not only prepared to trade, but his party was provided with everything necessary for hunting and trapping.

The route he took when he left the Missouri River was substantially the same that was used seventeen years later by the emigrants for California and Oregon. This was up the South Platte, crossing the river near what is now Julesburg, thence up the Polo Creek route to where the Laramie River empties into the North Platte, or where Fort Laramie now stands, and thence up the Sweetwater. It was not until the 26th of September that the first winter camp was established on the Salmon River. Here he was soon surrounded by numerous friendly bands of Nez Percés and Flatheads, whose ponies soon cleaned the country of the grass, and the Captain was obliged to move his camp. He organized a party to go around the great Salt Lake while he went up through the Grand Road and over the Blue Mountains to Fort Walla Walla, where the Hudson's Bay Company had a trading post. Being rather uncivilly treated here he returned to his old ground, and after moving around the country which is now in Northern Idaho, for some months, he made his second winter camp on the Pont Neuf River.

In the meantime the Captain did not appear to pay much attention to making his monthly reports to Washington, and we shrewdly suspect that he did not bother himself much in thinking of his letter of instructions or of General Macomb. At any rate he did not set his face eastward until the spring of 1835, and he

did not reach the settlements of the Missouri River until the latter part of August of that year. In the meantime, as nothing had been heard of the Captain for a long time after "the month of October, 1833," he was supposed to have been lost, and his name had been dropped from the Army Register. He had some difficulty in arranging this affair at the War Department, but in time he was restored to his old position in the Seventh Infantry, where he served until 1845, when he was promoted Major of the Sixth Infantry, and he joined his regiment just before the commencement of the Mexican war.

At the savage attack by our army on the fortified Convent of Churubusco in August, 1847, the Major commanded his regiment. It was a glorious day for our little army, but Captain Hoffman of the Sixth had seen his brother, who was a Lieutenant of Artillery, killed before his eyes; he was exasperated, and he made such charges of mismanagement on part of Major Bonneville that a Court-martial was ordered to settle the case. The Major, or "Old Bonny," as we called him, was such a genial, kind, companionable old fellow that a great deal of regret was expressed at the action of the Captain. The trial did not result in much, but it mortified the Major terribly, and he could never forget it. He was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel of the Fourth Infantry in 1849, and in 1855, after forty years of service, he was promoted Colonel of the Third Infantry. Since his retirement in 1861 he lived in the West. He married for the second time a lady at Fort Smith, and he was living a quiet, happy life when the message came.

By a former marriage General Bonneville had a charming daughter, who was the pride of the old man's heart, and a great favorite with all who knew her. She died many years since, and for a quarter of a century the old gentleman was alone in the world. He was excellent company, fond of the society of young people. His amiability and genial ways made him a favorite with old and young, and up to the time of his death we had never heard of his being ill a day in his long life. Employing the peculiar phrases so much used by the good old gentleman, we will only add: "I tell you, sir, we'll never see him any more, sir; I tell you, sir, no more."