

THE QUARTERLY
of the
Oregon Historical Society

VOLUME XXIV

DECEMBER, 1923

NUMBER 4

Copyright, 1923, by the Oregon Historical Society
The Quarterly disavows responsibility for the positions taken by contributors
to its pages.

MORE ABOUT ASTORIANS*

By STELLA M. DRUMM, *Librarian,*
Missouri Historical Society

On April 30, 1813, there arrived in St. Louis seven exhausted men returning from a journey of which more than 1500 miles was on foot. Included in this party were Ramsay Crooks, Robert McClellan and Benjamin Jones. They had left Astoria June 29, 1812, with important dispatches for John Jacob Astor. The little expedition was commanded by Robert Stuart.¹ John Day had also started with them, but because of a mental breakdown was sent back to the Fort. Ramsay Crooks and Robert McClellan had been partners in the Pacific Fur Company, but being dissatisfied gave up their partnership interest and withdrew.²

*Address before the annual meeting of the members of the Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon, October 28, 1923.

¹In the Pacific Fur Company Minute Book is this resolution: Resolved that it being necessary to send an express to New York and all the papers and other things being prepared, Mr. Robert Stuart is hereby instructed to have and to take charge of them, with which he is to go as directly to N. Y. as circumstances will admit, and there to be governed by the directions of Mr. Astor as to the time of his returning to the Northwest coast. It is also resolved that John Day, Benjamin Jones, Francois LeClerc and Andree Vallee accompany Mr. Stuart as far as St. Louis where he is to pay them the balance due each by means of drafts drawn by our W. P. Hunt on John Jacob Astor. June 27, 1812. (Missouri Hist. Soc. MSS.)

²*Ibid.* "Resolved that Robert McClellan having expressed his intention

Upon their arrival at St. Louis the men were hailed with great joy. Much anxiety had been felt for the safety of the Astorians, for news of the fate of the ship *Tonquin* had reached St. Louis in May, 1812.³

Starvation, and most every other peril had faced this little band of brave men on their return journey overland, but all their hardships were soon forgotten and great was their enthusiasm over the finding of a new route. The local newspaper in publishing the news of their return said: "The narrative of this event will evince to the world that a journey to the Western Sea will not be considered (within a few years) of much greater importance than a trip to New York." This paper further said that "By information received from these gentlemen a journey across the continent of North America might be performed with a waggon, there being no obstruction in the whole route that any person would dare to call a mountain in addition to its being the most direct route to go from this place to the mouth of the Columbia."⁴ Not until the spring of 1830, however, were wagons used on the Oregon Trail.

When the party reached the Walla Walla river on this return journey they secured horses from the Indians and started off southward and across the Blue Mountains. After leaving the Snake river country they became confused and were lost. They suffered almost every hardship imaginable. They were followed by a party of hostile Crows who stampeded their horses and thus forced

of withdrawing from the concern should he not have an augmentation of shares be permitted so to withdraw, and that he be no longer considered a partner of the Pacific Fur Co., nor in any way entitled to any right, etc. arising from his having been a partner. Astoria, March 1, 1812.

Ramsay Crooks relinquished all right to the interest he held in the Pacific Fur Co.—to-wit five shares. Also relinquished all profits and emoluments or privileges arising from having been a partner thereof. Binds himself not to engage or be concerned in the Indian trade or in any business whatever which may effect the interest of said Company. May 14, 1812." (Missouri Hist. Soc. MSS.)

³Letter from Charles Gratiot, St. Louis, May 31, 1812, to John Jacob Astor. (Gratiot Letter Book—Mo. Hist. Soc. MSS.)

⁴*Missouri Gazette*, May 8th and 15th, 1813.

them to proceed on foot. Being without food for five days, LeClerc suggested that lots be cast to decide which one of the party should be killed and devoured, as the only alternative to death for all. Fortunately this suggestion was not adopted. Because of the dangers encountered on the outward journey they chose a more southerly route, leading to the Platte and thence to the Missouri river, where canoes were secured for the last lap of the arduous journey. The route taken by them, in its greater extent, became later the Oregon Trail. Ramsay Crooks claimed they went through the celebrated South Pass,⁵ the discovery of which in later years, has been credited to Fitzpatrick and other, and claimed also by Fremont.

How short-lived is popular enthusiasm and hero-worship! During the campaign for Governor of the new State of Missouri, in 1820, the followers of Gen. William Clark urged his election because "he had been to the Pacific Ocean and had seen and faced many hostile Indians." An opposition paper scornfully printed an editorial to the effect that having seen the Pacific Ocean was not a sufficient qualification; that Wilson P. Hunt had also been there, but was considered unfit for a seat in the Constitutional Convention and was actually defeated. The editor further stated "we doubt very much if Russell Farnham, who has been to the Pacific Ocean, and who is the only man who has circumnavigated the globe overland in northern latitudes, would be thought to be entitled to the office of Governor of Missouri." A few years later when George Shannon was a candidate for United States Senator from Missouri an enthusiastic campaigner boasted of the part he had taken, when a mere youth, in the famous expedition of Lewis and Clark. He was likewise ridiculed and defeated.

You all know the story of the struggle, hardships and

⁵Letter from Ramsay Crooks to Anthony Dudgeon, New York, June 26, 1856.

failure of the Pacific Fur Company. Something of the lives of the leaders and a few of the men has been published, but there is much of interest left to be told.

I have selected for comment four of these men, whose lives are of interest to most people. Two of them had unusually romantic and eventful lives. Another gave his name to two streams in the Oregon Country⁶ and there, in the language of the old trappers "paid the debt of nature." Still another, though known simply as a guide and hunter, was evidently a man of substance and education.

