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HISTORY OF JACKSON'S HOLE, WYOMING

BEFORE THE YEAR 1907

By

Walcott Watson

Walcott Watson was an employee of
Grand Teton National Park.

This report was prepared as his Master's
thesis at Harvard University.

(See memorandum of August 31, 1943, from Superintendent
Franke, giving an outline of Mr. Watson's education
and work history.)

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Introduction

Jackson's Hole¹ is a narrow mountain basin with a rather intriguing name. The events that constitute its history have had little effect on the outside world. Yet for more than a hundred years this valley has excited the enthusiasm of those who have entered it, and stirred the imagination of many others who have only heard its name. Today the scenic magnificence of Jackson's Hole and the exciting story of the many diverse human activities of its past are equal assets in attracting numerous summer visitors.²

Jackson's Hole extends from the northern end of Jackson Lake, about eight miles south of the southern entrance of Yellowstone National Park, for forty-eight miles to the upper end of the Snake River Canon. Its width varies from twelve miles near the northern end to two miles at the southern limit, with an average of about seven miles. The sagebrush-covered floor of the valley appears quite flat and level although its elevation changes from 7,000 feet to 6,000 feet as its southern end is approached. The Gros Ventre Buttes, about two-thirds of the way down the basin, divide "South Park" from the

1. Recently the spelling Jackson Hole has become more common than Jackson's Hole. The latter form is, however, historically correct, and its use should be continued.
2. The Grand Teton National Park, which includes the spectacular portions of the Teton Range, estimates an average of 50,000 visitors each season in recent years.

rest of the valley. The Snake River rises a short distance north of Jackson Lake, in Yellowstone National Park, and flows through Jackson's Hole from Jackson Lake to its southern extremity. The main tributaries are Buffalo Fork from the northeast, the Gros Ventre from the east, and the Hoback River from the southeast. Many smaller creeks on both sides on the Snake River help to swell its volume and make it a serious obstacle to travel. The beauty of Jackson's Hole is in the wall of mountains that surround it on all sides. The Tetons rise abruptly along the thirty-five mile front to 7,000 feet above the western edge of the main portion of the valley (north of South Park). The range, which slopes less steeply toward the west, has its highest summits from one to three miles only in a horizontal distance from the valley floor. This precipitous front, combined with the pointed summits, abrupt cliffs, glaciers, snowfields, and general rugged aspect, make the Tetons the most inspiring and impressive mountains in the United States, as well as providing the best alpine climbing in the country. The resemblance of the Grand Teton to the Matterhorn, both as to appearance and difficulty of ascent, is noted by most who are familiar with both peaks. The mountains north and east of Jackson lake are gentle, timbered hills about two thousand feet above the lake level, which merge into the plateaus over which runs the continental divide. The Mt. Leidy Highlands and the Gros Ventre Mountains to the east of Jackson's Hole cover an extensive area of rough country before

reaching the northern end of the Wind River Range, which forms the continental divide. The Gros Ventre peaks are from three to five thousand feet higher than the valley level, but they do not rise abruptly from it. The Hoback Mountains on the southeast and south and the Snake River Mountains on the lower western border complete the bounds of the basin.

Teton Pass ⁴ (8,600 feet) at the southern end of the Tetons joins Jackson's Hole with Teton Basin, or Pierre's Hole, in Idaho. The Hoback River flows from a small grassy valley known as Hoback Basin, but formerly called Jackson's Little Hole, through a gorge into the Snake at the southeastern corner of Jackson's Hole, and provides a natural passage out and over a low divide into the upper Green River country. Union Pass, above the headwaters of the Gros Ventre, and Two-gwo-tee Pass beyond Buffalo Fork, are the best breaks through the Continental Divide to the Wind River Valley east of Jackson's Hole. Both passes are easy, though 9,600 feet high, but the more than fifty miles between them and the Valley proper make the trip long and tedious. To the northeast and north are the huge areas of high plateaus that attracted little travel until the modern tourist wanted to go into the Yellowstone region. The Snake River and Lewis River can be ascended in that direction to within a short distance of Lake Yellowstone.

Until the time of its settlement in 1884, Jackson's Hole was visited less for its own sake than because it formed part of certain well-defined routes of travel. Its mountain rim kept out most idle wanderers, but for one wishing to go from the Wind River Valley or the Upper Green River country to Pierre's Hole or the forks of the Snake River in Idaho, Jackson's Hole could scarcely be avoided. It is also the natural entrance to Yellowstone Park from the south. The valley, however, is not near any of the great transcontinental routes, lying about halfway between the Oregon Trail, one hundred and fifty miles to the south of it, and the well-traveled Montana route along the Yellowstone and Clark's Fork. The north-south trail from the Yellowstone to the Wyoming plains along the Bighorn River also misses Jackson's Hole by the same distance. The route along the Snake River Plains to the Beaverhead or Madison Rivers in Montana passes somewhat closer to Jackson's Hole, but is separated from it by the valley's most formidable barrier, the Tetons. As yet, no railroad has reached the valley, but during the past ten years improved roads have steadily reduced its inaccessibility. The beauty of this mountain-girt valley and the grandeur of the Tetons are now becoming familiar to thousands of tourists each summer.

Jackson's Hole in July and August appears to be an ideal place in which to live. The temperature usually rises from about forty degrees at night to eighty five in the afternoon, but the dry atmosphere keeps the heat from being in the least oppressive.

The grassy slopes which alternate with the aspen groves and pine forests to form the borders of the sagebrush flats that constitute most of the basin's floor, offer good range to both game and domestic stock. The lodgepole pine that covers the mountain sides up to 9,000 feet furnish logs for fuel and construction, and the plentiful water supply from glacier and spring-fed streams assures irrigation for hay crops. But in the winter the entire valley is buried under three to six feet of snow. Cold spells that send the mercury down to forty or fifty degrees below zero and blizzards that sweep across the flats make life unpleasant for even the well-housed settler. Snowshoes are the means of travel except on a few well-packed roads where sleighs can be drawn. The valley thaws out about the middle of April, but some of the passes retain their snow covering until the middle of June, and the higher portions of the Tetons above timberline have many snowfields that never disappear. There is little activity in winter. Except for those that trap, there is little to do but wait for spring.

II. Era of the Fur Trade

The story of Jackson's Hole during the countless past millenniums has been told by the geologists. It consists of heroic action by oceans, mountains, glaciers, rivers, that has finally given us the valley's present form.⁵ A history of human activity in the region, however, need not go back so very far. After a brief glance at its Indian life, we can begin with its discovery in 1807 by a white man and continue through the various phases of fur trapping, neglect, re-exploration, prospecting and settlement to the present which features conservation and recreation.

No Indians had permanent villages in Jackson's Hole as the winters were much too severe for comfort, but there is plenty of evidence to show that they frequently traversed the valley and often established temporary camps. Numerous arrowheads and domestic implements on the east shore of Jackson Lake lead to a belief that this was probably a favorite camping site,⁶ near as it is to the best hunting, fishing and trapping in the region. The Indians, who at various times guided parties from the Green River to the Snake, usually chose to go through the Jackson's Hole, and it is certain that there were several Indian trails through the valley which were followed by later trappers and explorers.⁷

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5. The Tetons were uplifted by a faulting along their eastern side to a height of about 14,000 feet above the valley. Erosion has worn them down to about 7,000 feet. Jackson's Hole was then several thousand feet higher than its present level, but has been constantly lowered by the action of the Snake River. Two glacial movements filled the northern end of the valley in Pleistocene times. A recent period of glaciation is now dying out in the small glaciers of the Teton Range.
 6. A collection of these is on display at the Jenny Lake Museum of Grand Teton National Park. A larger collection is in the possession of Mr. Lawrence of Moran. Many arrowheads have also been found on the Snake River nearest Teton Pass.

Most of the area to the southeast and south and southwest of Jackson's Hole, that is, the valleys of the Wind, Green, Bear and Snake Rivers, was occupied by roving bands of Shoshone, Snakes and Bannocks, allied tribes that had to wander widely over rather barren country to maintain themselves.⁸ They probably hunted and fished in Jackson's Hole at irregular intervals, and the bands from the Snake River regions must have crossed it often on their way to hunt buffalo in the Wind and Green River Valleys. The Nez Perce and Flatheads from the mountain regions of northern Montana, Idaho and Washington may have been occasional visitors in early times. After the establishment of the annual trappers' rendezvous, in the eighteen twenties and thirties, they frequented the area often, and appear a number of times in the history of Jackson's Hole during that period. They were intellectually and morally, the highest type of Indians in the mountains. The Crows centered around the valley of the Bighorn, but their hunting and warring parties traveled over wide areas and certainly were familiar with Jackson's Hole. The ancient enemy of the Crows, the Blackfeet, kept their main villages in central and northern Montana and up into Canada. They were the inveterate fighters of the mountains, however, and were constantly

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7. Indians guided early trappers in Jackson's Hole since the days of the Astorians in 1811. Irvings Astoria p. 271. Most of the early Western explorations followed along Indian routes, some of them well enough used to be called roads. Ibid. p. 261.
 8. A good brief account of the habits and locations of the mountain tribes is found in Chittenden, American Fur Trade, page 850 ff.

on the trail looking for Crows, Flatheads, Shoshones. or later, Americans, to molest. The tribe of Blackfeet most often in Jackson's Hole was the Gros Ventre, a warlike clan that frequently traversed the valley on its way to visit the Arapahoes. The most direct route for them would have been up the Bighorn Basin, but the location of the Crow Nation there forced them to make a wide detour including Jackson's Hole. That hunting parties of hostile tribes may have met and fought in the valley is highly probable, but since it was not near the headquarters of any tribe, it is unlikely that any major Indian battle ever took place there. Their arrows were spent on deer, elk, antelope and grouse, and occasionally buffalo. The grizzlies, black bear, mountain lions, wolves and coyotes were not bothered as a rule, nor were the beaver, martin, mink, marmot, or skunk much prized in the period before the white man. Thus Jackson's Hole idled away the years until a strange figure presaged the coming of a new era.

In the fall or winter of 1807 John Colter looked to the west from the top of a gentle pass along the Wind River Mountains and in the distance saw a silvery peak floating high above the horizon. He was a young hunter who had crossed the continent with Lewis and Clark, returning as far as the Missouri, spent the winter of 1806-07 trapping and hunting along that stream with two companions, joined Manuel Lisa's party the following spring, reascended the Missouri and Yellowstone to the mouth of the Bighorn where Ft. Manuel Lisa was built, and was now engaged on a trip through the Crow country to drum up trade for the new

post, a journey which had brought him up the Bighorn and Wind Rivers to the vicinity of Union Pass and his first view of the Teton. From there he descended the Gros Ventre to Jackson's Hole, crossed over Teton Pass to Pierre's Hole, came back across the northern end of the Tetons proper to the upper end of Jackson Lake, and thence to Yellowstone Lake and back to Fort Manual. Sometime in 1808 Colter made his famous escape from the Blackfeet after having been taken prisoner by them near the Threeforks of the Missouri.⁹ Prior to that episode, while in company with a band of Crows, he had been forced to fight a large band of Blackfeet, and had received a wound in the leg.¹⁰ This fight occurred after his long journey that took him through Jackson's Hole and the Yellowstone region on a separate trip in the Spring of 1808 to the Threeforks of the Missouri.

