



Fur Trade Sites: The PLAINS and the ROCKIES

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FUR TRADE SITES understandably tend to be elusive, debatable, and, at best, fragile and frequently unrecognizable. This picture essay begins with St. Louis, which has a better claim to recognition as the gateway to the West than any other community. The warehouse of Manuel Lisa (insert, above) stood where the Gateway Arch (top left) now rises to commemorate the epic of westward expansion.

Up the Missouri River near Arrow Rock, Missouri, is the lonely grave of William H. Ashley (lower right), one of the giants of the fur trade. Farther along, toward Independence, Missouri, before the river turns north to St. Joseph, stands Fort Osage (1808-19). Built on a site chosen by William Clark, the old factory operated by William Sibley, the blockhouse, and the captain's quarters have been carefully restored by Jackson County (lower left).

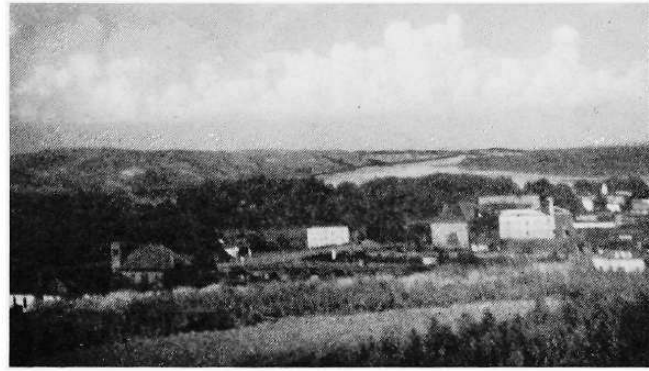




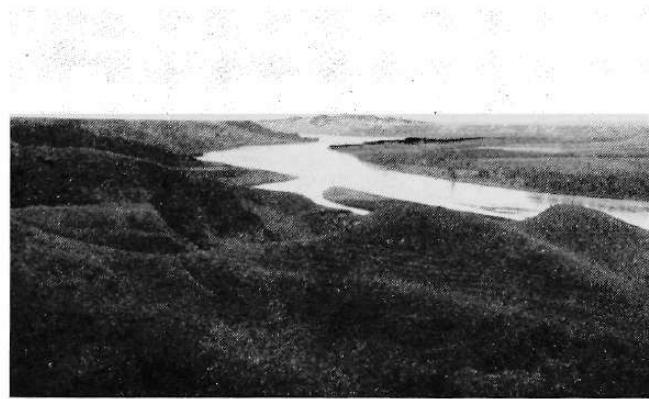
SARPY'S POST at Bellevue, Nebraska, was the beginning of that state's continuous settlement. The interior of the post store as restored by the Nebraska Historical Society is shown in a diorama (above).

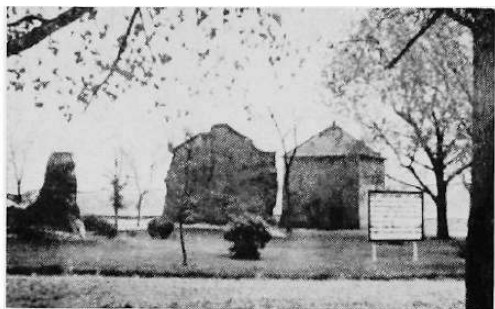
North along the Missouri near the town of Fort Pierre, South Dakota, is a concentration of sites, including the hill (upper right) where the 1742 lead plate of the Vérendrye expedition was found.

