

THE FUR TRADING VENTURES OF AUGUSTE PIERRE CHOUTEAU
AND PIERRE "CADET" CHOUTEAU

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SCIENCE AND THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF THE KANSAS STATE
TEACHERS COLLEGE OF EMPORIA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

LOUIS F. BURNS

September 1950

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS
LIBRARY
EMPORIA, KANSAS

RECEIVED
1913
BY
LAWSON F. BROWN. -Sept.

Approved for the Major Department

C. Stewart Boettcher

Approved for the Graduate Council

James H. Buchanan

111213⁵

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PROBLEM, DEFINITION OF TERMS USED, AND	
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	1
The Problem	1
Definitions of Terms Used	2
Review of Literature	3
Organization of the Remainder of the Thesis . .	4
II. THE FIRST FUR TRADING VENTURES OF THE CHOUTEAUS .	5
The Founding of St. Louis	5
Early Trading Ventures	7
Lineage Chart of Some Prominent Chouteaus . . .	8
Competition with Manuel Lisa	10
Summary of Chapter II	12
III. AUGUSTE PIERRE CHOUTEAU DOMINATES THE ARKANSAS	
TRADE	15
Chouteau-De Munn Expedition	15
Establishment of Trading Posts	20
Summary of Chapter III	23
IV. PIERRE "CADET" CHOUTEAU AND THE MISSOURI RIVER	
FUR TRADE	25
First Trip up the Missouri	25
Merges with the American Fur Company	28
Organization of the Missouri Fur Trade	30

CHAPTER	PAGE
Decline of the Fur Trade	38
Summary of Chapter IV	40
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	42
Summary	42
Conclusions	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY	47

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM, DEFINITION OF TERMS USED, AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Problem

Statement of the problem. The reasons for this study were (1) to discover what influence the Chouteau brothers had on the American fur trade, and (2) to seek out any innovations they might have introduced.

Importance of the study. To the fur trader we owe acknowledgment. He discovered and laid out our earliest roads and was instrumental in securing for the United States many of the western states. The importance of the fur trade in the acquisition and holding of territory has been pointed out by Pratt.¹

A. P. Chouteau and his brother, Pierre "Cadet" Chouteau were engaged in the western fur trade from its inception to its end. By tracing the lives of these two men, many events in the western fur trade become clearer and more meaningful. These men were active in all the major events of the western fur trade, except the founding of St. Louis which was

¹ Julius W. Pratt, "Fur Trade Strategy and the American Left Flank in the War of 1812," American Historical Review, 40:246-73, January, 1935.

established by their grandfather, uncle, and father. Pierre purchased the western division of the American Fur Company from John Jacob Astor and continued to operate the firm until the westward tide of immigration caused the end of the old western fur trade. The absence of any studies about these two men indicates a rich field of needed research.

Definitions of Terms Used

Fur trade. This term is used to describe the fur trade of the Missouri and Arkansas Rivers and their tributaries. This eliminates the necessity of adding American and/or western fur trade.

Missouri. Missouri is used to define fur trading activities that used the waters of the Missouri River or its tributaries. This will sometimes include the Rocky Mountain fur trade; the text will indicate the distinction in this case.

Arkansas. Arkansas is used to denote the fur trade of the Arkansas River, its tributaries, and the Santa Fe trade. Unless the text indicates otherwise, the Rocky Mountain trade will be included in this term.

Review of the Literature

Literature about the fur trade. The American Fur Trade of the Far West, by Hiram Martin Chittenden² is one of the best references available on the American fur trade. In this work, Chittenden relates some of the activities of the Chouteau brothers and by implication suggests a wide range of ventures in the fur trade.

Miss Coman³ gives us an excellent picture of the economic importance of the fur trade and the importance of the Chouteaus to the trade.

Literature about the western Indians. In Indians and Pioneers, Grant Foreman⁴ relates some interesting events about the relation of the Chouteaus to the various western tribes.

Absence of any studies about the Chouteaus. Information about these two men is difficult to obtain. Pierre kept a complete file of business transactions and correspondence which are available but difficult to obtain for this

² Hiram Martin Chittenden, The American Fur Trade of the Far West (Second Edition; New York: The Press of the Pioneers, Inc., 1935).

³ Katharine Coman, Economic Beginnings of the Far West (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 1:306-07.

⁴ Grant Foreman, Indians and Pioneers (Norman, Oklahoma: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1936).

study because of time and distance limitations plus the fact that they are written in French. Any attempt to find detailed information or primary source material about these men will reveal that no detailed studies have been made.

Organization of the Remainder of the Thesis

The scope of this study includes a short biography of the Chouteau family as a whole and a few of their activities; a more detailed discussion of Auguste Pierre and Pierre "Cadet" Chouteau; and some descriptive material on the organization and personnel of the fur trade. In the chapters, the events are related in sequence. Auguste Pierre is discussed first because he was older than Pierre "Cadet."

