

Sir Carl Cottalero
Schoolcraft, Henry R. 1821. Journal of a Tour into the Interior of Missouri
and Arkansas, from Potosi, or Mine à Burton, in Missouri Territory, in a
South-West Direction toward the Rocky Mountains; Performed in the Years #498
1818 and 1819. London: Sir Richard Phillips and Co.

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p. 84

Monday, Jan 25th.

"Fourche à Thomas is a stream of lesser size than either Strawberry or Elevenpoints; it affords, however, some excellent lands, and the alluvial formation, though not extensive, is very rich and several large and well-improved farms decorate its valley. It originates in high-lands forty miles west and unites with Black River, after winding a course of fifty miles. Settlements continue to the north of this stream six miles, and the ridge of high-lands by which it is divided from the Currents River, is less elevated, less rocky, better wooded, and better calculated for agriculture, than those already mentioned. The distance, therefore, between these two streams, which is sixteen miles, appears less to the foot-traveller on that account, as there is more to occupy the eye, and less to weary the feet; for while we are viewing plantations and the habitations of man occasionally interspersed among the woods, the time and the distance pass imperceptibly away, but the unvaried barrenness of the wilderness is tiresome. The eye seizes with avidity any new object which promises variety, and this variety is ever more pleasing when associated with the idea of being useful, and capable of in some way of promoting the happiness, or subserving the economy of human life. The rock strata, where apparent, are calcareous, and secondary. The Quercus tinctoria is the most common tree. Two miles before reaching the Currents, the river alluvion commences. Its fructiferous qualities are at once recognized by the unusual size of the trees, cane, and shrubbery, by which it is covered. At three o'clock I reached the banks of the river at Hick's Ferry, and was conveyed over in a ferry-flat, or scow. This is the fifth river I have passed since leaving Poke Bayou, in a short distance of ninety miles, all running parallel with each other from west to east, separated by similar ridges of calcareous rock, having analagous alluvions on their banks, and all discharging their waters into Black River, which, like an artificial drain, runs nearly from north to south, and, catching their waters, conveys them through White River into the Mississippi. That singular stream, which itself preserves an exact parallelism with the Mississippi during its whole course, is not less remarkable for the number of streams it receives from the west, than for receiving no tributary of any magnitude in its whole course from the east. This is owing to a singular configuration of the country, the

examination of which would, perhaps, prove very interesting to the geologist as well as the geographer, and possibly throw some new light on the subject of alluvial deposits, the circumstances under which they have // been formed, their relative ages, and other contemporaneous matters, which have not received a proper degree of consideration, the lack of tributaries from the east bank of Black River, results from the alluvial tract extending from its eastern bank to the western bank of the Mississippi, and which has a gradual descent from the former to the latter, ~~draw~~ draining off the waters even from within 100 yards of its banks. On the west it ~~is~~ successively swelled, as you traverse the country from White River northward, by Strawberry, Spring River, Elevenpoints, Fourche à Thomas, and the Currents, all streams of considerable magnitude, and entitled to the particular notice of future geographers of Missouri and Arkansas. Of these, the Fourche à Thomas is the smallest and the Currents by far the largest. The latter is, indeed, a noble stream. It is 1,000 feet wide at the Ferry, and has an average depth of eight feet. It originates in springs in the Missouri barrens, 250 miles west, and affords, in its whole length, bodies of alluvial lands well worth the attention of the planter and speculator. Its sources are amidst bluffs of secondary limestone, which are extremely cavernous, and afford salt petre. Our residence for several days in one of these caves, while passing through these regions in the month of November of the last year, has already been detailed in a former part of this journal. At Hick's Ferry, a town is in contemplation. The site is dry, airy, and eligible, and will command many advantages for mercantile purposes. A mile and a half north, the alluvial tract is succeeded by secondary limestone, rising in elevated ridges, which serve to separate the valley of Currents from that of Little Black River. Here ~~night~~ night approached, and I stopped six miles north of the Currents, at a farmer's house that happened to be contiguous, having performed a journey of twenty-three miles.

Tuesday, Jan. 26 th.

Thirteen miles beyond this, I entered the valley of Little Black River, a stream of clear water ninety feet wide with a swift current. This is the principal south branch of Black River, and joins the main stream seven miles below. The alluvion ~~but~~ on its banks is not extensive. Some improvements are however made, and the newness of the buildings, fences, and clearings, indicate here, as at every other inhabited part of the road for the last 100 miles, a recent and augmenting population. This is chiefly composed of emigrants from Pennsylvania, the Carolinas, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Two miles north of Little Black River I halted for the night, at an early hour, my foot giving giving symptoms of returning lameness. Distance fifteen miles. //

Wednesday, Jan 27th

The ensuing sixteen miles brought me to the banks of Big Black River, a large and rapid stream, being the seventh river crossed in a distance of 130 miles; and all of which are ultimately united in this. I was ferried over in a canoe, and lodged a mile beyond, at a house seated at the intermediate points, where the river alluvion is terminated by calcareous rock. I here found myself in Wayne county, according to a late division of Lawrence by the territorial legislature of Missouri. Agriculture forms the principal employment of the inhabitants along this stream, and its tributaries. A small proportion are mechanics, and very few professional men. The soil and climate are considered favorable for the different species of our domesticated graminea. Wheat and corn are the surest, and most advantageous crops. Rye, oats, flax, and tobacco, are also cultivated; the latter ~~partially~~ partially; and cotton is also grown, but not as a market crop, merely for family convenience, and domestic consumption. The raising of cattle has also engrossed considerable attention in this section of the country, and graziers have been well remunerated. St. Louis, St. Genevieve, Kaskaskia, and other distant markets have drawn a part of their supplies from this quarter. This business, which was very inviting at first, having been carried to excess, has produced a natural re-action, and it is ~~now~~ not now considered an object to drive their stock to remote markets."