

DAVID THOMPSON'S JOURNEYS IN THE SPOKANE COUNTRY

It has been indicated in the earlier articles of this series (for which see Vol. 8 of the *Washington Historical Quarterly*) that David Thompson was the first white man of whose travels through the Spokane Country there is any written record; and it is this record which designates the location of the principal trails or roads used by the Indians before the white man came. One favorite meeting place for the Indians at that time was the triangular flat lying between the Spokane and the Little Spokane Rivers nine or ten miles northwest of the present city of Spokane. The main river was then known as the Skeetshoo River, at least as far as the junction of the two streams, and Spokane House, which was the first trading post erected and used by white men in the entire state of Washington, was situated on this flat.

When traveling from the falls or "chutes" of the Spokane River to the Colville Valley the Indians were not accustomed to follow the present line of road northward by way of Loon Lake but kept to the westward across Five Mile Prairie to Spokane House. There the Little Spokane was forded at its mouth and the trail kept on to Tumtum, and then cut across the hills north and westward to Chimakaine Creek, and thence northeast to the head of the Colville River near Springdale. This route, the writer has been informed, was the first used by wagons and stage between Spokane and Colville and is still much used, with deviation from Spokane over the Northwest Boulevard and the water grade by way of Nine Mile Bridge.

From Springdale the Indians continued down the Colville Valley on the west side of the River. The main objective point was Kettle Falls, where in the proper season the Indians maintained the most romantic salmon fishery of the entire Columbia River. The number of fish caught there was enormous and the manner of catching was peculiar. Spears were also used, of course, but the main catch was by means of baskets hung from the end of poles across and close to the falls, into which the fish dropped after a vain attempt to swim up through the water running over the ledge or reef forming the falls. These baskets were constructed of hazel or birch osiers woven together with withes and roots. The name attached to these falls in David Thompson's time was *Ilth-koy-ape*, pronounced with a deep guttural and with a slight accent on the middle syllable, derived

from two Salish words, *ilth-kape*, meaning "kettle," and *hoy-ape*, meaning "net." The word was intended to describe the place where fish were caught in the net or basket kettle.

Those parts of the David Thompson Journals reproduced here-with contain his account of two journeys from Spokane House to Ilthkoyape in the year 1811. The first journey was in June immediately after his arrival at Spokane House from the headwaters of the Columbia River by way of the Kootenai and Pend Oreille Rivers. (See *Washington Historical Quarterly*, Volume 8.) He was then on his way to the mouth of the Columbia River. His knowledge of the Spokane and Colville Valleys had been obtained from the Indians, from his two clerks, Finan McDonald and Jaco Finlay, and from some of his former canoemen who had settled and intermarried in the region and were trapping on their own account. These men were French-Canadians or half-breeds.

The water in all streams was exceedingly high in 1811, and that fact renders it difficult to identify some of the creeks crossed by Mr. Thompson on the first journey. This condition compelled him to cross over to the east side of the Colville Valley and make use of the higher trail coming from the Calispell district across the mountains between the Colville and the Pend Oreille Rivers.

Mr. Thompson uses the figure eight written horizontally for the word "across," and a circle with dot in the center to represent the sun.

Mr. J. A. Meyers, of Meyers Falls, has rendered valuable assistance in preparing these annotations.

Beginning with June 17, 1811, Mr. Thompson's journal reads as follows:

[1811]

June 17th.

Monday. A very hot day, like those past. Sent Tobacco to the 4 Chiefs of the Skeetshoo¹ & the Chief of the Shaw pa tins² to desist from war on the Teck a ner gons³ & to make Provisions, also to hold themselves ready for the war on the Peagons⁴ by next September. Not being able to find the horses till late we did not set off till 8 3/4 a. m., when we returned down the river the same way we came, abt.

¹The Coeur d'Alene Indians.

²The Nez Perce Indians.

³The Okanogan Indians.

⁴The Blackfeet Indians of Montana, who were a common menace to all the tribes visiting the buffalo country every year.

300 yds below the place of the Kullyspel⁵ Road, we went up the Banks to the Ilth Koy ape⁶ Road at 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ a. m., and held on abt. N. 20 W. to 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ a. m. 9 miles, when we baited at a small rill, having again come upon the River & followed it near a mile.⁷ The River here turns off abt. S. S. W., constant strong current. At 1.50 P. M. set off & held on till 5 P. M., the Men at 6 P. M. Say N. 10 to 20 W. 10 M. here 2 Roads separated, we took the left & go off abt. N. 50 W. to a Brook⁸ 1 M. & camped. Very many Musketoes & very troublesome. The Brook is abt. 4 yds \propto killed an old Horse, bought of Buche for Food. The Road of this Morning cuts a large Point of the Spokane River, we then leave it entirely and go straight for the Columbia River,—the Road of the morning good but hilly, the soil sandy, rocky & much small gravel at times. Woods only of Cypress,⁹ red Fir & Fir Pine, along the River Poplar & Aspin, but not in quantities:—in the afternoon Wood of Red Pine, with Fir Pine & Cypress. The first part hilly & rocky, then tolerable level & much of it along a Brook that runs on our left & joins the one we camped on somewhere before us I should suppose, perhaps not. Observed Merid. Altde. of Mars, 40° 44 $\frac{1}{2}$ ' but the Star was falling, it may serve as a good guess. Lat. 48° 4' 4" N. Decn. 21. 37. 24. S.