Russel Farnham

An oil portrait of this Astorian is hanging in the museum of the Missouri Historical Society at St. Louis, and the label contains this legend: "Walked from Oregon to St. Petersburg, 1813-1814."

Upon reading this statement one might well exclaim: "Remarkable, if true!" It has been questioned many times, of course, but any one referring to our local histories will find it verified.⁷ They say that he walked from St. Louis to St. Petersburg. These accounts would be more nearly exact if they did not picture him as walking across the frozen Straits. The truth about Farnham is stranger than fiction, and this fable detracts from, instead of adding to, his just fame.

The occasion of this remarkable journey was the desire to avoid capture by the British and to convey important dispatches, and possibly drafts, to Mr. Astor.⁸ On November 12, 1813, the remaining partners at Astoria (Hunt being absent) sold out to the North West

⁶John Day creek near the mouth of the Columbia, and the John Day river in Eastern Oregon.

⁷Darby, John F.—*Personal Recollections of Many Prominent People*. St. Louis, 1880.

Shepard, Elihu H.—*Early History of St. Louis and Missouri*. St. Louis, 1870.

⁸Franchere, Gabriel—*Narrative of a Voyage to the Northwest Coast of America*. Redfield, 1854, pp. 369, 370.

Company. The sale brought \$58,000. After deducting wages this balance, together with the records, had to be sent to New York. Accordingly, Mr. Hunt on March 18, 1814, together with Farnham, J. C. Halsey, Alfred Seton and Bernard Clapp, embarked on a brig known as the *Pedlar*. They were compelled to stay at anchor until April 3, 1814, on account of the winds. Farnham was landed at Kamchatka, in Siberia, Halsey at Sitka. Mr. Hunt and Seton remained on the boat, which was captured off the coast of California, and held for two months.

The brig *Pedlar* had been purchased by Mr. Hunt at the Sandwich Islands, after he had waited a long while for the arrival of a ship expected from Mr. Astor. He paid \$10,550.00⁹ for it, and expected to use it for transporting provisions to Astoria, and for carrying away the furs.

From Kamchatka, Farnham started on his long journey to New York, walking through Russia and much of Europe. Most accounts say that he sailed from Hamburg to New York, by way of the West Indies. His passport, however, shows that he sailed from the city of Copenhagen.

This passport, dated 10 A. M. October 16, 1816, from the Police Magistrate in the Royal Residence, City of Copenhagen, makes known that the "super-cargo Russel Farnham, 32 years old, born in America, speaks English, is tall of stature, and of medium build, with light curly hair and brown eyes, intends now to journey from this City to the port of Baltimore. My official request is to all and every one whom said Russel Farnham may meet, that they allow him to pass on his journey without hindrance. The pass applies only to this and no other journeys, and here in this City only for three times 24 hours."

⁹Ross, Alexander—*Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River*. Thwaites ed. vol. 7, p. 261.

Coues, Elliott—*New Light on Early History of the Greater Northwest*.

John F. Darby, who served as the final administrator of the estate of Russel Farnham, says that Farnham had been intrusted with sterling bills on London for about forty thousand dollars, together with various dispatches, that Mr. Hunt had directed him to proceed by way of St. Petersburg, so that the bills might be collected for the benefit of Mr. Astor. "Mr. Farnham, with a small stock of provisions in a pack on his back, started on foot, across the Russian dominions, through that inhospitable country and severe climate to St. Petersburg. On this perilous journey he endured incredible sufferings, from hunger, exposure and want. From dire necessity he was forced to cut and eat the tops off his boots to sustain life. But having been blest with a robust and powerful constitution, which enabled him to meet and endure hardships, and an indomitable will and determination, whereby he was armed to overcome difficulties and dangers, he performed a feat which, for personal bravery, danger and daring, has never been equalled by any one man in ancient or modern times. He did that which Ledyard, the great American traveller, acting under instructions from Thomas Jefferson, had failed in twice, viz: to come east (that is, find a passage) from St. Petersburg to the American continent."¹⁰

After Farnham returned to the United States he continued in the employ of Mr. Astor. When the American Fur Company resumed operations after the War of 1812, Farnham bore the brunt of battle during the company's struggle to establish itself on the Missouri. To him belongs the credit of being the first trader in the employ of the American Fur Company to carry the business of that company into the valley of the Missouri.

The American Fur Company's force was largely recruited from Montreal, and when Farnham was assigned, in 1817, to manage the business on the Mississippi river and its dependencies, his outfit was composed mainly of

¹⁰Darby, John F.—*Personal Recollections*. St. Louis, 1880, p. 165.

Canadians. The Missouri Fur Company, and more especially Manuel Lisa, made strenuous efforts to keep Mr. Astor and the American Fur Company out of the Missouri country. This jealousy of the St. Louis traders towards Mr. Astor's company seemed to have affected in some degree the officials in the United States Indian Department. An act was passed in 1816 excluding British traders, although it did not prevent the engagement of foreigners in the service of American traders. Most of Mr. Astor's engagès were Canadians and the authorities near St. Louis seized upon this circumstance as proof of a violation of the law. Col. Talbot Chambers, of the Rifle Regiment, stationed at Fort Crawford, in September, 1817, thought proper to deny foreigners permission to accompany American traders down the Mississippi, and refused to recognize any authority to trade in that country other than the licenses emanating from the Governors of the Missouri and Illinois Territories. He therefore seized upon two boats belonging to the American Fur Company in command of Russel Farnham and Daniel Darling. These men and their boats were ordered to proceed to Fort Bellefontaine (not far from St. Louis) and report to Gen. Clark. Unfortunately Farnham had on board two notorious characters, one, a man named St. John, who had boasted of having hoisted on his boat, during the War of 1812, the scalps of three Americans. Farnham and Darling were en route to the DesMoines river to trade, and Col. Chambers insisted that in order to do so they must first obtain a license from Gen. Clark. Chambers permitted the boats to proceed, and gave them a letter to present to the military posts between Fort Crawford and St. Louis. During this passage they were positively prohibited from holding any intercourse with the Indians, save when absolutely necessary to satisfy immediate wants, or to land. Col. Chambers wrote Maj. Morgan that Farnham and Darling "appeared to be hardened rascals."