The evidence of Colter's long journey that made him the discoverer of Jackson's Hole rests largely on General William Clark's map¹¹ of the Lewis and Clark expedition to which he added a route marked Colter's Route 1807. Clark had not been over this new region

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9. A full account of this episode is given in Bradbury, Travels in the Interior of America p. 44. Colter, stripped naked, was placed several yards ahead of a pack of Blackfeet braves, and told to run for his life. Outdistancing all but one pursuer, whom he turned on and killed with the Indian's own spear; Colter at last reached the Madison River, six miles away, where he hid under a log raft with his head just above the water. From there without gun or clothing, save for a blanket he grabbed from the man he slew, he made his way back to Ft. Manual.
 10. Thomas James in Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans placed this fight between the Gallatin and Madison, where the site was pointed out to him in 1810 by Colter himself. Dale, Ashley Smith Explorations, p. 28.
 11. This is Gen. Clark's map of 1814. It can be found, among other places, in the back of vol. IV Elliot Coues, ed. History of the Expedition Under the Command of Lewis and Clark, N.Y. F. Harper 1893

of Colter's, but he had talked with Colter about it after he (the Latters) return to St. Louis in 1810. The map is full of errors, Jackson Lake, labeled Lake Biddle, is drained by a branch of the Big-horn; Pierre's Hole is at the headwaters of the Rio Grande del Norte; and numerous other mistakes of drainage and scale are made. But nevertheless, the location of the mountain ranges, of Lake Biddle and Eustis Lake (Jackson and Yellowstone Lakes) and the placing of the route so that it falls along a reasonable course, make it quite apparent that Colter crossed Jackson's Hole and followed the route as outlined above, H.C.Dale ^{12/} influenced by the drainage pattern of the map, does not place Colter at any time on the Pacific slope of the divide or even on the west side of Lake Yellowstone. The weight of reason and authority do not support his thesis, however. In addition to the map, we know that Colter told of seeing geysers and hot springs, which checks perfectly with the generally accepted interpretation of his route.

A recent bit of evidence has turned up in the form of a head-shaped stone, on one side of which is carved JNO Colte across the widest part and below that an R, and on the other side 1808. This stone was ploughed up in the spring of 1923 by a homesteader ¹³ on the edge of an aspen grove in Pierre's Hole (now called Teton Basin), buried about eighteen inches deep in the soil. It was kept by the discoverer because of its resemblance to a human head, which had been accentuated by a notch to indicate the mouth. He did not know who

12. Dale Asley-Smith Explorations, p. 27 ff.

13. Mr. William Beard, Tetonla, Idaho.

Colter was, and had not a neighboring ranchman¹⁴ noticed it in his house several months later, it might easily have been thrown away. As it was, the finder gave it to his neighbor who donated it in turn to the museum of the Grand Teton National Park in Jackson's Hole. The stone has every appearance of being genuine. It was found in an ideal camping site near a stream at the base of the Tetons. This new evidence strengthens the supposition that Colter was near Pierre's Hole and Jackson's Hole, but its date 1808 does not simplify the chronology. There is a complete disagreement among Colter's historians as to the dates of his exploits in the year 1807 and 1808. Chittenden¹⁶ thinks that Colter crossed Jackson's Hole with a party of Crows in the fall of 1807, had the fight with the Blackfeet in Pierre's Hole, returned from there to Ft. Manual alone, and in the summer of 1808 made his miraculous escape at the Three Forks. Thwaites¹⁷ places the long journey of 1807 during the summer months and puts the Blackfoot escape in the spring of 1808. Dale,¹⁸ denying that Colter got as far west as Jackson's Hole, puts the Crow-Blackfoot battle at the end of Colter's 1807 trip and the Three Forks episode a year later, Vinton¹⁹ places the start of the 1807 trip as late as November, for it took him many months to ascend the Missouri that year. According to him, Colter made the trip on showshoes, arriving back on the Bighorn shortly after the

14. Mr. A. Lyon of Tetonia

15.

16. Chittenden, American Fur Trade, p. 715

17. Thwaites, Early Western Travels, vol. v. p. 44

18. Dale, Ashley-Smith Explorations, p. 28

19. Vinton, John Colter, p. 45 ff.

first of the year, took part in the Crow-Blackfoot fight near the Three Forks in the Spring of 1808, and made his escape in the same locality in the summer or fall. The Vinton account seems to be much the best explanation. It gives credit to the Clark map, and also fits the apparent fact that Lisa's arrival at the Big Horn was late and that the Indian battle took place near the Three Forks. The stone could have been carved while Colter was camped right on the map's route shortly after the first of the year 1808, waiting, perhaps, in a sheltered camp for a blizzard to blow over. The journey was not a trapping expedition, but a quick tour of the tribes to give them information about the new post. For such a trip, a man on showshoes in winter, a man on snowshoes can travel more rapidly and comfortably than by foot in the summer. Brackenbridge²⁰, says, "This man with a pack of thirty pounds weight, his gun, and some ammunition went upwards of five hundred miles to the Crow Nation, gave them information, and proceeded from thence to several other tribes." He could have handled that pack and covered the distance with greater ease on snow that covered the underbrush and leveled the slopes than through the slash and brush. At this period, trappers still followed the Canadian habit of using canoes in the summer and snowshoes in the winter. The mounted trapper had not yet made his appearance.

John Colter and his adventures make a fascinating subject, on which there may in the future turn up some more much-needed information. Uncertain as we are of the details and chronology of his wanderings, it

20. Chittenden, American Fur Trade, p. 142 ff.

seems safe to assert that John Colter did visit Jackson's Hole and was the first white man to do so. When? The answer is a guess, but sometime near Christmas Day 1807 or New Year's 1808 seems to be the best we can offer.

The trappers of Lisa's company remained at Ft. Manual and a new post at the Three Forks until the fall of 1810.²¹ The untrapped territory on the headwaters of the Missouri furnished many beaver but the hostility of the Blackfeet kept them from going far afield; so it is unlikely that any of them got as far south as Jackson's Hole. The Blackfoot hostilities became so costly and deadly that the Three Forks position was abandoned in the fall of 1810. Andrew Henry led the trappers from there to a site on the north, or Henry, fork of Snake River where several log buildings were erected. After a hard winter, the party broke up, Henry going down the Missouri with one band, the other groups working toward Santa Fe, and still others crossing the mountains to the east on their way back to the states. We know that at least one of these parties, consisting of John Hoback, Edward Robinson, and Jacob Rezner, went by way of Jackson's Hole²². This, the second known visit of white men to the valley occurred during the early spring of 1811.

Meanwhile Wilson Price Hunt was assembling a party in Missouri to carry into effect his half of John Jacob Astor's dream²³. Astor had decided to establish a post at the mouth of the Columbia which would

21. Chittenden, *American Fur Trade*, p. 142 ff.

22. They recognized the locality in the fall on their return. Irving, *Astoria*, p. 366.

join in trade the furs of the mountains and the riches of the Orient. In furtherance of this plan he sent one expedition by sea and this second expedition by land. Hunt started from St. Louis on March 12, 1811. On March 18 the party met John Colter who had married and settled down near LaCharette. He may have told them of Jackson's Hole. Farther up the river on May 26th they picked up Hoback, Robinson and Rezner and induced them to join the expedition. At the Aricara villages the party procured horses and set out overland across what is now South Dakota and northern Wyoming. Besides Wilson Price Hunt, the leader, there were four other partners, Donald McKenzie, Ramsey Crooks, Robert McLellan and Joseph Miller; the interpreter Pierre Dorion with his Indian wife and two children; the hunters John Day, Alexander Carson, Ben Jones, John Read, and many others. The entire party, most of whom were French-Canadians, numbered over seventy and had with them at the start seventy-six pack horses, laden with equipment. This large and clumsy expedition reached Union Pass on September 16. Here they obtained their first view of the Tetons, which Hunt named Pilot Knobs. Instead of heading down the Gros Ventre, however, to Jackson's Hole, they descended into the Green River Valley. On the twenty fourth, after a rest of several days, the party crossed the low divide into Hoback basin and on the twenty-sixth of September reached the junction of the Hoback River with the Snake in Jackson's Hole.

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23. Washington Irving's Astoria is still the best account of this venture. First published in 1836, this volume, together with his Adventures of Captain Boneville provided the only information on Rocky Mountain Life that was available to the general public. N. P. Langford in his official report in 1872 (U.S. Geol. Survey of the Terr. vol. vi. p. 87) states that their only knowledge of the regions from Irving and a few old trappers.

Hoback had recognized the former stream as having been followed by him that spring in returning from Ft. Henry, and so his name was bestowed on it by the other members of the party.

A camp was made on the banks of the Mad River²⁴ as Hunt named the Snake, and the expedition took another rest. There had not been enough horses to go completely around for every member of the party, so that there was quite a bit of dissatisfaction with the mode of travel, especially on the part of the Canadians who were used to canoes rather than horses or foot. A demand, therefore, arose to continue the journey by boat down the river, and trees were felled and started to be hollowed out in order to carry out the scheme. In the meantime John Day, Pierre Dorian, and John Reed had gone down stream along the canon of the snake to report on the possibility of navigating it. They returned, convinced that the passage could not be made, a report which was corroborated by two Snake Indians who wandered into camp. The attempted navigation was, therefore, given up in spite of the protests of Miller and on October fourth the expedition broke camp and followed the two Snakes over Teton Pass to Fort Henry. Before the departure from the valley, Hunt had detailed Alexander Carson, Louis St. Michel, Pierre DeLauney and Pierre Detaya to stay behind and spend the winter trapping through the vicinity before proceeding on to the Columbia.²⁵ These four men undoubtedly remained in Jackson's Hole for some time as beaver must have been plentiful in this virgin territory. They probably wintered near an Indian village outside the valley for

24. The Snake is not particularly swift or turbulent at this point.

25. Irving, Astoria, p. 371 (Revised Ed. 1868)

DeLauney acquired an Indian wife. In the spring they were robbed by Crows and the upper Missouri, and Detaye was killed. The rest were found by another party of Astorians.

Although the expedition broke up into various parties at different places along the Snake River, none of them wandered back to the neighborhood of the Jackson's Hole until a small return party under Robert Stuart arrived at the junction of the Salt with the Snake River at the mouth of the canon of the Snake, not twenty-five miles from their camp in Jackson's Hole the year before.²⁶ This was on September eighteenth, 1812. The party, however, was lost, so they followed down the Snake River until they came to Hunts route of the year before, after which they obtained their bearings and reached Pierre's Hole at the end of the month. The party at this point consisted of Stuart, Crooke, Miller, McLellan, Leclere and two others. McLellan became annoyed at the rest and went on ahead from Pierre's Hole across Teton Pass, through the Jackson's Hole and up the Hoback to Green River where he was found exhausted by the others on October thirteenth. He probably passed through Jackson's Hole about October third. The main party, which was delayed by Crook's illness was in the valley about October seventh. They must have been a sorry looking outfit, wearied by a month of aimless wandering without foreward progress, and half starved by their inability to kill game, which for some reason was scarce at that particular time.

26. Irving, Astoria, p. 524 (Revised Ed. 1868, Putnam)

These six Astorians did not linger in Jackson's Hole, but hurried off after McLellan. After almost starving, plenty of trouble with the Crows, and a winter on the Plains, the entire party finally reached St. Louis, April 30, 1813.

