

DAVID THOMPSON'S JOURNEY IN THE PEND OREILLE COUNTRY

This is the third and final of three journals kept by David Thompson during his travels in the years 1809, 1810 and 1811 through what is now Pend Oreille County, Washington. These journals contain the first written record of the coming of white men to the County. A statement already made in this series that Thompson was the first white man to visit the County may not be strictly correct. Finnan MacDonald, his assistant, who is mentioned in the journals, possibly passed through the County during these same years but has left no journal or letters as far as is now known.

Since the next previous journal (April, 1810) Thompson has twice journeyed across the Rocky Mountains. He is now on his way to the recently established trading post known as Spokane House which was commenced in the summer of 1810 and antedated the founding of Astoria in April, 1811.

The season of 1811 was one of extremely high water in the Pend Oreille and Columbia Rivers. Of that fact these journals have become a valuable record for United States engineers in their study of the history of these streams. This condition enabled Thompson to travel from Kullyspell House on Pend Oreille Lake to Cusick on the river in about half the time he had consumed on the two previous journeys. From the south end of Calispell Lake his pack train followed the regular Indian trail south to the Spokane River at a point about one-half mile below the mouth of the Little Spokane. Over a part of this Indian trail the first wagon road from Spokane north to the lower Pend Oreille Valley was constructed many years later and is still used through the woods by way of Sachene Lake.

The later entries of this journal have previously been printed in number three of Volume VIII of this *Quarterly* in a series entitled "David Thompson's Journeys in the Spokane Country" the courses and distances are obscure among numerous ponds and small lakes near the south line of the County and in Spokane County adjoining and the local names have changed during the years. Close annotation is impossible. Thompson seems to have traveled north of Eloika Lake and east of the town of Deer Park.

One interesting fact is established by these journals, namely, that a few mixed-blood French and Indian trappers from across

the Rocky Mountains were already living among and probably had intermarried with the Kullyspell and Spokane tribes. Here is a field for some future writer of romance and fiction.

David Thompson was born in London in the year 1770 and died near Montreal in the year 1857. He was married and his family traveled with him on some of his journeys but not when he was passing through Pend Oreille County.

David Thompson Journal

1811, *June 7th Friday*. A fine Morning & Day at 2½ AM set off¹ dawn of day crossed the Lake & at the Rock below the Sandy pt² put ashore at at 7 AM here we dried our things, much wetted & spoiling & gummed the Canoe which from the Ho. has been so leaky as to keep a man continually bailing out water at 11 ½ AM set off held on against a slight head wind at 4 PM at the Falls³ obliged to carry on the right abt ¾ M as the water is exceeding high gummed a little & at 6 ⅓ PM set off & held on to 7-5 PM when we put up.

June 8th Saturday. Light Rain did not set off till 5 ½ AM when we ran down to 7 AM to the upper end of the Root Plains⁴ here we saw a Tent of Indians who informed us that several of the Tents were below us to them we went for further information from the little Chief & Haranguer from whom I learnt that Mr. McDonald & Jaco⁵ with the men &c were on the Skeetshoo River⁶ at the House there I got off an Indian & Cote with a Letter as soon as pollible to tell them to bring us Horses for the transportation of the Goods &c & what Provisions they can find us Expd 2 ft of Tob in bits to the Indians &c sent 1 fm of Tob 20 Balls & ¾ Pt of Powder to Mr. McDonald took 1 fm of do for Expences paid for Roots Tob ½ Skin sent 2 Men a hunting of Chevrail Killed 3 large woodcocks & 1 duck the whole of the Plains are buried under water like a Deluge we are camped at the foot of the high Banks much Rain in Showers with Thunder & Lightning but mild

The general Idea of all Indians is that war is a Sacrifice of Blood to the Great Spirit this is the first Motive, tho in the prosecution of this Deed their own Blood is often spilt & this brings in the Idea of Revenge added to the first, which still bears the reigning

1 Kullyspell House; then vacated and trade transferred to trading-post on Spokane River.

2 Sand Point, Idaho; but where was this rock?

3 Albeni Falls.

4 Camas meadows south and west of Cusick, Wash.

5 Finnan MacDonald, native Scotsman, and Jaques Finlay, mixed-blood, assistants of David Thompson, who had established Spokane House under his instructions and during his absence.