In general, the people involved in the incidents are discussed first and then the events. Trends and relationship to the problem are enumerated in the chapter summaries. In the last chapter, events in the lives of these two men are noted and compared to the movements within the fur trade in order to find what influence the Chouteau's had on and what innovations they introduced into the American fur trade.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST FUR TRADING VENTURES OF THE CHOUTEAUS

The Founding of St. Louis

St. Louis was destined to be the center of the western fur trade and the founders were to be involved in the trade until their deaths. Pierre Laclède, a New Orleans merchant, was the principal figure in the enterprise, but his agent, and step-son, Auguste Chouteau effected the formal founding.¹ Auguste and his half-brother, Pierre Chouteau, traded and established posts along the Missouri River. Two sons of Pierre, Auguste Pierre and Pierre "Cadet," became famous and influential men in the fur trade.²

In August, 1763, Pierre Laclède, representing Maxent, Laclède and Company, and a party of followers left New Orleans to establish a post in the Illinois country. Winsor states that the party arrived in 1764, and "on the spot where now stands the city of St. Louis, two Frenchmen, Chouteau by name, had set up a trading lodge in the previous

¹ LeRoy R. Hafen and Carl Coke Rister, Western America (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1941), p. 149.

² William J. Ghent, "Auguste Pierre Chouteau," and "Jean Pierre Chouteau," Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 4:92-93.

winter, and here Laclède established his new station."³ Miss Coman gives us a slightly different interpretation:

Laclède selected as the best site for a trading post the bluff that overhangs the Mississippi just below the deboucher of the Missouri. Here a palisaded fort was erected, (Rene) Auguste Chouteau, then a lad of thirteen, overseeing its construction.⁴

If we accept Coman's statement that Auguste Chouteau was Laclède's assistant, we may state that St. Louis was founded in 1763. For Winsor states that the party arrived in 1764 and built St. Louis at the site of the Chouteau's fort built in 1763.

The city soon became a crossroad.

Along the water front lay craft destined for the Mandan villages, for Prairie du Chien and the Falls of St. Anthony, for the voyage up the Illinois and through the navigable swamp that divided it from Chicago River and Lake Michigan. Others are bound for the south,--to Arkansas Post, to Natches, and New Orleans. An Indian trail, worn into a wagon road, connected St. Louis with Little Rock and Natchitoches. Another, the Osage Trace, led southwest to the Kiamichi settlements.⁵

This description indicates the importance of St. Louis as a trading center.

³ Justin Winsor, The Mississippi Basin (New York and Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1895), p. 443.

⁴ Katharine Coman, Economic Beginnings of the Far West (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 1:89.

⁵ Ibid., 2:64.

Early Trading Ventures

The first recorded trading venture of the Chouteaus was the Osage trade on the Missouri. Laclède placed Auguste Chouteau in charge as manager of his St. Louis venture. Upon Laclède's death, Auguste was retained as manager. "He and his brother won the confidence of the Indians by fair dealing and their business grew. It is due to the Chouteau brothers that St. Louis expanded from a village to a city."⁶ Before 1803, the monopoly system prevailed in the fur trade.

The only permanent establishment founded on the waters of the Missouri, under this system, was that of Auguste and Pierre Chouteau, who held a monopoly of the Osage trade for nearly twenty years; the fort was located on the Osage River below the Great Osage villages.⁷

Pierre spent most of his time among the Indians while his brother Auguste attended to the purchasing of goods used by them in their trade and to the sale of furs gathered.

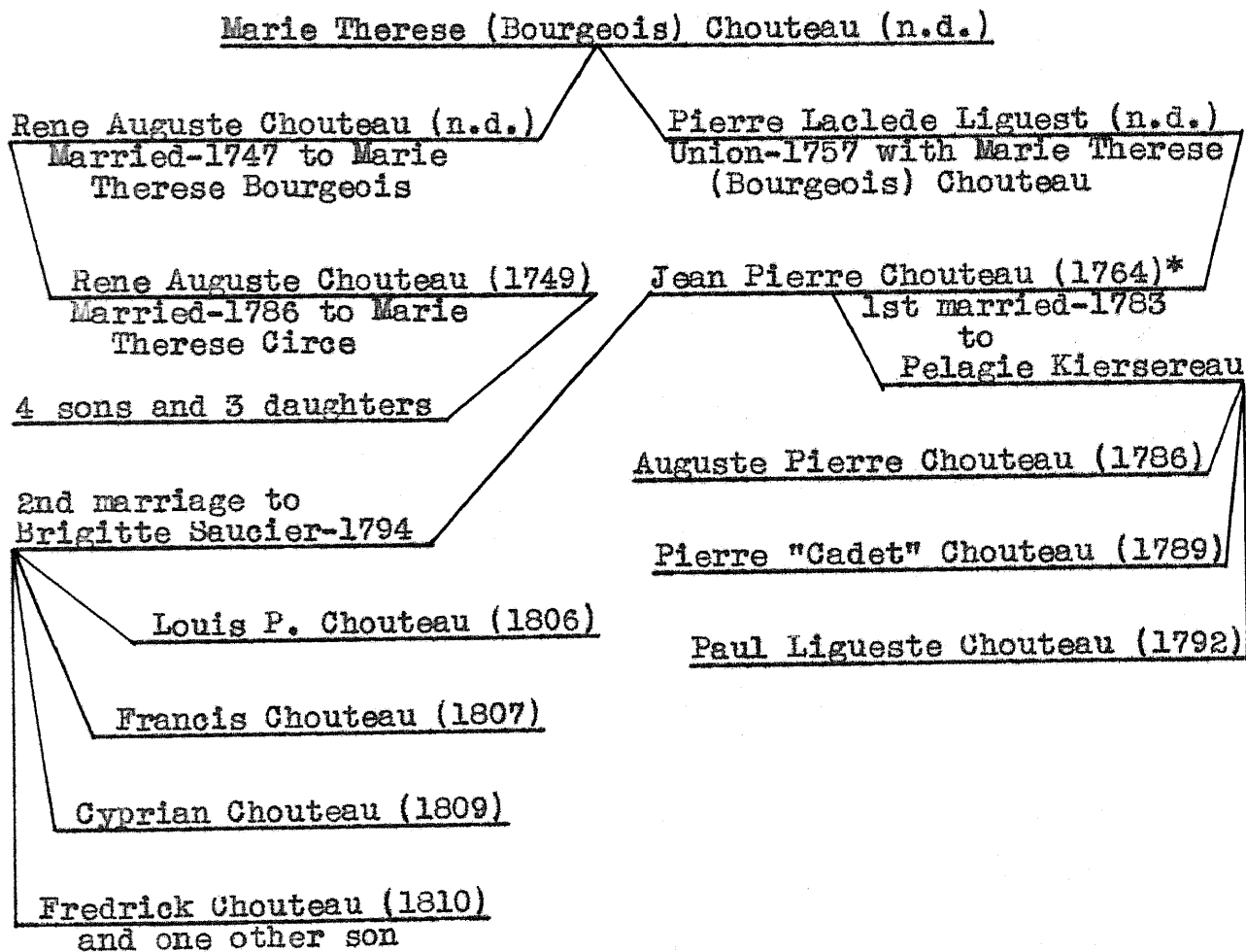
"Trading largely among the Big and Little Osages, the Chouteaus in 1794, erected a post called Fort Carondelet, of considerable size and well fortified, in what is now Bates County, Mo."⁸ We must bear in mind that this fort was not