The return of the Astorians marks the end of the first phase in the history of Jackson's Hole. The valley had been explored on all four sides, Colter having visited the eastern, western and northern approaches, and Hoback the southern. The large size of the Astorian expedition guaranteed the spread of information concerning its location and description among the mountain men, for geographical knowledge traveled fast among those whose livelihood depended on it. From 1812 to 1824 we have no record of any visitors to Jackson's Hole²⁷. During that period there were many trappers working out of posts along the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers. It is not likely that they needed to come as far as Jackson's Hole to find good trapping territory, although it does seem probable that the neighboring tribes increased their interests in the beaver and sent parties out to rich localities such as Jackson's Hole, to collect their share of the pelts.

The beaver, which was now being sought in the Rocky Mountain and Pacific regions, lives in streams and ponds of cool, timbered lands such as encircle Jackson's Hole. A hundred pound pack of eighty beaver skins brought from three to five hundred dollars at market. The only essentials needed by the trapper besides gun and ammunition were traps, which cost

27. J.O.R. August, 1819 was found carved on a tree near the falls of the Yellowstone in Yellowstone National Park. The unknown trapper, if the carving is authentic, would not have been likely to continue from here to Jackson's Hole, however. Chittenden and Richardson, Yellowstone National Park, p. 36.

about fifteen dollars apiece, and castorum, or odorous gland secretion, readily obtained from beaver, to be used as bait.²⁸ In addition to beaver pelts, there was a ready market for bear skins, martin and mink fur, and castorum for perfume.

to H. Allen
Prior to 1822, all of the fur trade in the mountain country had been in the hands of the Hudson Bay Fur Company, an amalgamation of the old company of that name with the new Northwest or XY company and the Missouri Fur Company. The former company controlled not only all of the trade of the British Territory west of Canada, but that of the entire Oregon Country and most of the Blackfoot trade in Montana as well. The Missouri Fur Company of St. Louis under Manuel Lisa's guidance worked the regions of the Missouri and its tributaries. John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company had been in existence since the ill-fated Astoria enterprise, but its power was not felt in the mountains until a later date. Those companies operated from fortified posts, using both trapping parties of their own and trade with the Indians to obtain their staple. Although the bourgeois, or post commanders, were generally British or American, the great majority of trappers, voyageurs and camp keepers were French-Canadians or half-breeds (French-Indians). In consequence the plains and Rockies north of the Spanish explorations were covered with French names to the exclusion of all others except a few Indian nomenclatures. Many of these original names were soon translated by the American trappers, but it should be remembered that Yellowstone²⁹, Big Horn, Blackfoot, Crow, and many others are merely translations of French

28. Chittenden, Fur Trade, p. 318 ff.

29. Rochejaune, Grosse Corne, Riviere Ronge, Pieds Noir, Corbeau

originals. Nez Perce, Gros Ventre, Grand Teton, Platte, et cetera, have remained unchanged.

When and by whom the Tetons were named is not known, but the phrase, "les trois Tetons", probably came into use early in the fur era, after the Astorians. As seen from the west the Grand Teton and the Middle and South Teton immediately to the south of it, were conceived of as resembling three teats. The appellation is not appropriate if the mountains are viewed from the Jackson Hole side. The Grand Teton was the only member of the trio designated by a separate name, and the range itself beyond the three tetons did not have the name applied to it until much later. The mountains did not derive their name from the Teton Indians, who did not frequent that locality. The Gros Ventre River and the mountains, however, were named directly after the tribe that often crossed them. Again the application of the name to the stream and range can only be placed indefinitely somewhere in the twenties or thirties. So far as is known there was little justification in giving the tribe this name which a more polite Frenchman of the second Empire would have refined to "ébonpoint".

Snake River and Lewis Fork (of the Columbia) were names at first applied interchangeably to the whole river, the one derived from the Indian tribe and the other from Meriwether Lewis who crossed it near its mouth. Later, the term Lewis' Fork was confined to the south fork through Jackson's Hole, the north being Henry's Fork after Andrew Henry who wintered there (1810-11). At present the two branches are designated as south fork and north fork of the Snake River. The Hoback River received its name from the Astorians ³⁰. The other proper names in

Jackson's Hole, including that term itself, were given at definite dates, and will be referred to later, in the appropriate places.

In 1822 Andrew Henry, who had just formed a partnership with William H. Ashley ³¹, led a party up the Missouri to the mouth of the Yellowstone where a post was established. Joined by Ashley the next year they moved up to the Big Horn River, from which point the trappers scattered in all directions for the fall hunt. Etienne Provost's party probably discovered South Pass, the flat plateau between the Sweetwater and Big Sandy Rivers that became a vital point in the Oregon Trail; but there is no rumor or record that any of them entered Jackson's Hole. In the spring of 1824, Ashley decided to abandon the type of trapping that centered around a post, and sent his men out in mounted bands to trap over widely separated areas in the Green River, Snake River, and Great Salt Lake Valleys. ³² These bands were to meet each summer at a previously designated rendezvous where they would turn in their pelts and receive their next years' supplies. These rendezvous from 1824 to 1840 became the most picturesque feature of mountain life. None were ever held in Jackson's Hole, but close to it in every direction. After a few years, they developed into lengthy July camps attended by men of all companies in the region, "free trappers", and Indians to the number often of four hundred whites, and a thousand natives. During the rest of the year the trappers wandered in groups of from four to six to thirty or forty. All were mounted and well

30. Irving, Astoria, P. 366

31. General Wilson Henry Ashley was born in Virginia in 1778. He early moved to St. Louis where by 1822 he had become commander of the State Militia and Lieutenant Governor. He was in the

armed, as they needed to be, for they were constantly subjected to open attack or stealthy thieving from the Indians. About half the party would lay out and take in the traps and shoot the game while the other half, the camp-keepers, prepared the skins and cooked the food.

Such was the type of life that Ashley inaugurated when he abandoned his winter post in the spring of 1824 and headed down the Green River. While most of the trappers went South into the regions of the lower Green River and the Great Salt Lake, Jedediah Smith and six men spent the spring and early summer trapping along the headwaters of the Snake, that is in the Jackson's Hole area.³³ They probably stayed in the valley until time for the appointed rendezvous in July.

Jedediah S. Smith,³⁴ the man who thus began the hunt for beaver in Jackson's Hole that was destined to send a steady stream of trappers into the locality for the next twenty years, was perhaps, the most

fur trade from 1822 to 1826, and represented his district in Congress 1831-37. General Ashley died in 1838. His last wife, who survived him, later married Senator Crittenden. Dale, Ashley-Smith Explorations, p. 59 ff.

32. The best chronological account of the activities of these various parties of trappers from the adoption of the rendezvous in 1824 to the dissolution of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company in 1834 is in Chittenden, American Fur Trade, pp. 271-305. General Chittenden has obtained his material on this period from the letters and journals of Smith, Wyeth, Stuart, Larpenieur, Ross, Fontenelle, Chonteau, etc; from official company records, early St. Louis newspaper files, and other original sources. He does not always stick to the documentary evidence, however, so his broad conclusions must be carefully checked against the published sources and such recent writers as Dale, Alter and Chent. The text above and following records only those visits of trappers to Jackson's Hole that are based on reliable evidence or are the geographically certain consequences trips between two known positions.

33. Chittenden, American Fur Trade, p. 271

34. Dale, Ashley-Smith Explorations, p. 179 ff.

interesting figure in the mountain trade. A young man of rigid Methodist upbringing, he was unique among his fraternity in his religious nature and constant use of the Bible. About this time he succeeded Henry as Ashley's partner and from 1826 to 1830 ran the business in conjunction with David E. Jackson and William L. Subletts. His chief fame rests upon his exploits from 1826 to 1829 when he crossed the desert from Great Salt Lake to San Diego, twice crossed the Great Basin from Salt Lake to central California and made a remarkable journey from California to the Columbia, the last half of it from the Umpqua River north being made alone and destitute. Most of the territory he traversed had never been seen before by white men. Smith met an early death at the hands of the Indians on the Cimarron in 1831.

After the spring of 1824 the trappers met on the Green River near the Big Sandy for their first annual rendezvous. When they broke up again, Smith went back up through Hoback Basin to Jackson's Hole ³⁵. The party did not stay long in the valley this time, but crossed Teton Pass to the Pierre's Hole and the Snake River Plains. The next known visit to Jackson's Hole was a year later, after the rendezvous on Green River in 1825 when Thomas Fitzpatrick and Jim Bridger led a band of about thirty men into the valley ³⁶. They trapped throughout the surrounding forests for several weeks or more before continuing north into the Yellowstone country.

35. Dale, Ashley-Smith Explorations, p. 95

36. Alter, James Bridger, P. 66

This first appearance of Jim Bridger in Jackson's Hole marked the beginning of his long and intimate acquaintance with the valley for the next thirty-five years. Jim Bridger was a typical trapper, illiterate and coarse, but full of practical knowledge and daring. He was as good a trapper and trader as any, but his fame in history would not have surpassed those of his contemporaries in the trade had he not lived beyond the fur era to operate his famous post on the Oregon Trail and act as guide on many government expeditions.³⁷ For the next three years, the center of activity was moved down to the area around the Great Salt Lake. The 1826 rendezvous was held in Ogden Valley near the Great Salt Lake. It was here that the Smith-Jackson-W.L. Sublette partnership succeeded to the business built up by Ashley.³⁸ The rendezvous of 1827 and 1828 took place on the shores of the Great Salt Lake. The hunts during these years covered the valleys of the Green, Bear and Snake Rivers and the Wasatch, Uinta and Wyoming Ranges. They may or may not have reached into Jackson's Hole. Smith attended the 1827 rendezvous in between trips to California, and there arranged to meet his partners two years later at the head of the Snake.³⁹ After the 1828 meeting, from which Smith was absent, Sublette returned to St. Louis, and Jackson with one band of trappers headed north toward the Jackson's Hole country.⁴⁰ Whether or not they wintered in the valley is undetermined, but they spent

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37. Alter, James Bridger. Bridger finally retired to Westfort, Mo. where he died July 17, 1881
38. Chent, Early Far West, p. 217
39. Chittenden, American Fur Trade, p. 288. This contemplated meeting has caused many writers to refer to Jackson's Hole as the site of the 1829 rendezvous, among them being Frederick Turner, Rise of the New West

a great deal of their time there and were certainly in the valley during the spring and early summer of the next year, 1829.

Sublette arrived with a large outfit from St. Louis at the Popo Agie near the east base of the Wind River Mountains, where the various bands had agreed to rendezvous. Jackson, either misunderstanding the location of the rendezvous or waiting for Jedediah Smith to show up from his two year journey, did not appear at the Popo Agie assembly; so, when the rendezvous was over, William Sublette with a large party including Fitzpatrick, Jim Bridger, Joseph L. Meek,³¹ who was a lad just starting his mountain career, and many others, crossed the divide near Union Pass and went down into the valley which Sublette now named Jackson's Hole.⁴¹ They met Jackson's Party camped there, probably camped on the Lake, to which Sublette also gave his partner's name.