Among several Hidatsa and Mandan village sites near the mouth of the Knife River

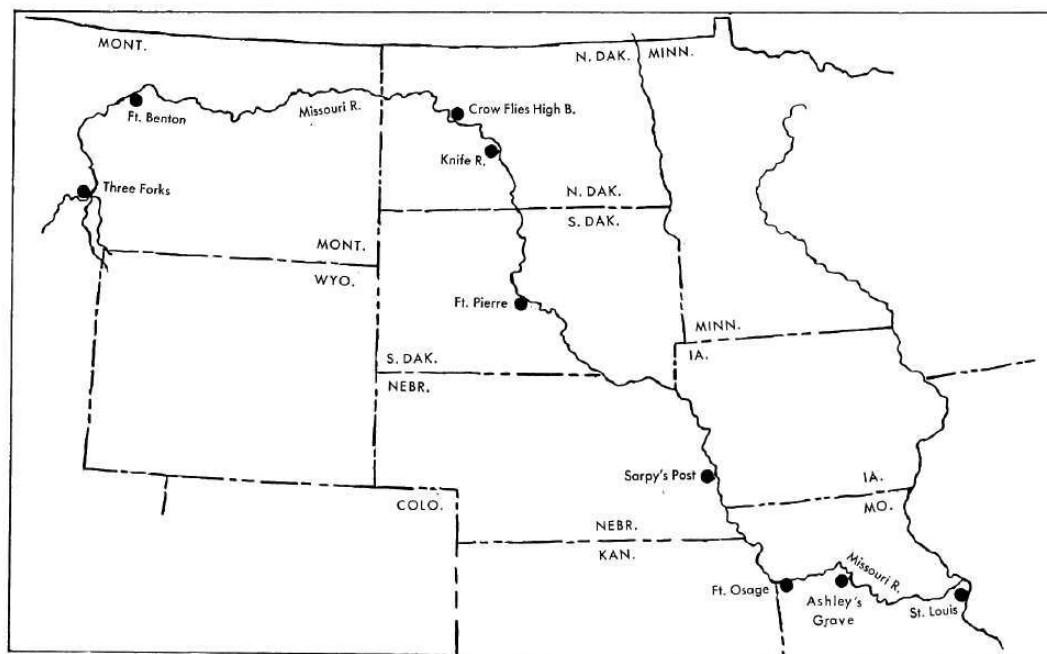
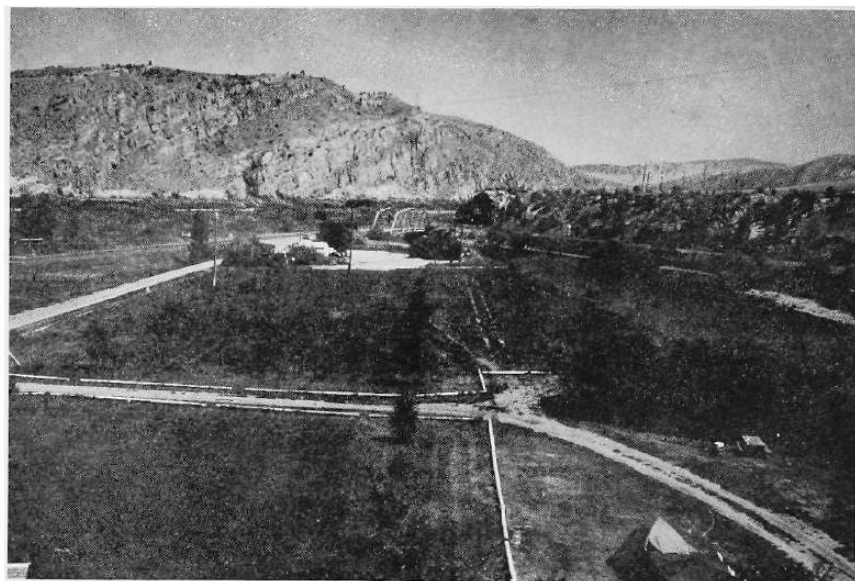


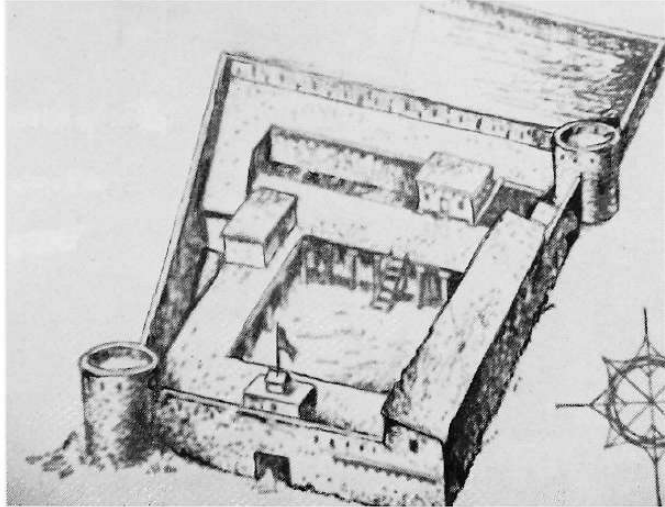
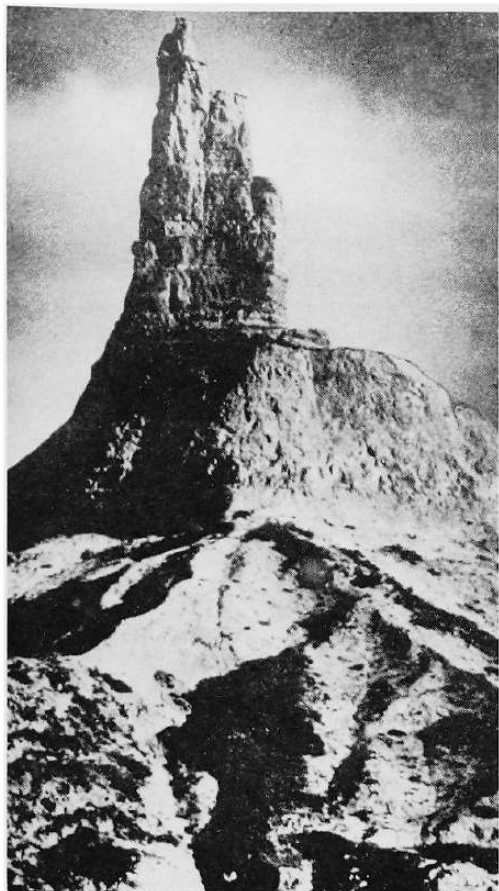
in North Dakota is the one where Toussaint Charbonneau and Sacagawea lived (left center). Some landmarks have disappeared through natural action, like Fort Mandan, built by Lewis and Clark, which is now somewhere in the Missouri. Many others, among them the American Fur Company's Fort Berthold, have been inundated by dam and reservoir construction. Comparative photographs taken from Crow Flies High Butte in 1950 (right center) and 1965 (bottom) show how a dam can obliterate the features of a historic landscape.