⁶ Bliss Isely, Blazing the Way West (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 184.

⁷ A. T. Andreas, History of the State of Kansas (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), p. 49.

⁸ Stella M. Drumm, "Chouteau's Trading Posts," Dictionary of American History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 1:369-70.

LINEAGE CHART OF SOME PROMINENT CHOUTEAUS



Compiled by Louis F. Burns

* The offspring of an unsanctioned union, under the old French law of Louisiana, took the name of the mother's separated husband. See Ghent, Dictionary of American Biography, 4:92-93.

established prior to the actual trade. The Osage trade was well developed by 1794, and the building of Fort Carondelet was a move to accelerate and facilitate the Osage trade. Foreman suggests that the fort was built for protection and as a means of perpetuating the trade monopoly.

Auguste Chouteau wrote on May 18, 1794, to the Spanish Governor, Carondelet, in New Orleans, that the Great and Little Osages, who numbered 2,200 warriors, by increasing raids and rapine had much disturbed the interior provinces, the 'settlements of Ilihoa, Nuevo Madrid, Acanzas and even Nachitochez.' He proposed to erect, with his brother Pierre, a fort in the Osage country whereby the Indians could be controlled, in consideration of a grant of the monopoly of the Osage trade until the end of the year 1800. Carondelet accepted the proposal and the contract was carried into effect the same year, by the construction of a fortified establishment overlooking the Osage village, of which Pierre Chouteau was made commandant.⁹

Although the Osage trade was the earliest involving the Chouteaus, they did not limit their operations to that trade. Auguste was a partner of Julian Dubuque in his lead mining venture on the upper Mississippi, across the river from Galena, Illinois, at the present site of Dubuque, Iowa. Dubuque mined the lead and sent it to St. Louis where it was marketed by Auguste Chouteau.¹⁰ The Missouri Fur Company was organized in 1808, with Manuel de Lisa at its head, Jean

⁹ Grant Foreman, Indians and Pioneers (Norman, Oklahoma: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), p. 16.

¹⁰ Isely, op. cit., p. 190.

Pierre and Rene Auguste Chouteau joined Lisa in this venture. In 1812, this company dissolved; the members establishing independent houses to prosecute the trade. In 1822, the Western Department of the American Fur Company was formed, and the Chouteaus, formerly connected with the Missouri Company, and also Pierre "Cadet" and his half-brother Francis became members. This company occupied the posts of the Missouri Trading Company, of which it was an outgrowth, and made great efforts to monopolize the trade in the Southwest by rooting out independent traders. Francis was sent to Kansas where he built a post on the north bank of the Kaw a few miles above its mouth; in 1825, Francis was joined by Cyprian, his brother. By 1830, another Chouteau brother, Frederick, built a post on Mission Creek, in what is now Shawnee County, Kansas.¹¹

Competition with Manuel Lisa

One of the most interesting rivalries in the history of the fur trade was the contest between Manuel Lisa and Jean Pierre Chouteau. Not until the upper Missouri trade overshadowed the Osage trade did this argument cease. The fight was even carried on by Pierre "Cadet," but the lure of

¹¹ Feature in The Kansas City Star, June 4, 1950, "When the Chouteaus Arrived, Kansas City's History Began," by Henry Van Brunt, Centennial I, pp. 3-4.

riches on the upper Missouri won over "Cadet". He became a member of Lisa's St. Louis Missouri Fur Trading Company, but Auguste Pierre remained in the Osage trade and became the foremost figure in the Arkansas fur business.