David Jackson is a comparatively obscure figure, whose position as a partner of Jedediah Smith and W. L. Sublette attests his character and ability. He evidently first came to the mountains in 1823 with Ashley,⁴² but where he spent the remainder of his life after leaving them in 1830 is not known. His signature⁴³ is not so well-formed as Smith's or Sublette's and leads to the belief that he received only slight education. Jackson did not undertake any sensational explorations like Smith, nor did he become an influential business man like Sublette, but he performed his share

40. Dale, Ashley-Smith Explorations, p. 283.

41. Ibid, p. 284

42. Hafen and Chent, Broken Hand, p. 19

43. Chittenden, American Fur Trade, p. 281

of the work well and was a prominent man in the fur trade while the partnership lasted. He deserves to have the valley known by his name, for certainly no man of whom we have record enjoyed a longer period of residence in the valley at any time in this entire period. His knowledge of Jackson's Hole and its vicinity was probably more complete than that of any of his contemporaries.

Sublette remained at Jackson's camp for several weeks, waiting for Smith, according to the prearranged plan of 1827; but on the latter's failure to appear, the combined parties abandoned camp and moved over Teton Pass to Pierre's Hole. ⁴⁴ Smith and his surviving companions were reunited with them there on August fifth. The fall hunt took the trappers north to the Yellowstone River, then East to the Powder River where they wintered. In the spring Jackson returned again to his valley, ⁴⁵ remaining there from the middle of April 1830 to the end of June when he had to lead his band back over the mountains to the rendezvous on Wind River. He never revisited Jackson's Hole after that, for at the rendezvous of 1830, Smith, Jackson and Sublette, sold out their interests in the fur trade

44. Alter, James Bridger, p. 104

45. Chittenden, American Fur Trade, p. 291

46. Dale, Ashley-Smith Explorations, p. 288. William L. Sublette remained in partnership with Smith until the latter's death next year. He then formed a partnership with his friend, Robert Campbell, and they supplied the Rocky Mountain Fur Company with goods for several years. They also entered the fur trade along the Missouri, where they formed the only serious competition to the American Fur Company. Sublette died, wealthy, in 1845. Chittenden, American Fur Trade, p. 254

and returned to St. Louis. ⁴⁶

The business of the partners was taken over by five young trappers who called their group the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. ⁴⁷ The five were James Bridger, Thomas Fitzpatrick, Milton G. Sublette (younger brother of W. L.), Henry Fraeb and Jean Baptiste Cervais. ⁴⁸ The fall hunt that year was made in one large party of about two hundred men, swinging in a wide circle down the Big Horn, up to the Great Falls of the Missouri, south to the Snake River Plains and Great Salt Lake, and over to the Powder River for the winter. A similarly big circuit in the spring of 1831 included Jackson's Hole and brought the trappers to the middle section of Green River for the summer rendezvous, and then back to Power River. ⁴⁹

Here the partners were soon annoyed by a large party of American Fur Company trappers that kept following them closely so as to be in the best beaver country. Astor's company had by this time obtained a practical monopoly of the trade of the Missouri and its tributaries below the mountains, and was now cutting in on the Rocky Mountain Fur Company's area. From now on the mountain trade became marked by cut-throat business competition in which the experience of the five trappers and of other

47. The Ashley-Henry and Smith-Jackson-Sublette partnerships are usually referred to as the Rocky Mountain Fur Company; but the name was not used prior to this reorganization in 1830.

48. All good trappers, none of these men ever became successful in financial matters. Bridger and Fitzpatrick remained in the mountains as traders and guides after the fur trade was over; the rest died early, Sublette in 1836 as the result of an amputation from a wound, and Fraeb (of Frapp) in 1841 during a battle with the Sioux and Cheyennes on St. Vrain Fork of Yampa River in southern Wyoming. Chittenden, pp. 254-260.

49. Haffen and Chent, Broken Hand, p. 81

independent leaders and free trappers was matched against the large organization and huge resources of "The Company", as the Astor concern was now referred to.

In order to avoid the company's men under Henry Vanderburgh,⁵⁰ the partners led their party from the Powder River west to the forks of the Snake, crossing Jackson's Hole during the journey.⁵¹ The spring hunt of Bridger and Fitzpatrick took them down to the Bear River, over to the Green, and back up through Hoback Basin and Jackson's Hole to the site of their rendezvous in Pierre's Hole. Vanderburgh and Andred Drips,⁵² had meanwhile brought their men into Pierre's Hole by way of South Pass and Bear River (not crossing Jackson's Hole) to participate in the rendezvous. Both groups were now assembled in the Pierre's Hole waiting for their supplies from St. Louis to arrive. Whoever had the first goods to trade would be able to obtain practically all the furs from the Indians and free trappers. So in order to hurry W. L. Sublette and his partner Campbell, who had contracted to bring up the outfit for the Rocky Mountain Company, Fitzpatrick left camp and proceeded through Jackson's Hole, down the Green River and over South Pass, finally meeting the pack trains on the Platte.

50. Vanderburgh, the company leader in the mountains until his death by the Blackfeet in 1832 in Montana, had been in the fur trade for many years, first with the Missouri Fur Co. then with his present Co. on the Missouri. Chittenden, p. 665.

51. Hafen and Chent, Broken Hand, p. 90

52. Drips, a Pennsylvanian, was the Company's leader 1826-1840. His Ute wife bore him a daughter in Pierre's Hole on the day of the battle, July 18, 1832. Chittenden, p. 392.

Accompanying Sublette's outfit were Nathaniel J. Wyeth, a courageous but inexperienced young business man who had set out to establish a fur trade on the Columbia, and his eighteen raw New Englanders. At the Laramie River, Alfred K. Stephens and his independent band of trappers⁵⁴ cached their furs and entered into a contract with Fitzpatrick. The latter soon decided to go on alone, ahead of the slow supply train and give his partners the news of the approach. On Green River he was attacked by Indians, barely escaping with his life and gun which had but a single charge.⁵⁴ After hiding in the mountains until his assailants were out of the region, he slowly worked his way up to Jackson's Hole. His moccasins already worn out, he now lost his gun and blanket in crossing the Snake on a raft and was on the verge of becoming the valley's first white casualty when two Indians found him and brought him safely to the rendezvous, and reached Pierre's Hole July 8, 1832.

At this rendezvous were about one hundred and fifty trappers of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, about eighty American Fur Company men, numerous trappers under such independent partisans as William Sinclair, George Nedivier, and Alfred Atephens, and two or three hundred Indians, mostly

52. Among them Zenas Leonard, who later joined Captain Bonneville

53. Leonard, Narrative, p. 54.

Flatheads, The Battle of Pierre's Hole ⁵⁵ occurred on July 18, shortly after the meeting broke up. A party of whites and Indians just leaving the rendezvous under Milton Sublette met a band of one hundred Gros Ventres. In the ensuing parley Antoin Godin and a Flathead killed a Gros Ventre chief, precipitating a fight in which the trapper-Flathead party reinforced by men from the main camp surrounded the Gros Ventres in a willow grove. Shooting from rifle pits with wooden breastworks the outnumbered Indians held off their attackers all day, and in the night by a clever ruse ⁵⁶ were able to slip away. Five whites and six whiteheads ⁵⁷ and about twenty-five Gros Ventres were killed. Others, including William L. Sublette, were wounded.

⁵⁸
As a result of the battle, half of Wyeth's small party became frightened and decided to return to St. Louis with W. L. Sublette. But as Sublette's wound delayed his departure, seven of the nine started with Alfred Stephens who had quarreled with Fitzpatrick and was returning to the Laramie with four men. ⁵⁹ These twelve were riding along the side of a

55. This well-known battle and subsequent skirmishes in Jackson's Hole were not really important, but being reported by a number of early writers, such as Leonard, John Wyeth, Parker, Irving, and others, have assumed undue importance among the many Indian fights during this period. The most detailed description is in Irving, Captain Bonneville, pp. 73-79. Later authorities believe that the Blackfeet of these early accounts were Gros Ventres. Chent, Earl Far West, p. 254.

56. This ruse was to spread the report that the main rendezvous camp was being attacked by a larger party of Blackfeet. Leonard in his Narrative, p. 74, says the trappers repaired to the main camp in confusion and fear. Other writers merely state they returned there to ward off the false attack.

57. Irving, Captain Bonneville, p. 79.

hill between Teton Pass and the mouth of the Hoback in Jackson's Hole on July 26, when they were attacked by a band of a little more than twenty Gros Ventres. The suddenness of the attack startled the horse of George More, a member of Wyeth's party from Boston, and the gentlemen was thrown off. The others, being mostly inexperienced Easterners, galloped up the hillside in different directions, except for two who saw Moore's predicament and went to his aid. These men, Alfred Stephens and a Mr. Foy of Mississippi, were shot by the Indians, who then killed the unhorsed Moore. Stephens was only wounded so he was able to return to Pierre's Hole with the others after they had recovered their nerve and scared off the attackers. He did not recover, however, dying July 30. It seems likely that a calmer group of men could have stuck together and shooting from behind their own horses, have given a better account of themselves. As it was, the manner in which these first white casualties in Jackson's Hole occurred brings no credit on the slain men's companions.

William Sublette was sufficiently well by July 30 to leave Pierre's Hole with his outfit and the survivors of the skirmish of the twenty-sixth.

⁶⁰ He passed through Jackson's Hole without difficulty on his way down the Green River. Three days later, Vanderburg and Drips followed through the valley on their lookout for Lucian Fontenelle who had not shown up

58. Dr. Jacob Wyeth, John B. Wyeth, William Hud, Theophilus Beach, R. L. Wakefield, Hamilton Law, George Moore, Walter Palmer, and - Lane. Wyeth, Oregon, p. 72

59. Purportedly including two grandsons of Daniel Boone, Irving, Captain Bonneville, p. 80

60. Financially the rendezvous had been kind to Sublette and Campbell. They took back with them 168 packs of beaver skins, worth \$60,000 to \$70,000. Chittenden, American Fur Trade, p. 664.

yet with their company's provisions. They soon met him in the Green River valley, however, and were back in Jackson's Hole on August 17, bound for Pierre's Hole and north.

The last of the month saw a new figure in the mountain trade camped in Jackson's Hole. Captain Bonneville, a much-publicized ⁶¹ West Pointer with a year's leave of absence from the Army for exploration, was on the first leg of an unprofitable three years' trading venture. With a large, well-disciplined party, furnished by New York capital, he had arrived on Green River in July and had started to erect a post. This unfinished Fort Bonneville, or Fort Nonsense, was abandoned in August, and he was now on his way to the Salmon River Mountains for the winter. Irving reports Bonneville as saying he buried the bodies of Fay and More which he found where they fell. ⁶² It seems strange that no man should have passed by them in the month since their death without having buried them, especially since their own friends who survived the fight had two opportunities to do so. But trappers are apt to be unconventional about the dead, so Irving's statement may be right. Bonneville's departure over Teton Pass on September third marks the end of the known record for Jackson's Hole in this eventful year, that witnessed the first two deaths and the most varied assortment on travelers in the valley's early history.

During the fall, winter and spring of 1832-33 most of mountain trappers remained in the area near the forks of Snake River, and the

61. From Irving's Adventures of Captain Boneville. Boneville's fame does not result from exaggeration by Irving, but from the lack of publicity given to the more deserving men. Boneville's discovered nothing new and lost his backer's money.