When Farnham and Darling reached Fort Armstrong it was reported that Farnham had declared his intention to commence trading with the Indians three miles below that place. When Maj. Morgan, in command at Fort Armstrong, heard this he put Farnham and his crew under arrest and sent them to St. Louis accompanied by a guard of soldiers under the command of W. S. Blair.

The matter of the arrest of Farnham and Darling, together with other unjust treatment given the American Fur Company, was presented to the President of the United States, and suit was promptly brought by the company against Col. Chambers. A verdict for \$5000.00 damages was recovered.¹¹

In March, 1819, Farnham started up the Missouri river to trade, at which time Ramsay Crooks wrote him "There is nothing to prevent your going into the Missouri country now with your Canadians."

Apparently he was relieved from the trade on the upper Missouri for in 1821 and 1822 he was again assigned to the trade on the Mississippi. The next year he was with the Sac Outfit with headquarters at Fort Armstrong, in partnership with Col. George Davenport, under the firm name of Farnham and Davenport. They had a store on Rock Island and were, of course, agents for the American Fur Company. They built the first house on the mainland in the vicinity of Fort Armstrong, which became the nucleus of a settlement that later sprung up and was named Farnhamsburg. Unfortunately the place has ceased to bear his name, being now called Rock Island.

Farnham made many visits to St. Louis, in the interest of the American Fur Company, and served as witness to the treaty between the United States and the Kansas Indians in 1825. On one of these visits he met pretty Susan Bosseron, daughter of Charles Bosseron, an early French settler of wealth and respectibility. Their mar-

¹¹Letters of Thomas Forsythe and William Clark in Mo. Hist. Soc. MSS.; Wisconsin Historical Society collections, vols. 19 and 20.

riage took place at the old Cathedral in St. Louis, October 27, 1829. The Church Register contains an entry that he was born in Massachusetts, and also gives the names of his parents.

At this time he held himself out as a resident of St. Louis. In 1821, and the years following, he acquired considerable land in the village of Portage des Sioux, a place in St. Charles County, Missouri, where most of the treaties with the Mississippi and Missouri valley Indians were signed. Farnham maintained a well stocked farm at Portage des Sioux, and a beautiful home, which contained, among other luxuries, a piano. He also owned a number of slaves.

In the early part of 1832 Farnham went East, possibly New York. Upon his return he remained at his home for a time, and then proceeded by boat to Forts Armstrong and Edwards to look after the trade with the Sacs and Foxes and to supply provisions and guns to the military posts.

He returned to St. Louis in October of that year, and, on the 23rd of the month, was there stricken with cholera and died within two hours. He was buried in the Catholic cemetery in St. Louis. When Ramsay Crooks heard of his death he wrote to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., as follows: "Poor Farnham! he has paid the debt of nature after a life of uncommon activity and endless exposure. Peace to his remains. He underwent greater privations than any half dozen of us. He was one of the best meaning, but the most sanguine, man I almost ever met with. During all the ravages of the pestilence here (New York) and the unexpected rapidity with which some of my friends were hurried to their long account, I never felt anything like the sensation I experienced upon hearing of my honest friend's death, for I did not know he was at St. Louis and thought him safe in some part of the wilderness."

Russel Farnham was born in Massachusetts in 1784,

and was the son of John Farnham and Susan Chapin. He was a typical frontiersman of the better class, energetic and resourceful, and was respected alike by his employers, comrades and opponents. A companionable and sociable fellow, and fond of playing jokes.

He had joined the sea expedition of the Pacific Fur Company in the capacity of a clerk and sailed on the *Tonquin*. While in the Oregon country he had many thrilling adventures. He was one of a party who pursued and captured a number of deserters in November, 1811; was in the Indian fight at The Dalles, when Reed's tin box was stolen; was the executioner of the Indian whom John Clarke ordered hanged for the theft of a gold goblet, June 1, 1813; assisted in building a post near Spokane. In 1812-1813, he wintered among the Flatheads, crossing the Rocky Mountains with this tribe to the headwaters of the Missouri.¹²

Only one child was born to Russel Farnham and Ssan Bosseron, Charles Russel Farnham, who died when eighteen years old. Mrs. Farnham survived her husband only one year.

In the treaty between the United States and the Sacs and Foxes made September 21, 1832, it was provided that, at the "earnest request" of the Indians, Farnham and Davenport should be paid \$40,000.00 in satisfaction of their claims against the tribe for articles of necessity furnished them during the seven preceding years.

Missouri Historical Society has a number of letters written by Farnham, one of them being in French. They indicate that he was a man of education and that he had a good knowledge of the French language.

¹²Ross, Alex.—*Adventures of First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River*. Thwaites edition, vol. 7, p. 211.

Robert McClellan

This romantic character of the West was one of the seven Astorians who returned overland to St. Louis. He was the son of Robert McClellan and was born in Pennsylvania near Mercersburg, in 1770. Here he was schooled in all the arts of woodcraft and inured to the hardships of frontier life. His first employment was as "pack-horseman."