The Chouteau-Lisa controversy dates from the acquisition of the Osage monopoly by Manuel Lisa. According to Isely, Lisa obtained the monopoly in this manner:

Lisa called on the governor and told him that since Spain owned Louisiana, it was not fair that Frenchmen should control the fur trade at St. Louis. He asked for and was granted the monopoly of the trade with the Osages on the Osage River.¹²

Pierre Chouteau was not one to stand by and allow this lucrative trade to slip from his hands. He still held the monopoly of the Arkansas and a strong hold on the hearts of the Osage people. In 1802, he persuaded more than 3,000 of these Indians to leave their homes on the Osage and migrate to the Neosho and Verdigris, streams which head in the same country as the Osage but flow south and empty into the Arkansas. Since this was outside the limit of Lisa's monopoly, he was forced to be content with a much reduced trade.¹³ This band of Osages was known as the Chaneers or Arkansas band, and were under the leadership of Chief Clermont. The

¹² Isely, op. cit., p. 193.

¹³ Loc. cit.

separation is often referred to as the Arkansas Schism. For one who benefited under the Spanish regime, Lisa showed a certain lack of gratitude in a letter to General Clark dated 1817. "I have suffered enough in person and property under a different government, to know how to appreciate the one under which I now live."¹⁴ This statement illustrates the shrewd jockeying moves of Lisa, and the effecting of the Arkansas Schism by Chouteau displays an equally shrewd maneuver. The scope of this study does not include a discussion of this subject, but the entire matter of the Chouteau-Lisa controversy merits further study.

Summary of Chapter II

The western fur trade and the Chouteau's fur trading activities had their origin in the establishment of St. Louis. There were other forts and posts on the Mississippi; St. Louis was the last French post built by the French, but their primary function was for protection of the country east of the great river. A few explorers had traveled up the Missouri in search of the Northwest Passage or mineral wealth; they disturbed the western rivers for a while and then disappeared. In the wake of their pirogues came the Chouteaus with the

¹⁴ Coman, op. cit., pp. 290-91.

keelboats, the voyageurs, the bourgeois, and the mangeuer de lards.¹⁵

The Chouteaus were unable to keep the trade for themselves. Manuel de Lisa, the Spaniard, entered the Missouri trade and competed for the Osage trade. Lisa and the Chouteaus were shrewd and unscrupulous in their dealings with competition. Lisa managed to gain the monopoly of the Osage trade, developed and previously held by the Chouteaus, but Auguste and Pierre countered by leading about half of the Osages to the Arkansas, thus nullifying Lisa's monopoly.

Enmities were overlooked when the Missouri Trading Company, sometimes called the St. Louis Missouri Fur Trading Company, was organized under the leadership of Lisa. Every St. Louis trader of any consequence, including the Chouteaus, became a member. These traders at first were hostile to Astor and his American Fur Company but with the disintegration of the Missouri company most of the former members joined Astor's company and directed its affairs until the end of the old western fur trade.

Trends in this period were: (1) the beginning of the competitive system and the abolishment of the monopoly system, (2) a noticeable move from the small trader-trapper toward

¹⁵ See page 31 of this thesis for additional information on engages and mangeuer de lards.

the organization of large trading companies, and (3) a willingness on the part of the Chouteaus to accept and support innovations in trading procedures.

CHAPTER III

AUGUSTE PIERRE CHOUTEAU DOMINATES THE ARKANSAS TRADE

Chouteau-De Munn Expedition

Auguste Chouteau was a principal in the Chouteau-De Munn affair, which was to have a profound effect on his future activities and the development of the Santa Fe trade.

As an active trader and man of influence among the Indians, A. P. Chouteau was the outstanding figure of all those in business at the mouth of the Verdigris. Chouteau had for several years traded with the Indians on the headwaters of the Arkansas and Platte rivers, but abandoned the hazards of that field in 1817.¹

Upon Chouteau's death in 1838 his financial condition was very poor; his widow and his children lived in actual poverty but the intercession of kind friends alleviated the situation.

In the summer of 1815, A. P. Chouteau and Julius De Munn formed a partnership of a fur trading enterprise on the Arkansas headwaters.

They left St. Louis on the 10th of September, 'in company with Mr. Phillebert, a trader, who had come back to get a supply of goods to enable him to buy horses to bring in his furs.' On their

¹ Grant Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1926), pp. 77-79.

way to the mountains Chouteau and De Munn purchased Phillebert's entire outfit and the time of his men.²

Upon their arrival at Huerfano Creek, near Pueblo, Colorado, they found that Phillebert's men, who were to rendezvous with Phillebert, had gone on to Taos, New Mexico. De Munn was nominated to go after them which he proceeded to do. On his arrival at Taos he found the Spanish friendly.

This favorable reception induced De Munn to seek permission to trap on the headwaters of the Rio Grande, which he had observed to abound with beaver. The Governor had no authority to grant permission but promised to recommend it to his government.³

De Munn returned to the camp on Huerfano Creek and after discussing the situation with Chouteau, it was decided that De Munn and Phillebert should return to St. Louis for additional equipment.

De Munn, with a new outfit and party, left St. Louis July 15, (1816), and returned to the mouth of the Kansas river, where he met Chouteau who had agreed to come there with the winter's hunt. Chouteau, on the way down, had had a severe fight with the Pawnees in which he had lost one man and killed several of the Indians.⁴

The fight here mentioned gave Chouteau's name to an island

² Hiram Martin Chittenden, The American Fur Trade in the Far West (New York: The Press of the Pioneers, Inc., 1935), 2:497.