62. Irving, Captain Boneville, p. 95.

Salmon River and Beaverhead Mountains to the north and west. Some bands may have collected beaver in Jackson's Hole, but whether or not it was visited during the trapping season, the valley once more became a crowded thoroughfare as the rendezvous time drew near. The 1833 meeting was scheduled for Bonneville's abandoned fort on Upper Green River so that most of the trapping parties had to travel through Jackson's Hole to reach the rendezvous. Bonneville went through early in July, after losing a horse on Teton Pass.⁶³ Wyeth followed closely behind him, crossing the Snake River near the Hoback on July 11. The rendezvous was well-attended, including besides the trappers of the two leading companies the men of Bonneville's, Wyeth's and Captain Stuart's⁶⁴ parties, and a large number of Snake Indians. Robert Campbell who had come up with a supply train from St. Louis, made a hurried trip from the rendezvous through Jackson's Hole to Pierre's Hole and back.⁶⁵ He left July 9 with ten men and was back with a cache of furs ten days later.

Between this time and the 1834 rendezvous farther down the Green River, Jackson's Hole was probably visited by several trapping bands, though none are recorded.

The year 1834 marks the end of the most prosperous period in the mountain fur trade. The decade before that year was characterized by good profits and fair competition. After them the high prices dropped and the American Fur Company squeezed out its various rivals. It was at

63. Irving, Captain Boneville, p. 175

64. Sir William Drummond Stuart, a scotch baronet, led several sporting expeditions to the mountains. Among the members of this party was Dr. Benjamin Harrison, son of General William Henry Harrison.

65. Larpenteur, Forty Years a Fur Trader, p. 32

this Green River rendezvous that the partnership of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company was dissolved ⁶⁶, and it was during this year that John Jacob Astor, seeing the vogue of the silk had replaced the beaver, retired from the business, leaving the company in the hands of the Chouteau interests in St. Louis.

In the fall of 1834 Bridger, who was now working with Fitzpatrick and Milton Sublette in harmony with the company (American Fur Company) led a hunt up through Jackson's Hole to the Yellowstone Country ⁶⁷; Joe Meek and Kit Carson were in the party.

So far everyone who had entered Jackson's Hole had been connected with the Fur Trade. On August 25, 1835 there appeared in the valley, however, a new type of man, the missionary, for the large band of trappers under Bridger, Meek and Carson that reached the mouth of the Hoback that day from the rendezvous at Fort Boneville was accompanied by the Reverend Samuel Parker and a delegation of Flatheads. ⁶⁸ Dr. Parker had come out with Dr. Marcus Whitman to found a mission in Oregon. When they were met at the Green River rendezvous by a group of Flatheads asking for Christian teachers, Whitman decided to return back east for more missionaries, letting Samuel Parker continue on under the guidance of the Indians. The intelligence and sincerity of the Flatheads impressed him deeply. Indeed, the so-called savages seemed to be more ready for salvation than the whites he saw. He had witnessed a mounted duel between Kit Carson

66. Alter, James Bridger, p. 146

67. Alter, James Bridger, p. 148

68. Parker, Journal of an Exploring Tour, p. 87 ff

and Captain Shuman at the rendezvous, which ended by Kit Carson shooting the gun from out of his opponent's hand.⁶⁹ On Sunday August 23, he had preached a sermon in Hoback Basin which he called Jackson's Hole, to an audience of trappers and Indians.⁷⁰ Jackson's Hole proper was referred to as Jackson's large Hole. Dr. Parker did not hold a regular service in the valley, but probably continued to talk about Christianity to the Indians. After crossing Teton Pass, the parties separated, the Flatheads conducting Parker to the Columbia, and Bridger taking his trappers north.

At the 1836 rendezvous which was again held at Fort Bonneville on Green River, there was the novelty of two white women, Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spaulding, among the new group of Oregon Missionaries.⁷¹ They were guided by some Indians from Fort Boneville to Fort Hall, by a route which led them south of Jackson's Hole.

The mountain trade by this time was thoroughly controlled by the American Fur Company under the immediate supervision of Lucian Fontenelle and Andrew Drips. Most of the trappers were direct employees of the company, but some like Bridger were independent leaders under its contract. The hunts now took place more in the high mountains and plateau country and less in the depleted lower waters of the streams. The entire Yellowstone region and the highlands to the east and northeast of Jackson's Hole became especially popular. During the years 1836, 1837, when

69. Parker, Journal of an Exploring Tour, p. 64

70. Parker calls his audience attentive, Journal, p. 88

Joe Meek said, however, (Mrs. Victor, River of the West) that in the middle of the service a small herd of buffalo was sighted and chase given. The minister's subsequent rebuke to the hunters was considered hypocritical when they noticed the relish with which he ate the Sabbath-killed meat. This story is interesting but not authentic. Parker places the buffalo hunt the day before.

71. Alter, James Bridger, p. 157

the rendezvous was moved to Wind River, and 1838, when Hayden Valley⁷² below Lake Yellowstone was the meeting place, Jackson's Hole must have been on the route of numerous bands going to their trapping grounds and probably was the temporary camp of several parties who could work up the streams from the valley floor. Between the summers of 1838 and 1839, both Bridger and Carson led bands of trappers through Jackson's Hole on their way to Green River where the next rendezvous⁷³ was held. Fontenelle with a hundred men, including Carson, made the fall hunt up through Jackson's Hole to the Yellowstone.⁷⁴ They were back at the Green River in time for the 1840 rendezvous.

Here on June 28, 1840 was celebrated the first Mass in the Rockies north of the Spanish settlements. Father DeSmet was the priest. He had just started his extraordinarily useful career as missionary at the request of the Nez Perces, and was on his way with a group of them to their country. Leaving the rendezvous on July 4 in company with ten Canadians, one Fleming, and the Nez Perce delegation, the young Belgian priest reached the mouth of the Hoback on July 10.⁷⁵ All of the party swam their horses across the wide Snake River except Father DeSmet, who was at that time still a tenderfoot. The Indians, however, were equal to the situation; for, making a sack out of a skin tent and putting all his belongings in it, they placed the little priest upon it, and swimming alongside the inflated hide, brought him in safety and comfort to the

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72. Alter, James Bridger, p. 164. There were really two rendezvous this year. One in Hayden Valley, another slightly later on Wind River.
73. Described by F. A. Wislizenus, A Journey to the Rocky Mountains in the year 1839, translated by F. A. Wislizenus, St. Louis 1912.
74. Mrs. Victor, River of the West
75. Chittenden and Richardson, Father DeSmet's Life and Travels, vol. i, p. 222 ff. Father DeSmet erroneously called this branch of the Snake Henry's Fork

other bank. Like Dr. Parker, Father DeSmet passed through the valley without conducting services, thus leaving the inauguration of Jackson's Hole formal religious life to the Mormon settlers over forty years later. The priest's party crossed Teton Pass on July eleventh over a blanket of fresh snow. In Pierre's Hole they found sixteen hundred of the Nez Perce tribe assembled to welcome this new teacher. After several weeks in Pierre's Hole, the entire company departed for the northwest.

The fur trade had declined rapidly the last few years of the thirties. In 1841 and 1842 Bridger and Benito Vasquez were in charge of the Company's last mountain outfits, and when they left the business to build up the famous post, Ft. Bridger in 1843, there was no longer any organized trapping in the mountain regions. The company had run out all of its independent competitors, so when it abandoned the trade, there was no one left to carry it on. The constant trapping of the past twenty years had its effect on the comparative scarcity of the beaver; and the complete change in hat styles had sent the price way down. The trappers who had worked out the mountain country either retired to farms in the East, joined the company of some trading post, became guides, or settled in Oregon. The Oregon trail, then the Mormon and California trails, became the center of interest, and the little valley of Jackson's Hole was soon forgotten by all except the old-timers.

But before this happened, one unique party visited the region. In 1842 a Frenchman, Michaud, attempted to climb the Grand Teton.⁷⁶ He was

76. Coutant, History of Wyoming, p. 711. Langford in his inaccurate Ascent of the Tetons, places the Michaud attempt in 1843. He says the party was equipped with rope ladders. This Michaud, about whom little is known, is not to be confused with the earlier Western traveler Michaux.

well equipped and very anxious to succeed, but his endeavors failed at the upper saddle about six hundred feet from the summit. Whether he made his attempt from a camp in Jackson's Hole or Pierre's Hole is uncertain, but he probably went up what is now the regular route. This route leads from either the east or west to a saddle between the Grand and Middle Teton. From this lower saddle (elevation 11,600 feet) one climbs up a series of couloirs, or steep gullies, at an angle of over fifty degrees to an upper saddle between the main peak of the Grand Teton and a west spur. The vertical cliff that rises from here for three hundred feet towards the summit stopped Michaud's ascent. Whether Michaud's was the first serious attempt to climb the Grand Teton is impossible to ascertain. There were reported to be Indian traditions to the effect that many brave warriors had attempted to scale the peak without success. ⁷⁷ One tradition that an Indian maiden reached the summit alone is worthy of remaining a mere legend. Jim Bridger is reported to have said that many men had tried to reach the summit but failed. It seems improbable, however, that many trappers would waste their efforts on the hazardous going above timberline. The legend of Indian attempts also taxes one's credulity, unless indeed the mountain were tied up with their religion in some manner that we know nothing about. In 1872 Langford and Stevenson found on top of the West Spur of the Grand Teton (elevation 13,200 feet) "a circular enclosure

77. Coutant, History of Wyoming, p. 711

about seven feet in diameter, formed by vertical slabs of rough granite and about three feet high, the interior of which was half filled with the detritus that long exposure to the elements had worn from these walls. It could not have been constructed less than half a century ago, when Indians only inhabited this region." ⁷⁸ Langford's description is accurate though his conclusions as to when the enclosure was built is not to be taken as final. It was erected either by Indians, or by Michaud as a shelter or summit monument in place of a cairn. Whoever it was had to work hard, for the slabs had to be carried some distance up hill. Since we know that Michaud attempted the climb and presumably reached the upper saddle near the west spur, it seems more reasonable to credit him with the enclosure than to place its construction on some unknown Indian.

78. Langford's Report to Dr. Hayden. United States Geological Survey of the Territory, Vol. vi. p. 89.

III. The Forgotten Valley Re-explored

About 1842 the trappers ceased roaming the mountains for beaver; and Jackson's Hole that had seen twenty years of activity reverted to complete wilderness interrupted only by hunting parties of Indians. In a period of westward expansion along the Oregon and Overland Trails, Jackson's Hole was forgotten. The trapper had disappeared from the remote localities but the miner and settler had not yet come. The same situation applied to other regions. Although literally hundreds of trappers had visited the Yellowstone country prior to 1840. Their stories had become looked upon as old men's yarns by the eighteen sixties, and no new knowledge of the remarkable phenomena of the region had been acquired. Of course, it is impossible to state with certainty that no white man visited Jackson's Hole in the eighteen years after 1842; but there is record of none, and no reason for any to have entered. The valley was five days ride from the nearest post, Fort Hall, and twice that far from the nearest settlement in Utah. With the abandonment of the rendezvous and far-flung commercial trapping, Jackson's Hole ceased to be the crossroads of the mountains. It was far alike from the Oregon Trail and Montana valleys, from the Bozeman Trail and the later Virginia City road. So the valley languished, and it was indeed a rediscovery when, on June 11, 1860, a large expedition reached Jackson's Hole from the east.

This expedition under William F. Reynolds of the United States Engineers had old Jim Bridger as its guide. They had crossed Union Pass

from Wind River and had tried to go up to the Yellowstone through the High Plateau country east of Jackson's Hole. The snow was too deep, however, and they had been forced to abandon their exploration of the Yellowstone wonderland and descended into the valley. Thus Bridger, who had been one of the last trappers to abandon the old life became the first to open a new period of exploration which lasted until the settlement of the valley in 1884.