McClellan was an expert shot, steady of hand, keen of eye, robust, enterprising, and absolutely fearless. He was of slight physique, but muscular, displaying strength, activity and firmness. His eyes were dark, deep-set and piercing. He was reckless and impetuous, with a temper that was sometimes ungovernable. McClellan was a great athlete and stories are related about his marvelous feats. On one occasion he beat a horse in a race on a stretch of ground between Mercersburg and Fort Loudon, which was afterwards known as the "race track." We are told that while he was at Fort Hamilton he would frequently leap over the tallest horse, without apparent exertion; that while walking in the town of Lexington, Kentucky, he came upon a yoke of large oxen obstructing the narrow sidewalk, and instead of walking around them he, without hesitating, jumped over them. When with the Army at Greenville, at a trial of feats of strength among the soldiers, he leaped over a wagon with a covered top, a height of eight and one-half feet.¹³

In 1790 McClellan's restless disposition led him to seek adventure in the West. His personal prowess and daring nature suggested the Army, which he entered in the capacity of spy, or ranger, at Fort Gower, a stockade fort just above the mouth of the Hocking at the Ohio river. He served as a spy under General Wayne, and rendered valuable service in the Indian campaigns; remaining in the Army until after General Wayne's treaty

¹³McBride, James—*Pioneer Biographical Sketches of Some of the Early Settlers of Butler County, Ohio*. Cincinnati, 1871, vol. 2, pp. 1-98.

with the Indians in August, 1794, which terminated the Indian War. He attained the rank of Lieutenant while in the service.

After the disbanding of Wayne's Army McClellan made his home with his brother at Hamilton, Ohio, spending most of his time hunting and often remaining in the woods days at a time.

In the the Summer of 1799 he went to New Orleans, where he endured a long illness from yellow fever. Being in poor health and suffering from the wounds received in the Indian campaigns, he decided to go East and obtain, if possible, a pension for his services and wounds. One of the wounds he suffered was from a shot under the shoulder blade, the ball coming out at the top of his shoulder. He went first to Philadelphia, and later to New York in search of Gen. Wilkinson, from whom he obtained the necessary certificates, which he presented to the Secretary of War at Philadelphia. The latter sent him to the examining surgeon, who reported that McClellan was entitled to only one-third pension, which for his rank, Lieutenant, was only twenty-six pounds Pennsylvania currency per year.

McClellan was greatly offended at this and declined to accept the pension. The Quartermaster General of the Army having some knowledge of McClellan and his services, induced him to accept the pension and also a position in his Department. In 1801 McClellan was sent on business connected with the Commissary Department to St. Louis, when, after completing his mission, he retired from the service.

His next venture was trading with the Indians, and his first returns amounted to one thousand dollars. This success gave him a taste for trading and for some years he made trading trips up the Missouri river. On one of these trips (September 12, 1806) he met Captains Lewis

and Clark, former comrades and friends, returning from their famous expedition.¹⁴

The following year (1807) he entered into partnership with Ramsay Crooks, an adventurous Scotchman, and in the fall of that year they set out on an expedition to the upper Missouri. On the way they met Ensign Nathaniel Pryor returning, after his defeat by the Arikaras, to St. Louis with the Mandan Chief. The report which Pryor gave them of the hostile attitude of the Sioux and Arikaras, made them decide to turn back. When they got back nearly to Council Bluffs they set up an establishment and remained there until the Spring of 1809. Then, following the expedition of the Missouri Fur Company, they again tried to ascend the river, but before proceeding very far were stopped by six hundred Sioux, who forced them to land and erect a fort in their country.¹⁵

McClellan always accused Manuel Lisa of inciting the Sioux against him and Crooks, and threatened that if ever he fell in with Lisa in the Indian country he would shoot him. If it had not been for the interference of Mr. Hunt, on several occasions, he would have carried out his threat.¹⁶

In 1810 Crooks and McClellan dissolved partnership and McClellan continued the business alone. He established a trading post on the Missouri two hundred miles above the Nodaway, erecting a cabin and store room for his goods and furs. Again his old enemies, the Sioux, frustrated his plans. They surrounded his cabin one day, disarmed his men, and plundered his store room of its contents, amounting to about three thousand dollars. McClellan was absent from his cabin at the time, and when he returned and learned what had happened he

¹⁴Thwaites' edition *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, vol. 5, p. 373.

¹⁵Bradbury, John—*Travels in the Interior of America*. London, 1819.

¹⁶Brackenridge, H. M.—*Journal of a Voyage Up the River Missouri*. Pittsburgh, 1814.

went boldly to the Indians and demanded restoration. He succeeded in recovering only about five hundred dollars worth of his goods. Completely dispirited, he divided what he had among his men, in compensation for their services, and shortly afterwards the whole party started back to St. Louis. When they reached the mouth of the Nodaway they found encamped the overland expedition of the Pacific Fur Company, in charge of Wilson P. Hunt. McClellan was happy to find in the party his old friend and partner Ramsay Crooks, who had joined the enterprise in Canada. It needed but little persuasion to induce McClellan to accept a few shares and become a partner in expedition.

About this time McClellan wrote to his brother William the following letter: "Six days ago I arrived at this place from my settlement, which is two hundred miles above on the Missouri. My mare is with you at Hamilton, having two colts. I wish you to give one to brother John, the other to your son James, and the mare to your wife. If I possessed anything more except my gun at present, I would throw it into the river, or give it away, as I intend to begin the world anew tomorrow."

When McClellan and party reached Astoria, in January, 1812, he was haggard, emaciated and in rags. While he had proven a very valuable man to the enterprise, he soon became dissatisfied with his position in the company and resigned his interest. Although in Astoria only a short time he decided to return with Reed and party, whom Mr. Hunt sent with dispatches to Mr. Astor on March 22, 1812.