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ Loc. cit.

near Hartland, Kansas; Foreman places it near the present site of Fort Dodge.⁵

Chittenden and Thwaites disagree on which tribe of Indians made the attack. Thwaites states: "The name dates from the disastrous expedition of 1815-17, (the Chouteau-De Munn expedition), when Chouteau retreated to this island to withstand a Comanche attack."⁶ Chittenden refers to the affair in a discussion of Chouteau's Island:

Chouteau's Island was a well-known point on the Upper Arkansas. The name dates from the Chouteau-De Munn expedition of 1815-17. While on his way to the Missouri in the spring of 1816 with the furs collected during the previous winter, Chouteau was attacked by a war party of two hundred Pawnees. . . He retreated to an island in the Arkansas where he could more effectually defend himself and the name arose from this incident. Chouteau did not have any trading post here as asserted by some authorities.⁷

Both tribes hunted in the vicinity of the island.

Auguste was no stranger to warfare. He entered the United States Military Academy in 1804 and was appointed an ensign in the 2nd United States Infantry, in June, 1806. He served on the Southwestern frontier as an aide-de-camp on the staff of General James Wilkinson for a brief term, resigning

⁵ Foreman, loc. cit.

⁶ Reuben Gold Thwaites, Early Western Travels (Cleveland: Clark, 1905), 19:185.

⁷ Chittenden, op. cit., 2:536.

from the service in January, 1807. During the following season A. P. Chouteau commanded a trading expedition up the Missouri river and was accompanied by a military detachment, under the command of Ensign Nathaniel Pryor, which had been detailed to escort the Mandan chief, Shehaka, back to his people in Dakota. The expedition was attacked by the Arikara Indians and driven back down the river with the loss of a number of men killed and wounded. In 1809 he ascended the Missouri river to the Rocky Mountains with a trading expedition, returning the following year. During the War of 1812, when a general Indian uprising throughout the Mississippi Valley seemed imminent, he served as a captain of militia.⁸

Chouteau and De Munn led their men back to the trapping grounds in the Sangre de Cristo mountains of southern Colorado. In this area they trapped during the following winter (1816-17) with the kind permission of the Spanish Governor, but a change of administration during the winter caused their eventual arrest. With the return of spring the partners decided that Chouteau should stay with the trappers and that De Munn should return with the catch to St. Louis for supplies.

. . . both Chouteau and De Munn made preparations for the latter's departure for St. Louis. May 23rd, 1817, was fixed as the date of departure. Unluckily

⁸ Bliss Isely, Blazing the Way West (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 233.

it rained hard that day and prevented the start and on the 24th a force of Spanish troops appeared with orders to escort the whole party to Santa Fe.⁹

The exact location of Chouteau's trapping activities is unknown; Hafen speculates considerably on this point.

The Chouteau and De Munn men must have trapped a large part of the area of present Colorado, and were doubtless the first American explorers of some sections of this mountain region. But no satisfactory account of their trapping and exploration has been preserved. However, one of the trappers, Bijou, accompanied Major Long to the mountains in 1820, and was able to give the official explorers descriptions of country far beyond the route of the government expedition's march.¹⁰

The Spanish imprisoned Chouteau and De Munn in Chihuahua and took possession of their furs and equipment. After forty-eight days of imprisonment they were tried and banished from Spanish territory.

Some years later after this incident, in answering a letter from the Secretary of War, inquiring about trading conditions in the west, Colonel Chouteau wrote from the Verdigris: 'Shortly after the war I went upon a trading expedition on the head of the Arkansas and was taken by the Spaniards. When I was near Santa Fe, I was invited by them to visit their place. Convinced of my own innocence and believing the invitation to be an act of hospitality, I unhesitatingly accepted what I believed was intended as a mark of respect. Immediately upon my arrival in town I was arrested, thrown into prison, and charged with revolutionary designs, my property confiscated, and after having undergone an examination

⁹ Chittenden, loc. cit.

¹⁰ LeRoy R. Hafen and Carl Coke Rister, Western America (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1941), p. 220.

in which my life was endangered, I was discharged without any compensation for my property which had been taken by violence.

On my return home I was determined to abandon a trade that was attended with so much risk until the time when the United States Government would extend protection to those citizens who embarked their capital and risked their lives in a trade that ultimately must produce advantages to the citizens of the United States, and in a political point of view cement the bonds of friendship between the governments of the United States and Mexico.¹¹

Chouteau expresses fear of the Spanish in this letter, for between 1817 and 1821 almost no trade of any kind was carried on in Spanish claimed territory. Hafen expresses the same idea.

The unfortunate termination of the Chouteau and De Munn trapping and trading venture discouraged further American expeditions to the New Mexico border. In 1819, however, the Spanish-American boundary line in the Southwest was agreed upon¹² and some of the uncertainty and danger was thus removed. Then came the achievement of Mexican Independence in 1821, and the restrictive policy of Spain was replaced by one more favorable to American interest.¹³

Establishment of Trading Posts

Colonel Chouteau after the disastrous Chouteau-De Munn expedition became cautious and limited his operations to

¹¹ Foreman, loc. cit.