June 18th

Tuesday. A morning of much Thunder & Lightning with a little Rain. At 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ a. m. set off. Michel Alloric paid us a visit for a few minutes. We went abt. N. 50 W. $\frac{1}{2}$ M. & recrossed the Brook¹⁰ of yesterday eveng., then 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ M. to another Brook, crossed it to the westd. \propto 4 yds., held on say 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ M., crossed a bold Brook in 2 Branches, say 8 yds. \propto , 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ M. to the Indians, where we traded 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ Sacks of Roots & crossed the Brook of 3 yds. \propto then N. 80 W 3 M. to the Tent to Revé,¹¹ & 4 Tents of Indians. Here we baited the Horses at 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ a. m., at 1.50 P. M. set off & held on abt. N. 60 E., say a Brook of 3 yds. \propto directly then 6 m., a Brook¹² of 6 Yds, \propto then

⁵The trail leading north to Calispell Lake and the camas meadows between that Lake and the Pend Oreille River.

⁶The trail leading to Kettle Falls.

⁷At present Tumtum; consult any map of Stevens County for this road and camping place.

⁸Chimakaine Creek (Tshimakain).

⁹Tamarac.

¹⁰Chimakaine Creek again. Beyond this he evidently crossed several streams forming head of Colville River, and Deer Creek in two branches.

¹¹Probably Francois Rivet, a French-Canadian, and afterward for many years an interpreter for the North-West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company. He settled in the Willamette Valley during the forties and died on a donation land claim there. His daughter became the wife of Peter Skene Ogden.

¹²Probably Smith or Dunn Creek.

+ 3 M. a Brook¹³ of 6 yds. ∞ deep, put up at 5 P. M. Killed 1 Curlew, 1 Pigeon & 1 large Partridge; fine Ground all day & all the Brooks we crossed are from the left to the right & the Road always following down in the direction of the main Brook. Obsd. Mars. Merid. Altde. $40^{\circ} 12\frac{1}{2}$ OG. The ground of the day seems very fit for cultivation, black deep mould & the higher Ground a kind of black gray greasy Earth. Woods as yesterday, mostly all red Fir. Latde. $48^{\circ} 20' 42''$ N. Decn $21^{\circ} 36' 41''$ S.

June 19

Wednesday. A fine day, tho' a few smart showers of Rain in the Afternoon. At $5\frac{1}{2}$ a. m. set off & held on abt. N. 20 W. say 5 M., $1\frac{1}{2}$ M. gone, crossed a Brook to 7 A. M., the Men at $7\frac{1}{4}$ a. m., here I sent Michel for a Canoe to cross us over the Main Brook,¹⁴ which we got done by $9\frac{1}{2}$ a. m. ready to set off. Paid for Roots & Fish 12 In. of Tob. Gave for the use of the Canoe 6 In. do., traded 22 Rats, at 9.40 a. m. set off Co. abt. N. 30 W. 8 M. $11\text{-}3\frac{1}{4}$ a.m. when we baited the horses, near 2 Tents of Iloy koy ape Indians. Abt. 3 M. gone we crossed a Brook¹⁵ of 6 Yds. ∞ At $1\text{-}3\frac{1}{4}$ P. M. set off & held on abt. N. 20 W. 3 M., crossed a bold Brook¹⁶ of 12 yds. ∞ then N. 40 W. 2 M., crossed another Brook¹⁷ 6 yds ∞ also from the Northd. they both in a short distce. join the Main Brook W. 20 N. abt. 6 M. to the Ilth Koy ape Fall & Indians on the Banks of the Columbia. Thank kind Heaven for this safe voyage. Here we camped as we are now to make Canoes for the rest of our Voyage.

In August David Thompson again reached Spokane House, having returned from Astoria by way of Snake River and the trail from the mouth of the Palouse River; and almost immediately set out for Kettle Falls again. He was to build new canoes and ascend the Columbia River through the Arrow Lakes and thus complete his survey of the entire River that year. His second journey was over nearly the same trail as the first and is for the most part confirmatory. The text of the original journal is very much faded and is difficult to decipher and there are seeming contradictions in both these excerpts which cannot be clearly explained.

¹³Probably Stranger Creek.

¹⁴The main brook is the Colville River and this crossing was near the present town of Arden.

¹⁵The Little Pend Oreille River.

¹⁶Mill Creek, after baiting the horses on present site of Colville.

¹⁷A slough from the Colville River, draining Spanish Prairie.