When Reed and his party reached The Dalles they were robbed and attacked by the Indians. Reed was badly wounded and the tin box containing the dispatches was captured by the Indians. The bright, shiny tin box, coveted by the Indians, was the cause of the trouble. The important dispatches being lost the object of the journey

was defeated, so Reed, McClellan and the others in the party returned to Astoria.

McClellan, however, was persistent in his determination to go back to St. Louis and when Robert Stuart was sent by Mr. Hunt with another set of dispatches McClellan joined the party. As Mr. Stuart had gone to Astoria by ship it was necessary to send with him well tried men as hunters and guides. Benjamin Jones, John Day, Andre Vallée and Francois LeClerc were chosen for this purpose, all of these men having been in Mr. Hunt's overland party.

The party left Astoria, as before stated, on June 29, 1812, on their perilous overland journey to St. Louis. On one occasion when danger from the Blackfeet was threatened, the party for greater safety, wanted to make a detour through rugged and difficult country. Mr. McClellan, greatly fatigued, and therefore somewhat more stubborn and irascible than usual, swore he would rather face all the Blackfeet in the country than encounter the difficulties of the mountains. He refused to stay with the others and left in a huff. All alone he trudged along through the wilderness. Such a desperate course must have required considerable courage. Ten days later, the rest of the party found him encamped, without fire or food, and reduced through hunger and fatigue to a mere skeleton. He could not help showing his joy at seeing his friends again, and cheerfully rejoined them. Being too feeble to walk, the party encamped for several days in order that he might recover a little. When they started off he was not able to carry anything, his pistols and rifle being carried by his comrades, most of whom were not much better off. They wandered about for five days and nights without a mouthful to eat, and were reduced to the last extremity. Now and then some deer were seen but they had not sufficient strength to use their rifles. It was at this period that one of the party suggested "it were better that one should die than that all

should perish." The next day, Providence directed their forlorn steps to a solitary old buffalo bull, which they managed to kill, thus saving their lives.

They arrived in St. Louis on April 30, 1813, and while happy to be back to civilization, McClellan was no more enriched in health or purse than when he wrote to his brother on December 20, 1810, that with nothing more than his gun he was beginning the world anew.

On May 18, 1813, he was committed to prison for debt and was forced to take advantage of the bankruptcy act.¹⁷ Here it was necessary to make another start, for he had accumulated nothing but debts, suffering and hardships for his several years in the Astorian expedition.

The following January, Risdon H. Price of St. Louis furnished him with a stock of goods with which to open up a store at Cape Girardeau, Missouri, but ill health forced him to close out and return to St. Louis within six months' time. Then his friend, Abraham Gallatin, placed him on his farm called *Marino*, in St. Louis County, and he recovered sufficiently to go back and forth to St. Louis.

Later records show McClellan again in battle with the Indians, not as a soldier, but as a citizen, in the famous Missouri battle of the War of 1812 known as the "Fight at the Sink Hole." On May 24, 1815, the Indians made an attack on a detachment of soldiers from Fort Howard, killing the Captain, Lieutenant, five privates and one citizen, besides wounding a number of soldiers and two of the citizens who came to the aid of the soldiers. The report of this affair says that Robert McClellan and other citizens deserved credit for their spirited exertions.¹⁸

About this time he seems to have been conducting horse races, at least he had two race horses, the more famous one being called "Plough Boy." At the time of

¹⁷*Missouri Gazetete*, May 29, 1813.

¹⁸*Missouri Gazette*, May 27, 1815.

his death he owed his friend, Abraham Gallatin, \$39.25, which was for thirty days' boarding of himself and two boys, for three bushels of oats, stabling for two horses, a quart of whiskey (twenty-five cents) and dinner for the judges on the first day's racing.

Robert McClellan died November 22, 1815, having been seriously ill for five days. He was buried, presumably by his old friend and comrade of the early Indian campaigns, Gen. William Clark. In 1875 a tombstone was unearthed on the old Clark farm in St. Louis County, Missouri, which caused some newspaper comment. A copy of the inscription was published and old citizens were interviewed regarding "Capt. Robert McClellan." Mr. John F. Darby stated that he thought McClellan was a friend of Clark's and was killed in a duel. If Capt. McClellan was killed in a duel there was no mention made of it in the newspaper at the time, and the doctor's bill does not indicate that he was treating a wound. The inscription on the tombstone was as follows:

"To the memory of Capt. Robert McClellan. This stone is erected by a friend who knew him to be brave, honest and sincere; an intrepid warrior, whose services deserve perpetual remembrance. A. D. 1816."

The sale of his horses brought \$172.50, and his wearing apparel \$145.50. His debts amounted to \$196.00. The inventory and appraisal of his personal property is rather interesting, considering he spent most of his life in the wilderness. You might like to hear some of the contents of his wardrobe:

Black cloth coat	\$12.00
Great coat	18.00
Striped blue summer vest75
Striped blue Toilinet vest, old25
Pair blue cloth pantaloons	1.50
Pair white stockinet pantaloons	6.00
Pair Nankeen pantaloons, old50
Pair of boots	5.50