The Snake was swollen with the spring run-off when the Raynold's arrived; so the crossing of the large and cumbersome outfit became quite a problem. One man was drowned on the twelfth while attempting to launch a raft.⁷⁹ On the following day, they lost the heavy log raft on which they had planned to buck the current. A more buoyant craft was obviously needed. They therefore constructed a light pole frame which they covered with gutta percha blankets and lodge skins and on application of rosin to insure its tightness. This contrivance did the trick, and the crossing was effected with only the abandonment of the odometer wheels which⁸⁰ remained on the banks of the Snake. At their camp on the west bank of the river they were visited by a band of Snakes under their chief, Cut-Nose. On June 18, 1860, Captain Reynolds broke camp and crossed into Pierre's Hole. Jim Bridger left the valley never to return. The soldiers were soon destined to gaze at dead along the line of battle instead of counting revolutions on the odometer wheel.

79. Raynolds, Report on the Exploration of the Yellowstone River, p. 93
Lance Corporal Bradley was the victim.

80. Raynolds Report, p. 95

The outbreak of the war next year put an end to all government activity in the region, but it could not silence the call of the mining camps. The big gold discoveries in Montana occurred in 1862 and in the spring of 1863 the rush began. The rush itself missed Jackson's Hole completely, but many who were too late to stake the best claims started prospecting over the adjoining terrain. One group under the leadership of Captain Walter DeLacy decided to pan the gravels along the headwaters of the Snake, so they came down through Idaho into Jackson's Hole and camped near Buffalo Fork during the latter part of August 1863.⁸¹ They built a corral immediately then drew up rules to govern themselves in case disputes should rise over rich diggings. On the twenty-eighth the men, forty-three in number, were organized into small parties which worked up all the various streams in the locality. But by the end of four days hard work without striking gold in paying quantities, the men abandoned their prospecting and left the valley. DeLacy going north into the Yellowstone district, and a group of fifteen returning directly to Virginia City via Teton Pass and Pierre's Hole.

In 1864 a large party of seventy-three men under James Stuart that had been prospecting as a unit broke up on the Stinking Water (Shoshone) River into several smaller bands. One of these went down to South Pass, up Green River to Jackson's Hole, and after inspecting the possibilities of finding paying gravel continued northeast to Two Ocean Pass and the source of the Yellowstone.⁸²

Jackson's Hole has never rewarded the prospector with any rich diggings, but from this time down to the present, men have continued to

81. Chittenden, Yellowstone National Park, p. 63 ff.

82. Chittenden, Yellowstone National Park, p. 67

investigate the gravels of the Snake and its tributaries. Signs of mineral are numerous and thin deposits have been worked, especially since the depression following 1929, but at best the miner can pan only a few dollars a day. The records of early prospectors are found more often in their diggings than their writings. North of Gros Ventre River there is an artificial ditch that leads water from the hills onto the valley bottom. Of unknown origin, Ditch Creek, as it was named by early settlers, was first described by the geologist St. John in 1877 as "constructed some six or seven years ago for the purpose of conveying water to some placer mines opened in the gravels in the lower bottom level." He also reported that "prospect pits were found in several places in the valley, which is periodically resorted to by small parties and solitary individuals in quest of gold and adventure."⁸³

During the sixties and seventies, great changes were coming over the mountain region. The Indians were placed on reservations to live a settled agricultural life, the continent was opened up by a railroad, and the frontier was slowly giving way before the miner, ranchman, and farmer in numerous scattered areas. These changes did not affect Jackson's Hole directly for a long time, but indirectly they caused its transformation during the sixties from a forgotten valley, seen only by free Indian hunting parties to a not unknown locality visited occasionally by prospectors, hunters, and reservation Indians. These Indians continued to shoot game in the valley of Jackson's Hole, coming from the Wind River Reservation on the east and the Fort Hall Reservation

83. St. John, Report, United States Geological Survey of the Territory, vol. xi; p. 445

in Idaho; but they were perfectly peaceable Shoshones and Bannocks who did not depend on their hunting for their livelihood. It was in this period that the hunter-trapper made his reappearance in Jackson's Hole. Not a commercial adventurer like his predecessor, the new trapper was the man who rebels against society whom the steady advance of civilization had now driven into the remoter mountain sections. Living largely on the game he shot, he had to depend on furs for the cash he needed. The price for beaver, martin and other pelts was not high enough to induce any ambitious men into the occupation, leaving the field to those who looked for their reward in the freedom of life that it afforded. None of these trappers took up a permanent abode in the valley until after it was settled, but a number of them must have become familiar with its vicinity during the period from the sixties to 1884.⁸⁴ The outside world in general knew nothing about the valley, and even the explorers and topographers of the Rockies were ignorant of the details of its topography. The map of the Hayden Survey party which explored the

84. The earliest name that we have is that of Tim Hubbard who is said to have wintered on Snake River during 1865-66. Stone, Uinta County, p. 231. Richard Leigh and Phelps are referred to in Bradley's report of 1872 as being hunters familiar with the valley. U. S. Geol. Survey of the Territory, vol. vi. p. 262 ff. Mrs. Stone names James Goodland, and David Breckenridge as being reported to have trapped in Jackson's Hole in 1884, and Edwin G. Trafton as early as 1880. She also refers to Teton Jackson, An outlaw, as having frequented Jackson's Hole during this period. Stone, Uinta County, pp. 231-235. The stores of occurrences of lawlessness, however, fall entirely within the period of settlement.

Yellowstone region in 1871⁸⁵ traces the course of the Snake River as flowing west along the southern border of the proposed park to a point in Idaho below a large DeLacy Lake, Jackson Lake was not shown, unless indeed it was grossly misplaced as DeLacy Lake; and the course of the Snake was unrecognizable.

The summer of 1872 witnessed the second known attempt to ascend the Grand Teton. The climbers, N. P. Langford and James Stephenson, reported that they reached the summit, and their claim remained unchallenged for years. The credit of the first ascent is now denied them, however, and given to the Owen party of 1898. Langford and Stevenson were with the Snake River Division of Hayden's Territorial Survey expedition of 1872, Langford as a guest, and Stevenson as director of the division. On their way to Yellowstone from Fort Hall, they detoured into Pierre's Hole, or Teton Basin as it now became called, and entered the western canons of the Teton Range, where they made their camp. Fourteen members of the party left their advance camp early in the morning of July 29. Of these five reached the lower saddle. Frank H. Bradley waited here while Langford, Stevenson, Hamp and Spencer headed up the steep couloirs toward the upper saddle, which the former two reached⁸⁶ after a hard climb. In his official report to Hayden, Langford reported the ascent to the upper saddle with reasonable accuracy, as

85. This important expedition made a careful survey of the most interesting phenomena of the Yellowstone region, including Mammoth Hot Springs, Upper Geyser Basin, Yellowstone Lake, and Grand Canon. Special reports on the geology, paleontology, zoology, botany, meteorology and agricultural possibilities of the area resulted in its creation as a national park. U.S. Geol. Survey of Terr. vol. vi. p. 87 ff.

86. Ibid, vol. vi. p. 87 ff.

well as describing the enclosure on the west spur. The difficult part of the ascent, up the wall that rises above the saddle is not referred to, and the summit itself is only described in the most general manner that anyone from below would recognize. The omission in this report, however, would not be enough to refute his claim. But in the June 1873 issue of Scribner's Magazine, Langford published The Ascent of Mount Hayden (as the members of the survey had decided to rename the Grand Teton), - an article that contains so many misstatements of fact as to vitiate the entire story, even after due allowance is made for the exaggerated style in which it was written. As far as the upper saddle, the account is recognizable, although the difficulties and dangers are greatly overestimated. At the end of the description they reach the top with ease, not mentioning the most spectacular feature of the route, "a horizontal ledge, which, about six hundred feet from the top, leads around the northwest precipice of the peak to the base of a succession of chimneys extending on up the remaining distance. Along a twenty-foot stretch this ledge becomes a mere niche in the face of the precipice, twenty to thirty inches wide and even less high, through which one "coons" along, or wriggles like a snake, unable to rise even on the elbows. This is the "cooning place" and its traverse, while safe enough by reason of the inward slope of the ledge, is highly spectacular since one can, if in search of thrills, dangle his arm out toward the brink of the 3,000 foot abyss." ⁸⁷

87. Fryxell, Teton Peaks and Their Ascents, p. 41

The worst error in the article, however, is in his description of the summit. Actually an irregular area of large broken slabs and blocks piled on each other with no trace of animal life or flowers for thousands of feet below, the top of the Grand Teton is described as a "bald denuded head worn smooth" on which "we saw in the debris the fresh track of that American Ibex, the mountain sheep -- flowers, also, and of beautiful hue, and delicate fragrance;"⁸⁸ and although the summit is separated from the west spur by a long and difficult climb, Langford speaks of the two points as though they strolled from one to the other. The entire account seems to be that of a man who had no knowledge whatsoever of the upper areas of the peak. No record or cairn of theirs has ever been found on the summit, a significant fact in view of the common custom of climbers even in that day.

The two climbers descended in the late afternoon, and after picking up Hamp and Spencer on the way down, reached Bradley on the lower saddle at sunset. The latter, who was the geologist of the expedition, had to accept their account; but whether he was piqued at having to wait behind, or whether he really had his doubts, he couched all reference to the higher ascent in his official report in such phrases as "if their account is correct, the hardest part of the ascent is passed when the high saddle is reached," "They report that--- (they) reached the summit", and other rather questioning remarks.⁸⁹

After the climbing party reached the camp, the expedition left Teton Basin for the Yellowstone Geyser Area where they joined the main division

88. Langford, Ascent of Mount Hayden, p. 144, Scribners Monthly, June 1873
 89. Bradley, Report, U. S. Geol. Survey of Terr. vol. vi. p. 222.

under Dr. Hayden. It is likely that Langford thought that his story would never be checked up on, for he wrote, "as it is not probable that another ascension will be made in our day, we have no advice to give those who are ambitious of this distinction."⁹⁰ The peak was not destined to be shunned, however, for in 1877 three members of Bechler's survey party, Thomas Cooper, Louis McKeene, and Peter Pollock reached the upper saddle only to be rebuffed by the verticle precipice, a fate that was likewise encountered by William O. Owen in 1891 and 1897. In 1898, however, Owen, accompanied by Franklin S. Spaulding, later Episcopal Bishop of Utah, and Frank L. Peterson, and John Shive, ranchers, made a determined effort that resulted in the discovery of the "cooning place"⁹² and the attainment of the summit on August eleventh.

Owen was convinced that this was the first ascent, and set out with vigor to disprove the former claim. Langford defended himself staunchly. Stevenson had never made any claim for himself, and Spaulding felt it ungenerous to doubt the word of his predecessors; so the argument continued between Owen and Langford. The good character and prominent position of Stevenson as director of the survey division and of Langford as first Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park made most people discount the Owen argument at first; but later, after their personalities were forgotten and the Grand Teton became more familiar to climbers,⁹³ the Owen Party was accepted as the first conquerors of the rugged peak.

90. Langford, Ascent of Mount Hayden, Scribner's June 1873, p. 147

91. Coutant, History of Wyoming, p. 711

92. Owen and subsequent parties have left written records in containers at the summit. The best account of this first ascent is W. O. Owen, Ascent of the Grand Teton, Outing Magazine, June 1901. pp. 302-307

93. The Wyoming State Legislature by resolution in 1928 accepted the Owen climb as the official ascent. It is so considered by the Grand Teton National Park records.