¹² The Adams-Onis treaty of 1819-1821 arranged the Southwestern boundary between the United States and Spanish possessions.

¹³ Hafen and Rister, op. cit., p. 221.

the Arkansas in what is now Oklahoma. He was easily the most influential man in the Arkansas trade. After Chouteau abandoned the far western trade he formed a partnership, in 1817, with ^{Joseph} John Revoir for trade with the Osages.¹⁴

In 1822 Colonel A. P. Chouteau occupied the trading post called 'La Saline' where Salina, Oklahoma, now stands. The following years he enlarged his operations and established a trading house just below the falls of the Verdigris.¹⁵

The date given here, 1822, indicates Chouteau's occupation of the post and not the date of its construction. This lapse of five years is explained by Foreman. "Chouteau did not remove to the site of their post, but Revoir was established there on the bank of the Grand River."¹⁶ In the same year, 1822, Auguste Pierre and his brother Paul Liguste formed a partnership and in 1823, the brothers bought a trading establishment from Grand and Barbour, just below the falls of the Verdigris.¹⁷

Foreman gives us a very good description of Chouteau's trading house on the Neosho.

¹⁴ Grant Foreman, Indians and Pioneers (Norman, Oklahoma: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), p. 53.

¹⁵ Stella M. Drumm, "Chouteau's Trading Posts," Dictionary of American History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 1:369-70.

¹⁶ Foreman, loc. cit.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

They stopped at Colonel Chouteau's house near the Grand Saline on the Grand River. It was an imposing establishment in the midst of the wilderness where Chouteau lived with his Osage wife, Rosalie, by whom he had an interesting family of children. Surrounded by a retinue of colored and Indian retainers, he was a feudal lord of this whole country. A shrewd Indian trader, of dominating personality and great influence with the Indians, he lived a care-free life with all the luxury obtainable in the wilderness. His was a double log house with a large passage through the center from which a stairway ascended to the second story and the whole was covered and whitewashed. A piazza extended across the front, with buffalo and bear skins draped over the railing, while one end was loaded with harness, where dogs and cats were sleeping together. One room, the treasure house of the establishment contained guns, rifles and traps.¹⁸

The volume of business at the Neosho and Verdigris was tremendous. Some indications of the business volume can be surmised from a description by Foreman.

On the second day of April (1824), the large barge left down-stream with a cargo of thirty-eight thousand seven hundred fifty-seven pounds of furs and skins; the shipment included three hundred eighty-seven packs and fifty-seven pounds, made up of three hundred female bear skins, one hundred sixty bear cubs, three hundred eighty-seven beavers, sixty-seven otters, seven hundred twenty cats, ninety-five "Pinchon" and fox, and three hundred sixty-four packages of deer skins, which included seven hundred twenty-six deer skins belonging to Mr. Menard.¹⁹

Auguste Chouteau established one other post for the Arkansas trade. This post was located on the north bank of

¹⁸ Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest, pp. 90-91.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 83.

the South Canadian near a creek which still bears Chouteau's name. The present town of Purcell, Oklahoma, is about five miles southwest of the site.²⁰ Very little information exists concerning this fort, possibly because it was not of prime importance.

Summary of Chapter III

Auguste Chouteau was the principal trader on the Arkansas River. He developed the Arkansas trade by establishing posts and through his influence with the Indians, which was accomplished by fair dealings, caused the development of the Indian fur trade.

The Chouteau-De Munn expedition, which ended tragically, had a far reaching effect on the history of our country. (1) It caused a turn away from disputed Spanish territory and hastened the development of the upper Missouri trade which in turn aided in gaining ownership of the Pacific Northwest. (2) It was possibly a minor influence in the boundary settlement between Spanish possessions and the United States. After the settlement of this boundary some trade was carried on but not by Auguste.

²⁰ U. S. Bureau of Ethnology, Seventeenth Annual Report, 1895-1896, part i, 171.

Two trends are especially noticeable in this discussion; they are: (1) A move away from the upper Arkansas trade toward either the upper Missouri or the lower Arkansas, and (2) a move toward the use of a central post system on the Arkansas. This movement eliminated the brigades of white trappers and made full use of the Indian trapper who brought his pelts to a central post. As a comment on this last trend we should add that this centralization might in part be responsible for the presence of fewer Europeans, in the present state of Oklahoma, as contrasted with the upper Missouri region at this time, 1830.

CHAPTER IV

PIERRE "CADET" CHOUTEAU AND THE MISSOURI RIVER FUR TRADE

First Trip up the Missouri

Pierre "Cadet" Chouteau¹ entered and became a force in the fur trade at a later date than his brother Auguste Pierre, but his influence on the history of the fur trade was greater. Pierre was primarily interested in the Missouri trade which by far overshadowed the Arkansas trade. In histories of John Jacob Astor's famous American Fur Company we find an occasional mention of Pierre, but his true importance seems to be lost. In any discussion of the Missouri trade an understanding of the methods used and the type of men involved is essential. For this reason some material on methods and men is included in this discussion.

Pierre Chouteau was born in St. Louis, January 19, 1789. He became acquainted with the fur trade at an early age, he was clerk in his father's firm before he reached the age of sixteen, and displayed unusual aptitude for business.²

¹ "Cadet" means second. Pierre "Cadet" Chouteau was the second son of Jean Pierre Chouteau.