Pair of shoes50
Four long linen shirts	9.50
One dickey50
Three colored cravats and 1 pad	1.00
Three flannel shirts	5.00
Five pocket handkerchiefs	1.50
Pair dimity suspenders & silver buckles.....	2.50
Two pairs black silk stockings	5.00
Shaving apparatus, viz: 5 razors, 1 shaving box, 1 looking glass and strop, 1 coarse comb, 1 sealing wax, 1 clothes brush, shav- ing soap	3.00
Comfort, 2 pairs suspenders and 1/3 yd of cloth	1.50
1 trunk	3.50
Pair Cassimere pantaloons, worn	1.50
Satin vest	1.50
Two towels37½
Wampum and knife	1.00
1 skin pocketbook25
Small morocco pocketbook50
Small memorandum book25
1 Sorrel horse said to be 6 years old.....	70.00
1 Horse Plough Boy	80.00
Bridle, saddle and saddle-bags	32.00

John Day

If John Day left any descendants, they might easily establish their eligibility to that very exclusive organization, the "F. F. V.'s;" for a John Day, no doubt his ancestor, was living in Virginia at "Ye College Land" in 1623.¹⁹ The Day family was rather conspicuous in the early history of Virginia, in Isle of Wight County, and a John Day was a member of the last House of Burgesses from that county.²⁰

There were at least two John Days in the Revolution, and I hope the Daughters of the American Revolution of Oregon will be able to prove that one of them was John Day of Astoria fame. One of these John Days was a

¹⁹*William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 24, p. 124.

²⁰*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 255.

corporal in the Minute Men from Northampton County; one served in the 5th Virginia Regiment from Culpepper County;²¹ and the same one, or possibly a third John Day, was a private in the Virginia Continental line, for which service he received two hundred acres of land in Kentucky.²² His warrant was issued February 11, 1784, and was later assigned to Henry Banks.

John Day was the son of Ambrose Day of Culpepper County, Virginia. He had a brother, Lewis, and there was a Lewis Day who had a plantation at Limestone (now Maysville), Kentucky, in 1797.²³ This town was a rendezvous for Daniel Boone and other famous frontiersmen.

I like to think that the John Day, who received the military grant of land in Kentucky, was our John Day. It is very likely that he was considerably older than forty years when he joined the expedition at the Nodaway river, and was therefore probably old enough to serve in the Revolutionary War. It is quite possible that he met Daniel Boone in Kentucky, after the latter was planning to go to Missouri, and decided to join him.

On March 2, 1798, John Day was in St. Louis petitioning the Spanish Lieutenant Governor to grant him "two hundred and forty arpens of land on a river south of the Missouri." He stated that he wished to use this land for a *habitation* (plantation).²⁴ In passing I might say that just about this time the Spanish Governor had invited the immigration of Americans to Upper Louisiana, and had promised them concessions of land.

In addition to this concession of two hundred and forty arpens Day apparently acquired another concession of seven hundred arpens from the Spanish Government on the "Waters of Point Labaddie Creek," County of St.

²¹Virginia State Library. Ninth Report, p. 88.

²²*Yearbook of the Society, Sons of Revolution, Kentucky.* Lexington, 1913, p. 211.

²³*William and Mary Quarterly*, 2d ser., vol. 1, p. 153.

²⁴*Original petition of John Dey (Day) to Lieutenant-Governor Upper Louisiana.* Mo. Hist. Soc. MSS.

Louis. This concession was confirmed in 1812 to the legal representatives of John Day.²⁵

Day endeavored to cultivate this land from time to time until he joined the Hunt party. When he was away trapping, and not occupying his little cabin, he had it rented out. In 1802 he had a good sized corn field, but the following year the whole settlement around Point Labaddie was broken up by the invasion of hostile Indians. In 1804 Day engaged Asa Musick to cultivate the land and allowed him the use of his cabin. Musick planted peach trees, erected a new house and improved the place generally, making thus the first permanent improvements beyond the Bon Homme settlement.²⁶ This land is now included in Franklin County, the next county southwest of St. Louis County.

The next year Day sold, or mortgaged, part of his plantation to Asa Musick, and started off to the Boone's Lick Country.

From 1806 until he joined the Hunt expedition at the Nodaway, he was probably hunting and trapping on the Missouri and working his mines. In 1809 he formed a partnership with Benjamin Cooper and John Farrel to work the saltpeter mines he had discovered.

In April, 1809, Day was in St. Louis, and for the small sum of \$15.00 assigned to John Withinton "all my right, title, claim and interest in and to a tract of land that I hold or may hold, the same being and lying on Point Labaddie Creek and the improvements on the north side of the Creek and near the big slew that runs in the bottom." This instrument, for some reason or other, was not filed for record until April 28, 1840.²⁷

According to Irving, "John Day was a hunter from the backwoods of Virginia, who had been for several years on the Missouri in the service of Crooks and other

²⁵*Amer. State Papers*, Public Lands, vol. 3, p. 326.

²⁶*Bates Minutes*.

²⁷*Franklin County Deed Records*.

traders. He was about forty years of age, six feet two inches high, straight as an Indian, with an elastic step as if he trod on springs, and a handsome, open, manly countenance. It was his boast that in his younger days, nothing could hurt or daunt him, but he had 'lived too fast,' and injured his constitution by his excesses. Still he was strong of hand, bold of heart, a prime woodsman, and an almost unerring shot. He had the frank spirit of a Virginian and the thorough heroism of a pioneer of the West."

In November, 1810, John Day met the Hunt overland party in winter quarters at the Nodaway, and was induced to join them in the enterprise. In the following December, while on the way to Astoria, he became so ill that Mr. Hunt was compelled to leave him behind, near Weiser, Idaho, on the banks of the Snake river. Ramsay Crooks remained with him, and to this kindness John Day owed his life. The following Spring the two men made their way across the Blue Mountains to the Columbia river. They suffered many hardships, were robbed by the Indians of everything and left naked near the mouth of a river which has ever since been called the John Day river. They were finally rescued by Robert Stuart and his party and taken to Astoria, arriving there in May, 1812.