The second accredited ascent⁹⁴ did not occur until after the Grand Teton had suffered a long neglect of twenty-five years. Since 1923, ascents have been numerous, and four additional routes have been worked out from different approaches--all more difficult than the original one. By the end of the 1934⁹⁵ season about one hundred forty parties and over three hundred individuals had reached the summit--most of them by the Owen route. The caution with which most climbers, whether experienced alpinists or novices with guide, conduct their ascent, is attested by the fact that in spite of steep chimneys, slick ice, and abrupt precipices, only three persons⁹⁵ have lost their lives on the Grand Teton. Buck Mountain near the southern end of the range was climbed in 1898 by surveyors from T. M. Bannon's mapping party, and Mt. Moran to the north was scaled in 1922. Since then each separate peak of the Tetons has been conquered by alpine enthusiasts who visit the valley each summer. Practically all the climbers since 1872 attempt⁹⁶ have started from the Jackson's Hole base of the mountains.

Returning to the year 1872, we find the Stevenson Division of the Territorial Survey came down to Jackson's Hole after leaving the interesting Yellowstone Phenomena.⁹⁷ The expedition camped just above Jackson Lake from September 19 to 21. They were met there by a picturesque character, "Beaver Dick" Leigh, who acted as their guide. Beaver Dick, so called from his protruding incisors, was an Englishman who had adopted the lonely life of a trapper and with his Shoshone squaw and

94. August 25, 1923 by Quin A. Blackburn, Andy DePierre, and Dave DeLap, of Missoula, Montana.

95. Theodore Tseepe, 1925; Fred Ohlendorff, 1935; and Hans Leese, 1934.

96. Records of all ascents are on file at Grand Teton National Park, Moose, Wyoming.

their children wandered and hunted through the mountains. The party camped at the outlet of Jackson Lake from September 22 to 24 and at String Lake at the base of the Tetons from the 25th to the 27th. Jenny Lake, the present tourist center of Grand Teton National Park, was named after Mrs. Leigh who accompanied Beaver Dick on the trip. Other lakes at the mouths of the glacial canons that descended from the Tetons were called Leigh, Taggaet, Phelps Lakes after the guide, assistant geologist and an itinerant hunter. The main party moved down the Snake River to the vicinity of Teton Pass, which they crossed on October first. Meanwhile a detachment had followed up the Buffalo Fork for twenty miles and then returned and paralleled the Snake through the valley and the Canon at its southern end until they reached the Swan valley in Idaho. In addition to the Lakes, Mt. Moran received its name from the artist Thomas Moran who accompanied the expedition as a guest. The Grand Teton had been rechristened Mt. Hayden early in the year but the name never received much favor outside of the personnel of the Hayden Survey parties.

Orestes St. John led a geological expedition to Jackson's Hole in the summer of 1877, resulting in a thorough report on the geology and economic possibilities of the area. He sums up - "possessing a fertile soil and an abundance of water, nought but its norther latitude (near the 44th parallel), and its altitude (6,500 feet) and the consequent shortness of the season, prevent this from becoming a prosperous agricultural community.... the pasturage, however, is excellent, and at seasons the woods and plains are stocked with game; elk, deer, antelope, and bears abound." ⁹⁸ In addition to St. John's work, Gustavus A. Bechler

97. Bradley, Report, U. S. Geol. Survey of the Terr. vol. vi. p. 261-271

98. St. John, Report, op. cit. vol. xi. p. 445

did some topographical surveying in the region, three of its men making an unsuccessful attempt on the Grand Teton during the course of their work.

In the fall of that year, Dr. Hayden with the photographer, William H. Jackson, who had taken the first photographs of the Tetons in 1872, and a party passed through the highlands between Yellowstone and Two-gwo-tee Pass, within sight of Jackson's Hole,⁹⁹ as had Captain W. A. Jones of the Engineers in 1873;¹⁰⁰ but they did not enter the valley. In 1878 Lieutenant Doane visited Jackson's Hole with a geological survey group¹⁰¹ that had the misfortune to lose their supplies in the Snake. Bechler with a survey party in 1878¹⁰² and the painter Moran, with a government escort in 1879¹⁰³ got into the Tetons from the west, but not into Jackson's Hole. Scientific research in the valley has gone on continuously in recent years with the Forest Service, Biological Survey, and the National Park Service all interested in promoting the study of the life and resources within their jurisdictions. Private individuals have also undertaken valuable scientific investigations, especially in the field of geology where Messrs. Blackwelder and Fryxell have ably completed the work of Bradley and St. John. The United States Geological Survey mapped the Grand Teton quadrangle in 1898; and sent a second party under

99. Hayden, Report, op. cit.

100. Jones, W. A. Captain U. S. Engineers, Report on the Reconnaissance of Northwestern Wyoming, House Executive document, no. 285, 43d Congress, 1st Session.

101. Fryxell, Story of Deadman's Bar, p. 132 After this W. O. Owen did a considerable amount of surveying for the state in Jackson's Hole during the early nineties. He named Emma Matilds Lake east of Jackson Lake in honor of his wife.

102. Bechler, Report, op. cit. vol. xii.

103. Fryxell, f. m. Thomas Moran's Journey to the Tetons in 1879, Augustana Historical Society Publication No. 2, Rock Island, Ill, 1932.

Mr. Murphy in 1934 to remap the area on a more accurate basis. Many changes in elevation from the old map have been made, including the raising the Grand Teton from 13,747 feet to 13,766. But, although the government now has many interests in the valley, federal activities ceased for a twenty-year period after the St. John survey until the creation of the Teton Forest Reserve in 1897. Down to 1884, the roving hunter or occasional reservation Indian visited Jackson's Hole at intervals. The valley was still beyond the frontier.

IV - The Settler Stays

The arrival of the first settlers in 1884 marks the most fundamental change in the valley's history. Moving from the Fontenelle, a stream that flows into Green River from the west about one hundred miles south of Jackson's Hole, John Carnes and John Holland with the former's Indian wife, took up adjoining ranches in 1884.¹⁰⁴ They had brought a wagon with them, so had been forced to go up Green River to the low divide that separates it from the Gros Ventre and go down the latter; the historic Hoback Canon trail being too steep and narrow for the wagons at that time. Both of these original emigrants left the valley before they died. Robert E. Miller,¹⁰⁵ therefore, who settled there in 1885 became the first settler to take Jackson's Hole his permanent home. It was Mr. Miller who brought the first wagon over Teton Pass in 1885, thus starting a road, however bad, that developed into the main artery between the valley and the outside world.

It is difficult to compile a satisfactory list of early arrivals in Jackson's Hole. Being an isolated locality, two hundred miles from Evans-¹⁰⁶ton, the nearest town in the territory of Wyoming, no records were kept that might lead to an accurate count. A great deal of settling was

104. Stone, Uinta County, pp. 217-232; and Souvenir History of Jackson's Hole, p. 7

105. Stone, Uinta County, p. 232 says that Mr. Miller took up land in Jackson's Hole in 1884. He probably did not settle there until 1885, however,

106. The county seat of Uinta County. Jackson's Hole was in Uinta County, which included the entire western strip of Wyoming, south of Yellowstone National Park, until 1911 when Lincoln County was formed out of the central and northern portions with Kemmerer the county seat. In 1923 Teton County covering roughly the Jackson's Hole area was established. Jackson is the county seat.

done without original benefit of Public Land Office. Human memory can still compile an adequate list of names, but the dates of arrival are apt to be erroneous, and the presence of temporary settlers forgotten.¹⁰⁷ By 1889 there were probably sixty-four people living permanently in the valley, including Sylvester Wilson, Sellar Cheney, and his brother, Edward Blair, Brigham Adams, Michael Detweiler, Carol Thompson, Lorenzo Bebee, Irvin Wilson, "Sandy" Marshall, J. P. Cunningham, William Crawford, John Cherry, Dick Turpin, John Jackson, Jack Hicks, Stephen N. Leek, Frank Wood and others. Some of these, like the Wilsons, Cheneys, and Adams, were Mormons from Idaho who thus extended the line of settlement of Latter Day Saints one valley farther away from Salt Lake City. The Wilsons settled near the base of Teton Pass and the Cheneys moved across the Snake to the fertile south Park area. Of all the early inhabitants, only these two families have numerous descendents of their name in the valley today. Effie Wilson and Howard Cheney were the first white children born in the valley, in 1891.. Some of the other settlers branched out from ranching in later life. Mr. Miller became the president of the Jackson State Bank and a leading citizen of the state. Mr. Leek soon specialized on conducting hunting

107. The Souvenir History of Jackson's Hole contains the names of a number of early settlers. Composed by seventh and eighth grade pupils of the Jackson School in 1924, it is practically worthless as an accurate record. Mrs. Stone's Uinta County, contains some material of early settlement, based largely on hearsay evidence. These are the only published accounts of this period. The writer's personal knowledge of the valley's history gained from local sources is not very complete. The statements made in the text that follows are only those he has checked against the several sources.

parties into the big game country to the northeast of the valley.

His photographs and moving pictures of the scenery and game have had an important effect in both advertising the region and enlisting the aid of game conservationists in protecting the elk herd.

108

Both because of its lack of transportation facilities and the shortness of the growing season, Jackson's Hole is not a good locality for crop agriculture. The better ranchers among the settlers planned their farm economy around a small cattle herd. Good summer grazing among the hills and plenty of irrigable land on which to raise a hay crop for winter enabled the energetic settlers to soon have marketable beef.

But the standard of living was low, so far from modern transportation; the number of cattle a single rancher without capital could attend to was small; and the winters were unproductive. It is much to the credit of the community that it expanded as rapidly as it did under the circumstances. One factor favored the settlers, however, the essentials of land, wood and water were free. The lodgepole pine that surrounds the valley provided warm log houses and plenty of winter fuel. The thousands of elk, deer and antelope that roamed through the valley and its adjacent highlands furnished meat for the taking. Potatoes and hardy vegetables were raised on the ranch. Not all the settlers, however, were forward-looking men who wanted to establish a home on a decent standard of living and increase the welfare of the community. Some were trappers and

109

108. These elk, now numbering about twenty thousand, that winter in Jackson's Hole and spend the summers in the high country to the northeast and east.

109. Probably about twenty-five thousand elk then. Deer and antelope were also numerous, though the former are scarcer now, and the latter completely gone from the valley.

woodsmen who homesteaded a small place but did not improve it, earning their living by trapping and hunting and later guiding. These men were picturesque characters and honest citizens, but although they contributed to the valley's subsequent popularity as a hunting and dude ranching center, they did not form the backbone of the ranching community.