Beginning with August 14, 1811, the journal reads:

[1811]

Aug. 14th.

Wednesday. A fine day, much Indian business & arranging the Furr's &c. for to take the acct. of do. They catch but few Salmon & those of a poor quality. Merid. Altde. of \odot LL. $117^{\circ} 30' W.$ $112^{\circ} 58' V. G.$

Aug. 15th.

Thursday. A fine day. Sent Michel to the Saleesh¹⁸ River. Several Kullyspells arrived. Finished the acct. of the Furr's &c.

Obs. \odot LL. $112^{\circ} 21' G.$ Latde. 47-47-2m. Decn. 14-11-3W.

Aug. 16th.

Friday. A fine day. Many of the Indians, mostly Skeetshoo, went away. Put our things in order to go off the Morrow & arranging many little matters. Acct. of the Goods &c. &c.

Aug. 17th

Saturday. A blowy cloudy day. Early began arranging, but it was $1\frac{1}{4}$ p.m. before the men could get off, before the Horses could be found &c. Our baggage &c. is on 3 Horses. At $3\frac{1}{2}$ p.m. set off, having waited Michel. Co. by the Compass down the Spokane River N. W. 8 m. to the place where we baited formerly in June, here we camped¹⁹ at 5-1/3 p. m. Killed 2 Ducks, & 1 pigeon. We have with us 32 lbs of Salmon dried.

Aug. 18th

Sunday. A fine day. at 6-3/4 a. m. set off & held on up the Banks & by 9 a.m. below the banks at the Brook.²⁰ Co. by the \odot N. 10 W.; $4\frac{1}{2}$ m. there is a plain. At 10 a. m. crossed a brook ²¹ of 2 yds. \propto that goes to the Spokane River. Co. N. 30 W. 2 m. then to noon crossing a Ridge of Knowls to a Brook of 1 yd. \propto that runs to the North.²² Co. N. 20 W. 4 m. baited the Horses at 2.10 p. m. Set off. Co. W. $\frac{1}{4}$ m. up a Rill which came from S. 30 W. 3 m. Co. N. 10 E. $6\frac{1}{2}$ m. to a Brook from Wd. to N. E. + $\frac{1}{2}$ m. to a large Brook, Co. do. to N. ed. 5 yds. \propto Co. N. 15 E. 3 m. to a Brook at which we

¹⁸The Pend Oreille River. David Thompson applied this name Saleesh to the River running from the Saleesh or Flathead Lake clear through to the Columbia River. A "South Branch" came from the Bitter Root Valley.

¹⁹Tumtum, Stevens County, Washington.

²⁰Chimakaine Creek.

²¹Compare with entry of June 17th, prox. Mr. Thompson evidently took the right hand road this time, to neighborhood of Springdale, crossing a small creek flowing into Chimakaine Creek on the way.

²²One of the small creeks at head of Colville River.

camped at 6-3/4 p. m. the last 1 m. nearly down along the Brook,²³ Michel joined us.

Aug. 19th.

Monday. Froze to Ice this morning. A fine day. At 7 a. m. set off, Co. N. 30 E. 2 1/2 m., a Rill, Co. N. 20 E. 2 1/4 m. to a Brook, Co. North 6 m. to a Rill, baited at 11 1/2 a. m., the last 3 m. we have been along a considerable Brook.²⁴ 2 p. m. set off, Co. N. 10 E. 2 m. to a Rile from S. Wd., Co. N. 10 E. 2 m., passed a Brook²⁵ of 3 yds. α Co. N. 3 1/4 m. to where we crossed in a Canoe in June. Co. North 6 m. & put up at 7 p. m. Bon Vieux²⁶ in company. We keep on the So. Side of the Brook.²⁷

Aug. 20th

Tuesday. A fine day. Froze to Ice this morning. At 6-3/4 a. m. set off, Co. N. 10 W. 3 m. Co. N. 40 W. 5 m. to where we crossed the Root Brook,²⁸ the crossing place²⁹ is good, & quite shoal, say 1 ft. of water, in this Co. is 2 Rills,³⁰ abt. 1 m. + 1 m. beyond the crossing place. Co. N. W. 2 1/2 m. to the Ilthkoyape Falls on the Columbia at 1 p.m. thank Heaven. The Ilthkoyape & Cochenawyer³¹ Indians gave us a dance & made me a present of Berries & dried Salmon, for which I laid down Tob. & other things to the amount of 32 Skins. 8 Spokanes with us.

T. C. ELLIOTT.

²³Impossible to identify these streams, but the camp probably on Huckleberry Creek.

²⁴Probably Dunn Creek.

²⁵Probably Strenger Creek.

²⁶Jacques Hoole. See Vol. 8 of this Quarterly.

²⁷That is, on the west and south side of the Colville River. This camp just west of present city of Colville.

²⁸His usual designation for the Colville River.

²⁹Just above Meyers Falls.

³⁰One of these was Gold Creek.

³¹That is, the Okanogan Indians.