Day started with the Stuart party returning to St. Louis, but before proceeding very far he became violently insane, and was left with some Indians who promised to take him back to Astoria. Irving said he died within a year, but in this was, of course, mistaken. For, after the sale of the Pacific Fur Company, Day entered the service of the North West Company and remained with that company in the Upper Snake Country until his death in 1820. For a time there seemed to be some question about the identity of the John Day of the North West Company, but the finding of the will, which was probated in Chau-tauqua County, New York, October 29, 1836, settled the

question beyond a doubt. A copy of the will was published in volume 17 of the Oregon Historical Quarterly, whereby he bequeathed to Donald MacKenzie land which he received from the Spanish Government in 1798, all his right and pretensions to the saltpeter lands about the Boone's Lick at the river Missouri, and all the profits arising therefrom after the commencement of his partnership with Cooper and Farrel. To Miss Rachel MacKenzie, daughter of Donald MacKenzie, he bequeathed all his ready cash and lawful interest arising therefrom and lying in the hand of his former master, Mr. John Jacob Astor. Donald MacKenzie, in proving the will, stated that John Day died February 16, 1820, "on the south side of the river Columbia in the Territory of Oregon."

In the manuscript collection of the Missouri Historical Society I have found some correspondence from Alexander MacKenzie, a grandnephew of Donald MacKenzie, in which he stated that he had before him the original will of John Day and gives a copy of the text thereof. There are some minor differences between the will as published in your Quarterly and the copy made by Mr. MacKenzie. For instance, he gives one witness's name as William Kiteson, instead of William Rettson. But the most interesting part of our copy, lacking in your publication, is the note attached to the will, as follows:

"On the 16th February about 2 P. M. he 'Departed this Life viewing Mr. MacKenzie as the *Man* at whose hands he had ever experienced the most kindness,' he therefore said he bequeathed to him all he possessed: Deeming it too inconsiderate to divide among his relations, but requested Mr. MacKenzie to inform his brothers Lewis and Willis. He appeared to die the death of a good man. Signed February 17, 1820. William Kiteson James Birnie."²⁸

²⁸With the permission of Miss Drumm the following is added to her interesting sketch of John Day:

In the Henry-Thompson Journals, edited by Dr. Elliott Coues and published in N. Y., 1897, vol. 2, p. 861, under date March 29, 1814, it is stated that "arrangements were made with J. Day, Carson and other

Mr. MacKenzie, in the letter referred to, states that the money in Astor's hands belonging to John Day was never paid over to the legatees until the Court compelled him to do so; that Astor had acknowledged the debt from time to time, but his final objection was to the paying of two and a half per cent interest on the same. Final settlement was made of the estate June 25, 1838.

Benjamin Jones

This man was also a member of Robert Stuart's overland party. He and Alexander Carson were returning from a two years' hunting trip on the upper Missouri when they met Hunt and his party near the Omaha villages, in May, 1811. It has been suggested that Jones was one of the forty "Americans and expert riflemen" who escorted the Mandan chief to his nation.²⁹ Irving says Jones and Carson before they met the Hunt party had been leisurely floating down the turbulent Missouri, through regions infested by savage tribes, yet apparently

freemen, on halves for Spanish river." And on page 875 of the same volume, under date April 4, 1814, his name is listed among the passengers up the Columbia river in the large brigade of canoes departing from Fort George (Astoria) on that day. Spanish river would be the Green river of the present time, but the reference would be to the entire interior basin of Southern Idaho, Western Wyoming and Northern Utah, to which Donald MacKenzie returned in the Fall of 1818. We are to presume then that our John Day was engaged in trapping and hunting in that dangerous and extensive region until his death in February, 1820, as a free hunter for the NorthWest Company.

The name of one of the witnesses to his will should be spelled Kittson, who is very clearly identified as William Kittson, who came to the Columbia river district in 1817-18, and who is described by Alex. Ross at page 207, vol. 2 of his *Fur Hunters of the Far West*. In the probate records of the will the name appears as Rettson. William Kittson was prominent in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company until his death at Fort Vancouver, Cowlitz or Nesqually in 1840 or 1841. His brother, Norman Kittson, was an associate of James J. Hill in early real estate and railroad affairs at St. Paul, Minn.

Contemporaneous with Kittson there came to the Columbia district James Birnie, afterward prominent at Astoria and Cathlamet on the Columbia. Descendants of these two men are connected with prominent families of Montana and British Columbia and Washington and Oregon.

—T. C. ELLIOTT.

²⁹Chittenden, Hiram M.—*The Amer. Fur Trade of the Far West*. Vol. 1, p. 187.

as unconcerned as if navigating securely in the midst of civilization.

The acquisition of two such hardy, experienced and dauntless hunters was peculiarly acceptable to Hunt. These two needed but little persuasion to join the outfit. The wilderness is the home of the trapper. Like the sailor, he cares but little to which point of the compass he steers. Jones and Carson willingly abandoned their voyage to St. Louis, and turned their faces towards the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific.

Jones served in the capacity of guide as well as hunter, for he was well acquainted with the whole of the country between the Mandans and the Aricaras. Because of his skill and expertness as guide and hunter he was later assigned to the Stuart party on the return expedition.

Jones was a Virginian by birth, his father having emigrated from England. The fascinating tales of the frontier induced him to leave his father's home, in Kanawha County, when he was about sixteen years of age. Jones was in St. Louis prior to 1802, although he seems to have gone first to Kentucky, for he was referred to by Irving as the "Kentuckian Benjamin Jones." His brother Lewis, when very young, also ran away from home and came to St. Louis in 1802. He married Delinda Hayes, a granddaughter of Daniel Boone.