In July 1886 when as yet there were only a few settlers in the valley and none in the northern end, there occurred the most gruesome crime in

its history--a triple murder on what is now known as Deadman's Bar. 110

A group of four Germans ¹¹¹ arrived at a point on Snake River in the northern part of Jackson's Hole about the first of June and began sluice mining operations for gold. About two months later three bodies were found loosely buried in a bank, the heads of two of them badly mashed as though by an axe. The fourth member of the party who had gone to Teton Basin was soon arrested and charged with the murder of all three. This man, John Tonnar, pleaded self-defense and was taken to Evanston for trial, where on April 15, 1887 he was acquitted by a jury. His story was that the other partners had decided to exclude him from their partnership and told him to get out. On his remonstrances and efforts to at least retain his own personal property and the others ganged up on him, and when one yelled "Kill the s-- of a b---", Tonnar said he broke loose, grabbed his gun and shot them dead in rapid succession. The bruises

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110. Dr. Fryxell's Story of Deadman's Bar includes statements Emile Wolff and William Crawford made in 1928, an account from Cheyenne Daily Sun for April 17, 1887, and the record of the District Court.
111. Henry Welter, Tigerman, August Tellenberger and John Tonnar. Welter was from Luxembourg. Fryxell, Story of Deadman's Bar p. 132 (P.A. Hollins in The Cowboy, p. 52, (N.Y. Scribner's 1932; (This last to note 112)).

were explained as the result of throwing the bodies down the bank to where he buried them. Although the jury believed the story, the coroner's examination which revealed no broken bones below the heads leads to a strong suspicion that he attacked them with an axe, probably while they slept. That he may have been justified is possible, because they had been known to quarrel, the three of them against Tommar. The case, originating as it did in such an out-of-the-way locality, excited a great deal of interest throughout Wyoming, and undoubtedly led many to imagine that Jackson's Hole was full of "bad men".

Another incident occurred during the early nineties, which has been
112
greatly exaggerated. Two horse thieves were traced to Jackson's Hole by law officers from the outside. They were located at the Cunningham Ranch where they had wintered in a two room log house along with a man who was working for Cunningham. One morning a posse of seventeen men surrounded the cabin, hiding behind the outer ranch buildings and in the bushes. When the first rustler came out of the door, he was shot without a warning. Whereupon the second, swearing he would sell his life dearly, ran out, and before he was riddled by the posse's bullets, succeeded in emptying his gun, though without results. The posse was composed largely of young men who have since become prominent citizens. They do not look back on the affair with pride. More experienced men would have at least given the men a chance to surrender.

112. Rollins, The Cowboy, contains a reference to this incident that makes the posse appear brave heroes against deadly outlaws. The writer has heard many erroneous accounts of it himself. The following is according to the statements of the most reliable members of the posse.

Meanwhile in the early nineties, the people of the valley and the state as a whole began to realize that they had a valuable cash asset in the thousands of elk that made the Jackson's Hole region the best hunting country left in the United States.¹¹³ Hunters, many of them wealthy Easterners, came in to collect trophies, and the money that they spent for guides and outfits put the valley on its feet financially. Ranchers obtained good cash prizes for accommodating hunting parties, and packing them into the best game territories. The business was highly profitable and soon became the most important feature in the economic life of Jackson's Hole. Most of the Homesteaders in the northern and eastern part of the valley joined this outfitting of hunters with regular ranching and winter trapping, to form a regular and agreeable routine of work. The ranchers in the central and southern portions relied more on crops and larger cattle herds.

The State of Wyoming, which had been admitted to the Union on July 10, 1890, wanted to insure the elk's preservation and at the same time realize some revenue from its natural asset, adopted game laws that placed a closed season on the elk during the winter, spring and summer, and also required the purchase of licenses to hunt, with a limitation on the number killed on each license. Naturally there was some illegal poaching by a few, but the great majority of ranchers kept the spirit of the law, if not always the exact letter, and resented any unlawful diminution of their game supply.

113. In addition to elk, deer, and antelope (see note 109), a hunter could and still can, get mountain sheep, moose and bears.

The local settlers had early protested against Indian hunting parties leaving the reservations. By 1894 when the value of the elk was being realized, the protests were numerous,¹¹⁴ but in Evanston, the county seat, Cheyenne, and Washington, little interest was aroused. In the summer of 1895, the settlers therefore took matters into their own hands,¹¹⁵

when a band of Bannocks from Fort Hall refused to desist from killing elk, a posse of twenty-seven men was formed under William Manning of Teton Basin, later of Jackson, to take the Indians into custody. The Indians relied on their Treaty of 1868 with the United States Government by which they were granted the right to kill game on unoccupied lands when at peace with the whites. The settlers were acting under warrant to enforce the state game laws of February 20, 1895 making it a misdemeanor to hunt out of season as it then was (July). The posse found a band of Bannocks, including women and children, camped on a tributary of the Hoback River, and relieving them of their arms, started to escort them to Jackson for trial before a Justice of the Peace. The Indians were undoubtedly afraid of the treatment they would get, away from Government authorities, at the hands of settlers, so while riding along the base of a gentle slope the Indians suddenly made an uphill dash through the trees that caught the officers by surprise. They shot after the fleeing Bannocks, but the forest cover prevented them from being very effective. One Indian, however, was killed in the escape. A baby died from falling to the ground from his mother's horse, and a little boy was separated from the band, to

114. Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs; 1894 p. 66

115. Ibid., 1895, pp. 60-80

be found later by the posse. The rest, nine men and thirteen squaws, escaped to Fort Hall Reservation. Officers of the Army and representatives of the Indian Bureau visited Jackson's Hole to investigate, but took no action against the settlers.¹¹⁶ In October one of the Bannocks named Race Horse surrendered to Sheriff Ward of Uinta County at Evanston for the purpose of making a test case. He was convicted of killing seven elk on July 1, 1895 in violation of the Wyoming game law, and immediately sued in Federal Court in Cheyenne for a writ of Habeas Corpus, pleading the treaty of 1868. It was admitted that the region to the southeast of Jackson's Hole¹¹⁷ where the offense occurred was unoccupied according to the meaning of the treaty.¹¹⁸ The Circuit Court granted the writ, upholding the superiority of the federal treaty; but the United States Supreme Court in an opinion by Justice White¹¹⁹ reversed the decision. The ownership by the state of its wildlife was thus absolutely established.

The disposal of the Indian hunting difficulty, however, did not solve all the game problems. About this time "Tusk hunters" were becoming active in the Jackson's Hole country. These were men who shot elk for their two front tusks of teeth, leaving the head, hide and meat to go to waste. If unchecked, they could have seriously depleted the size of the herd in a very short time. Of course, the game wardens and then the forest rangers kept checking their activities as best they could. Prices for good bull tusks reached a high of about thirty dollars a pair in 1905,

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116. At first the country was startled by a report of an Indian War. Later public opinion became incensed at this "massacre" by the settlers, feeling that twenty-seven armed men were utterly unjustified in shooting at a lesser number of unarmed men, women and children in order to keep them from escaping a charge of mere misdemeanor, Ibid. 1895, p. 69 quoting from New York Evening Post, August 2, 1895.
117. In an area of 36 by 40 miles there were only seven ranches, In Re Race Horse, 70 Fed. Rep., 598
118. Ibid.
119. Ward v. Race Horse, 163 U. S. 504

unusually fine specimens bringing up to seventy-five dollars. Cow tusks never were worth more than five dollars, so in general the hunters killed only the bull elks. About 1901 or 1902 the Binkley gang, composed of William Binkley, Bill Morritt,¹²¹ Charles Purdy, and Bill Isael (?) began its illegal slaughtering. Their inroads on the elk herd during the period of high prices for teeth became so serious that a group of legitimate local hunters was called together in the fall of 1906 by Ortho Williams. At the meeting they held, a resolution was adopted, that tusk hunting must stop and the four men leave the country within three days. The gang followed the hint and quickly moved out, thus ending the organized phase of this unique occupation. In the fall of the year when the elk band together and start down from the high country toward the valley, a good hunter can kill six or seven bulls at one time. Although an elk's tusks can be extracted from the living animal that has been roped and thrown, this is generally too much trouble, so most are killed. About 1920 tusk hunting was revived for a short time, but at present the prices are too low to make the practice worth while.

From about 1890 down to the present, the greatest threat to the elk has been starvation, for the rancher with his fences took away the normal winter range of the animals and forced them to winter in the lower hills where a severe winter will prevent them from getting any feed. Fortunately,

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120. The following account of tusk hunters in general and the Binkley gang in particular is taken from a statement made to Dr. Fryxell by Mr. Charles Hedrick during July and August 1934. Other accounts of these illegal hunters agree with that of Mr. Hedrick.
121. Merrit married Binkley's daughter, Sadie. They now own a fine ranch in Stanley Basin, Idaho, which the writer visited in 1934.

this danger has been greatly reduced since about 1909 when the local ranchers first put out hay for the elk. This winter feeding is now done jointly by the United States Biological Survey, the Isaac Walton League, and the State of Wyoming.

The vast forest areas surrounding Jackson's Hole were little wanted by private individuals when the federal government began its conservation policy. There was therefore slight opposition when Teton Forest Reservation was created in 1897 over the entire timbered region that drains into Jackson's Hole. Of course, many inhabitants grumbled over the supposed closed door policy to private enterprise, but active opposition was not strong or effective. Mr. Charles De Loney became first supervisor in 1898. The Forest Service has since then played an extremely important part in the affairs of the valley. Its main functions are to protect against forest fires, enforce state and federal game laws, and to allot summer pasturage to the cattle from the valley. From its beginning the Teton Forest has been closed to domestic sheep, a policy in accord with the wishes of the ranchers of Jackson's Hole, who a few years before the establishment of the Forest Reserve had had to resort to forceful methods to keep sheepmen from bringing their flocks to the valley, the general feeling being that the cattle and the game took up all available grass, which sheep would soon crop clean. Even during its first ten years, the Forest Service opened up many of its resources to individuals by leases. Several summer camps were built along Jackson's Lake, sawmills were put up, and coal mines up the Gros Ventre River were opened; but

their activity was not great and the lumber and coal were only consumed locally.

By the year 1907, the hundredth anniversary of Colter's discovery, when the period under consideration here is ended, ranches were spread out over almost all sections of the valley. The south Park area was well taken up. The west side of Jackson's Hole, especially where Spread Creek and the Gros Ventre enter the valley, had many scattered ranches. There were small communities at the base of Teton Pass, at the outlet of Jackson Lake, and in the south center of the valley. The latter settlement had at first been called Marysville,¹²² but before it was more than just a post office the present title of Jackson was used. Jackson boasted a hotel, post office, school, several general stores of which the oldest was Mr. DeLoney's, saloons and not very many houses. The bank, newspaper, hospital, drug store, et cetera were not yet established. There were about twenty-four pupils in the Jackson school in 1906, some of whom came from ranches outside the town. Cheney in South Park, Wilson at the base of Teton Pass, Zenith in Spring Gulch, in the center of the valley, Moran at the outlet of Jackson's Lake, Elk at the mouth of Spread Creek, and Kelly on the Gros Ventre were names of schools and post offices. Kelly was the largest community of them. The valley's only church, Mormon, had been built in 1905.

122. Souvenir History of Jackson's Hole, p. 29, says it was called Marysville; but outside contemporary reports use the form "Marysvale". Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs, 1895, p. 63 ff.

The history of Jackson's Hole after 1907 is one of modern progress. The dude ranches, inaugurated in that year became the most important business venture. More recently good roads and the establishment of the Grand Teton National Park in 1929 have brought thousands of automobile tourists. The creation of Teton County in 1923 and the violent debates over the question of park extension have added some interesting political factors to the valley's history. But all these phases are really a unit in that they deal with the problem of recreation and conservation that loom largest in the present and future development of Jackson's Hole. They constitute an interesting study in the modern Jackson's Hole, a show place of the nation, the old west on parade before her cash customers.

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