² Hiram Martin Chittenden, The American Fur Trade of the Far West (New York: The Press of the Pioneers, Inc., 1935), 1:381.

AMERICAN LIBRARY

U. S. F. A.

AMERICAN LIBRARY

Little is known of his early life, but it is known that at the age of twenty he ascended the Missouri in the service of the Missouri Fur Company.³

The Missouri Fur Company, also known as the St. Louis Missouri Fur Company, was the first to enter the upper Missouri trade. This company had as its incorporators practically every trader of any consequence.

The members of the new company in the order in which their names appear in the record were Benjamine Wilkinson, (Jean) Pierre Chouteau, Sr., Manuel Lisa, Auguste (Pierre) Chouteau, Jr., Reuben Lewis, William Clark, Sylvester Labadie, all of St. Louis; Pierre Menard, and William Morrison, of Kaskaskia, Illinois; Andrew Henry of Louisiana, Missouri, and Dennis Fitz Hugh, of Louisville, Kentucky.⁴

Its capital amounted to \$40,000 and its operations were conducted on a scale which up to the formation of this company was unknown. For the six years following 1809, the company dominated the upper Missouri trade.⁵

"Cadet" accompanied the expedition of 1809, which consisted of a brigade of one hundred fifty men and their supplies.⁶ The trappers found the beaver plentiful, but they

³ Loc. cit.

⁴ Chittenden, op. cit., p. 138.

⁵ Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion (New York: Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 454.

⁶ Katharine Coman, Economic Beginnings of the Far West (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 1:306-07.

worked at the risk of their lives. As a defense for the hunters and in defiance of the Blackfeet Indians, who harassed the trappers continuously, a fortified post was built at the three forks of the Missouri.

A more detailed account of Pierre's first trip up the Missouri is given by Hafen.

In June, 1809, the company's first expedition set forth "with 172 men, nine barges and a canoe," and with sufficient merchandise to supply five or six trading posts. Upon reaching the Arikaras and the Mandans, the traders were accorded friendly reception, the size of the party doubtless influencing the Indian attitude. After leaving traders and goods with the principal tribe on the Missouri, the main party pushed on to Fort Manuel. Profitable trapping and trading with the Crows were carried on during the fall and winter. In the spring, the fur men moved north to the Three Forks of the Missouri, and began erection of a fort there. In this rich beaver region the trappers were making excellent catches and everything looked promising, when suddenly the Blackfeet attacked the trapping party, killing five men and made away with their horses, guns, traps, and furs.⁷

The members of the Missouri Company formed a tight monopoly of the Missouri trade. It was too top-heavy with capable men and did not have enough capital to become a success. "They excluded the very man (John Jacob Astor) who would have been able to carry them through their initial misfortunes to ultimate success."⁸ A proposition to admit

⁷ LeRoy R. Hafen and Carl Coke Rister, Western America (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1941), pp. 215-16.

⁸ Chittenden, op. cit., p. 145.

Mr. Astor to the extent of five shares was rejected. Astor did not allow the opposition of the St. Louis traders discourage him; after the failure of his Astoria expedition he organized the American Fur Company and absorbed the Missouri Fur Company.

In 1808 Mr. Astor had already founded the American Fur Company. Then with the Nor'westers, he had bought out the Mackinaws, receiving their Wisconsin posts as his share into the South West Company. Now, in 1810, he suggested that the Nor'westers join him and take a third interest in his new Pacific adventure.⁹

Merges with the American Fur Company

As long as Manuel Lisa lived he held the leading merchants of St. Louis united so that they worked together as a unit. His death was the signal for several rival companies to spring into existence. Pierre "Cadet" or Pierre, Jr., as he was sometimes called, was selected to take Lisa's place as leader of the Missouri trade.¹⁰ He was thirty-one years old at this time, 1820, and well experienced in the fur trade. His first problem was that of coming to terms with John Jacob Astor. Under an agreement, Pierre, Jr., was to take the active management of trading brigades and Indian trade

⁹ Meade Minnigerode, "Butcher, Baker, Fortune Maker," Collier's, 79:24-25, April 2, 1927.

¹⁰ Bliss Isely, Blazing the Way West (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 233.

of the Missouri while Astor agreed to handle the sale of furs on the markets of the world.

In 1822, the Western Department of the American Fur Company was formed and the Chouteaus, formerly connected with the Missouri Company, were members. Pierre "Cadet" and his brother Francis also became members. This company occupied the posts of the Missouri Company. Francis Chouteau was sent to Kansas, and was employed for several years in this work. The post known as the "Four Houses," so called from its being built on the four sides of an open square, was established on the north bank of the Kaw, twenty miles above its mouth. In 1825, Francis was joined by Cyprian, his brother, and a house was built about opposite the present site of Muncie, on the south side of the Kaw, and in 1830, another post was established by Frederick at Mission Creek, in what is now Shawnee County, Kansas.¹¹

With the creation of the Western Department of the American Fur Company, in 1822, Pierre "Cadet" began to exert an increasing effect on the Upper Missouri Outfit as it was commonly called.¹² Pierre was responsible for the construction of several new forts. Fort Union, at the junction of

¹¹ Feature in The Kansas City Star, June 4, 1950, "When the Chouteaus Arrived, Kansas City's History Began," by Henry Van Brunt, Centennial I, pp. 3-4.