6 Spokane River, called by Thompson the Skeetshoo (Coeur d'Alene) River.

Idea. Every warrior puts white Earth on his Head as a kind of Mourning for those who are to fall & Penance for himself, that the Great Spirit may give him Success As soon as he rises each Morning while on his excursion he cries for a few Minutes in a loud voice as one afflicted with Grief every time he smokes, before the pipe-stem touches his lips, he begs the Master of Life that he may slay his Man & offer the Sacrifice of Blood this Idea is pushed so far that having at their outset, under the auspices of their Idols, vowed Blood they consider it as a great misfortune not to have shed Blood & sometimes go so far as to kill one of their own Party or raise part of the scalp of some one of their Friends or allies, whom they may meet on their return without offering him any further hurt they have now shed Blood & are clear of their vow. Beware, said an old Indian warrior to a party of white Hunters, Beware of a small war Party, they are always cruel, as they are not strong enough to attack those they see of their Enemies when numerous, they often return unsuccessful & must make the Blood of their Allies pay for their Vow a large war Party can always attack so as to shed Blood, & tho they should instantly fly, yet they have shed Blood & are clear of their vow they are under no further necessity to shed the Blood of any & their allies are safe.

June 9th Sunday--a day of much heavy & smart Rain with mild Thunder & Lightning Le bon Vieux⁷ & 2 or 3 others came to see me see expence Book he brought 12 Mulletts & 1 lb of cow meat.

June 10th Monday A rainy mornng. At 8 a. m. ceased & we loaded & went up abt. 1½m. to the woods where we camped on dry ground,⁸ 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. Loyer came to see us in the evening.

June 11th Tuesday A very rainy morning & day. Traded Roots & a horse & colt for the Men,⁹ 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, 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, 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. ³/₄M. down the River, we now

⁷ A free-hunter or trapper then living among the Kullyspell Indians.

⁸ Near Usk, Washington.

⁹ Food for the men; colt steaks were a luxury.

turned out of the river & went over inundated Ground S. 10 W. $\frac{3}{4}$ M. S. 3 W. $3\frac{1}{2}$ M. 11.5 a. m. to 2. 0 P.M. but waited for the Bon Vieux say 5', we then put up¹⁰ to arrange the Goods, of which we arranged to major part for the Horses &c.

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 the¹¹ $2\frac{1}{2}$ M. to a Lake on our right, this Lake is obliquely more than $\frac{1}{2}$ M. of the last Co., we went along the Lake abt. South by the ° 5 or 6 M. to $11\frac{1}{4}$ a. m., when we stopped to bait the Horses, & carried all the Goods over a Bridge across a narrow of the Lake¹² abt. 30 yds. wide. At $\frac{3}{4}$ P. M. set off & held on abt. S. 10 or 15 W. by the ° $5\frac{1}{2}$. sharp walkg. to 3 P.M. when we crossed a Brook 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. $\frac{1}{4}$ M., crossed another Brook 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 $3\frac{1}{2}$ P. M. as there is no water near us. Co. say S. 30 W. $1\frac{1}{4}$ 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 Brook 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 River¹³ we then turned off abt. S. b. E. $1\frac{1}{2}$ M. to the House of the N. W. Co'y. Thank Heaven for our good safe journey, here we found Jaco &c. with abt. 40 Spokane Families.

T. C. ELLIOTT.

¹⁰ Near southeast corner of Calispell Lake.

¹¹ Thompson's way of writing the word sun. For the word across he used another symbol like the figure 8 horizontally.

¹² This lake is difficult to identify. May have been an extended beaver-dam bottom which was then inundated but since has been drained, but location not far from Sachene Lake.

¹³ Spokane River and trading-post. For continuation of this journal see *Washington Historical Quarterly*, Vol. IX, No. 1.