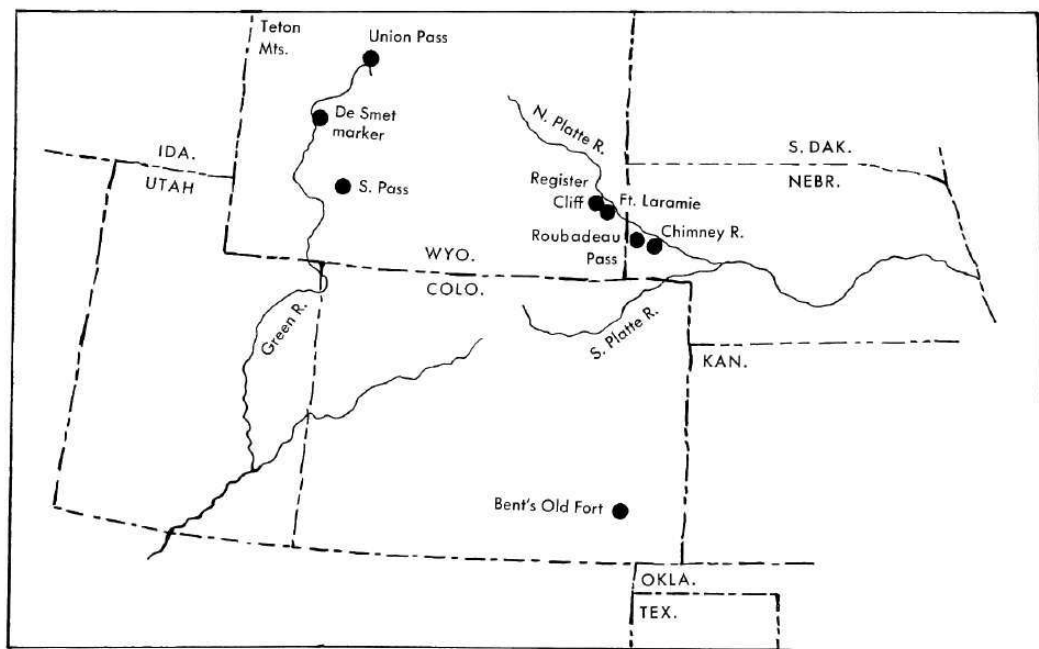
FORT BENTON, Montana, founded by the American Fur Company in 1846, is a marvelous survival of an old steamboat town. The picture at left shows the adobe remains of the original post. Three Forks (below) in the same state is a landmark of the Lewis and Clark expedition and also the site of a Missouri Fur Company fort established in 1810 by Andrew Henry and Pierre Menard.