When Jones returned to St. Louis in 1813, after an absence of four or five years, he purchased a farm in St. Louis County on the Mississippi river, just below the mouth of the Missouri. It contained 240 arpens. There he pursued the vocation of farmer for a few years, but finally becoming restless, he longed for the freedom and excitement of a hunter's life. Starting off on another expedition, this time to Santa Fe, he remained away for another four years.

Returning to St. Louis, Jones removed his family to the neighboring town of Carondelet, and later to a tract of land on Gravois Creek, in the neighborhood of Wilson

P. Hunt; having in cultivation one hundred acres of it when he died.

Jones died in June, 1835, from cholera, leaving his widow, Margaret, who died in May, 1837, and five children: Elvira, Melinda, Ramsey Crooks, Wilson Hunt and William Arbuckle Jones. The three boys were minors and their father's intimate friend, Wilson Price Hunt, was appointed their guardian.

The inventory of Jones' estate shows that he left a considerable fortune for that day, including fourteen slaves, a library of fifty-four books, a pleasure carriage and two well matched roan horses, live stock, farming implements and considerable real estate. He requested that the slaves bequeathed to his children should never be sold by them or their heirs "under any pretence whatever." Jones made provision in his will for the education of his children.³⁰

³⁰In the name of God—Amen. I Benjamin Jones, of the county of St. Louis in the State of Missouri, being in feeble health of Body, but of sound and disposing mind and memory, do make, declare and publish, this to be my Last will and Testament, hereby revoking and declaring null and void, all former wills by me made. First—I give and bequeath, to my well beloved wife, Margaret Jones, all my Estate, real, personal and mixed, during her natural life,—excepting therefrom the Legacies to Rowena Robinson and Jane Kirker, hereinafter mentioned, and my Lot of ground in the Town of Carondelet, State aforesaid, which I give and bequeath to my wife, & to her Heirs and assigns forever. And it is especially my will and desire, that my wife shall take possession of all my estate, upon my decease, with as little delay and formality as possible,—and that she shall continue to reside upon my Home place, & conduct the farming, and other business, in which I am now engaged, with as little change as possible. Secondly—At the death of my wife, it is my will that the following distribution, or appointment, of my Estate shall be made—to wit:—To my sons Ramsey Crooks Jones and Wilson Hunt Jones, and to their heirs and assigns, I give and bequeath forever, my pre-emption right to a half quarter section of Land, which I bought of James Hutchinson & which is situate upon the matice,—also my half quarter section of Land near Wolf's, and my fractional quarter section of Land adjoining the Home tract, all of which Lands are in the county of St. Louis aforesaid, and shall be equally divided between my said two sons—To my son William Arbuckle Jones, & to his Heirs and assigns, I give and bequeath forever, my Home Tract, being one quarter section—Lastly—All my slaves and their future increase, (except a negro girl, for the use of Rowena, & the Boy Jerry), shall be equally divided amongst my surviving children, or the Heirs of their bodies,—provided nevertheless, that my Daughters shall be entitled to one slave each, more than my sons.—Thirdly—It is my will and pleasure that my step-daughter Rowena Robinson, shall have the use and benefit of one negro girl, during her life, and that the said

These four men were part of those adventurers who forged their way through the wilderness, into the West and to the Pacific Coast. Their success encouraged others to travel there, gave the spur to civilization, and the western boundary to the United States. They were of Anglo-Saxon origin, with that spirit of adventure and travel peculiar to the race. Whatever credit may be due to the employers and leaders, these men blazed the trail and made a story of human endurance worthy of any age. Coming from different states of the Union they joined a common enterprise, and were stimulated by an impulse common to all. The study of their lives calls to mind the homogeneous character of the American people in the early years of the Republic.

negro girl, at the death of the said Rowena, if she shall so long live, become the absolute property of that member of my Family, with whom said Rowena may have resided.—Fourthly—It is my will and pleasure, that my step-daughter Maria Macky, shall have and possess, for her sole use and benefit, during her life, my slave Jerry, and after the death of the said Maria, that the said slave shall become the absolute property of Jane Kirker, (the daughter of the said Maria), and her Heirs, should she survive her mother. Fifthly—It is my will and pleasure, that none of the slaves bequeathed as hereinbefore mentioned, shall ever be sold, by my children or their Heirs, under any pretence whatever,—and that if any of my children (namely Elvira Jones, Melinda Jones, Ramsey Crooks Jones, Wilson Hunt Jones & William Arbuckle Jones), should die without issue, that, in that case their portion of slaves, shall be equally divided amongst the surviving children, or their Heirs. Finally—I do hereby nominate and appoint my wife, Margaret Jones, sole executrix of this my last will and Testament—and I further declare, that it is my will that my said executrix shall pay all my just debts, & perfect the titles to my Lands, and that she shall educate my minor children in a becoming manner, according to her best judgment—and, for the better enabling her to do these things, all my personal estate, other than my slaves, together with the entire proceeds and profits of my estate (after my decease), are hereby placed at her sole & absolute disposal, without any kind of accountability therefor.—

In testimony whereof, I the said Benjamin Jones, hereto set my hand & seal, at my residence, in the county of St. Louis aforesaid, this second day of June, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and thirty-five—1835.

(Signed) BENJAMIN JONES.

Note—Rowena may reside with her sister, Maria, if she should choose to do so.

The foregoing last will and Testament was read in the presence of the Testator Benjamin Jones and was subscribed & sealed by him in the presence of each of us—the attestation of each of us being also made in the presence of each other. Attest—

JEROMO B. GREER
FRANZ ROTHENBUCHER
WM. CARR LANE.