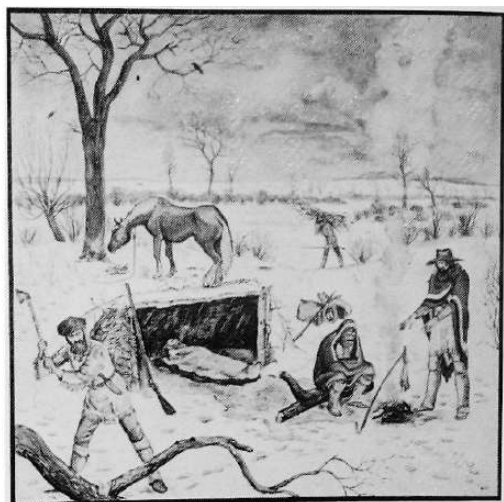




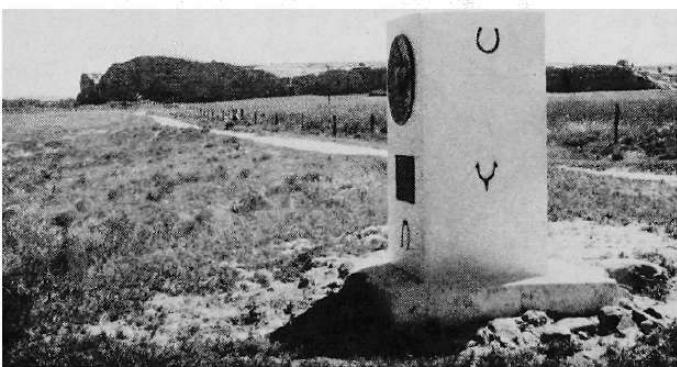
WHILE the Missouri River was the first great highway of fur trade advance, the Platte River route carried the largest volume of traffic between St. Louis and the mountain rendezvous points. Most famous, perhaps, of its landmarks is Chimney Rock (left) in extreme western Nebraska on the south side of the North Platte River.

South on the Santa Fe Trail in Colorado is Bent's Old Fort, a national historic site. An archaeological salvage operation conducted in the past three years has revealed structural features. From these and from the known architectural design (above) a reconstruction is tentatively planned.





THE RETURNING ASTORIANS (above) are depicted in one of many fur trade paintings in the Oregon Trail Museum at Scotts Bluff, Nebraska. Named for one of Ashley's lieutenants, the place has been a national monument since 1919. A few miles to the west is Roubadeau Pass (top left) where in 1849 Joseph Robidoux, Jr.—the name has acquired many spellings—operated a blacksmith shop and trading post.



Fort Laramie, Wyoming, most famous of all the Platte River posts, was pivotal to the entire fur trade of the Plains and the Rockies. The adobe sutler's store of 1849 (center left) represents the transition to military control. Ten miles west is Register Cliff (lower left), the location of Seth E. Ward's trading post.

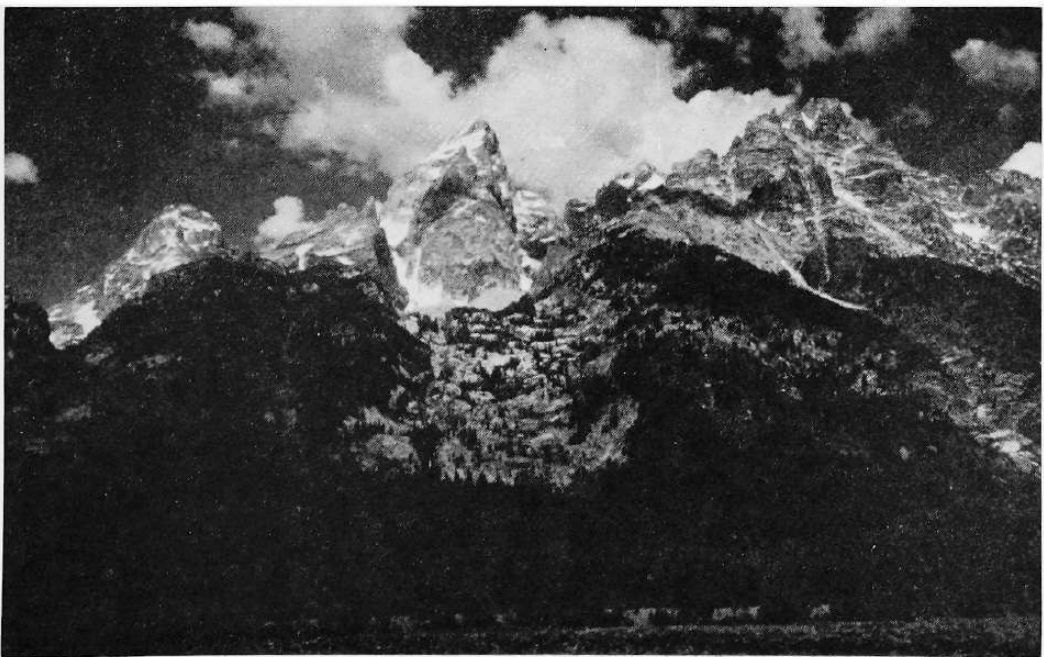
Crossing the continental divide in Wyoming is South Pass (below). First discovered by Robert Stuart, it was found again by Ashley's men.





ACROSS the continental divide to the west, near Pinedale and Daniel, Wyoming, a small shrine to Father Pierre-Jean De Smet (above) overlooks the Green River Valley. The famed Jesuit missionary visited the last rendezvous there in 1840. At the headwaters of the Green River is Union Pass (left), a crucial point in the fortunes of the Astorian expedition of 1812.

In many ways the fur trade is ideally commemorated in the museum at Moose, headquarters for Grand Teton National Park. The mountain range (below) was named by French-Canadian trappers in 1811.





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