¹² Coman, op. cit., 1:348-49.

the Yellowstone and the Missouri, was built and Fort Manuel, at the mouth of the Big Horn was rebuilt. In the Blackfoot country he built another fort at the mouth of the Marias River. Fort Tecumseh, in the present state of South Dakota, had fallen into decay so a new fort was built to replace it. This new fort, called Fort Pierre, was at the site of the present city of Pierre, South Dakota.

That Chouteau had an eye for the location of future cities is shown by the fact that so many forts he built are now sites of cities. He realized as early as 1822, that the mouth of the Kansas River was a strategic trading center. There he built Chouteau's Landing.¹³

Organization of the Missouri Fur Trade

The organization of the fur industry is beyond the scope of this study but a limited discussion is necessary to show the changes in the industry while Pierre was in control of the Missouri trade. There were four plans for exploiting the fur resources. First, and most far-reaching, was the plan of organizing fur companies for the purpose of trading goods with the Indians for their furs. The second was the forming of companies which sent hunters and trappers into districts where fur-bearing animals were plentiful, to take furs directly. The third plan was that of independent

¹³ Isely, op. cit., p. 234.

individuals trading, and the last was that of the individual or "free" trapper.¹⁴

The first two plans above were the ones used by Pierre Chouteau and the Upper Missouri Outfit. "Bourgeois" was the name given to the key man or chief trader, under this system. Clerks training for the bourgeois position were called "Commis". Next in rank were the "Voyageurs" or "Engages". New and untried engages were called "Mangeuer de Lards" and seasoned voyageurs were called "Hivernants." The bourgeois had absolute command of either his brigade or post. The commis kept accounts and sometimes led brigades, which consisted of white trappers and the voyageurs who performed the menial tasks of the expedition.¹⁵

While Chouteau did not introduce these forms of organization he did use them and modified them for the use of the Western Department of The American Fur Company. Pierre introduced an unique practice in the fur trade when he started issuing company stock to his bourgeois. This practice has caused some confusion in ascertaining who actually controlled the company.¹⁶

¹⁴ Everett Dick, Vanguards of the Frontier (New York, London: Appleton-Century Company, 1941), pp. 7-8.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 1-3.

¹⁶ Loc. cit.

The last two plans gave rise to the free trader and free trapper, who were bound to no company and sold to the highest bidders. Chouteau was inclined to crush and drive out the free trader, but he did on some occasions supply and purchase from them as he did the free trapper. It is to be noted that in the latter days of the fur trade the supply of furs from Indian trappers was slight; the white trappers on the upper Missouri, whether company or free trappers, were called "Mountain Men."¹⁷

The "Rendezvous" which has almost become synonymous with the fur trade was inaugurated under the direction of Pierre "Cadet". Under orders from Pierre, General Ashley started the first Rocky Mountain rendezvous. Hafen gives us an excellent picture of this first rendezvous.

Ashley organized a party in the fall of 1824 and led it to Green River. Dividing his men into "brigades," he sent these in various directions to trap beaver, and appointed a place where all were to assemble in early July, 1825. Here pelts would be delivered and supplies replenished.

Thus was inaugurated the trapper rendezvous in the central Rockies, the first of a series of 16 such summer gatherings. The rendezvous became the most picturesque and typical fur trading institution of the mountain region. To it came fur company caravans from the East, laden with equipment and supplies for hired trappers, and with attractive goods for trade with Indians and independent fur

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

men. The rendezvous was the great occasion of the year for the trapper. Here was opportunity for barter and for recreation. Races and contests of all kinds were arranged; gambling and drinking were indulged in. Beaver skins were money and with these hairy banknotes all primitive wants could be satisfied. White trappers with Indian wives bedecked their spouses with bright cloth and gewgaws. Most of these Mountain Men were of the open-handed sort who in a few days of prodigal living squandered the earnings of a year. Indian bands came in, set up their lodges, and participated in the wilderness fair. Indeed, the rendezvous was a market day, a fiesta, a carousal, all in one.¹⁸

Two of the more serious problems confronting Pierre, as a leader of the Missouri trade was the diversion tactics of the Northwest Company and the problem of either including or excluding whiskey as an item of trade. It was customary for the British government to set aside money to purchase gifts and medallions for the Indians; the British companies, the Northwest being one, then distributed these to the Indians. Such items were highly prized by the red men; the Northwesters were well aware of the value of such offerings and put them to good use among the Blackfeet thus diverting much of the peltries to Canada. In an attempt to halt such diversions Pierre Chouteau tried to convince our government that gifts and medallions should be made available at public expense. This move being justified on the grounds of

¹⁸ Hafen and Rister, op. cit., pp. 225-6.

territorial acquisition as well as commercial.¹⁹ Correspondence with Washington gained permission, from the War Department, for the casting of some medals by the fur company at the company's expense. The company actually made and distributed some of these medals.²⁰

For Mr. McKenzie's coat of mail I have sent to England, for nothing of the sort could be found here. His fusil a six coups is ordered from Rochester; and the medals for his outfit are in the hands of the die-maker, who, I hope, will give us a good likeness de norte estimable grand-papa (Astor). I wrote to Washington about them, and the War Office made no objections to our having these ornaments made. Remember they are ornaments, not medals!

These medals later gave the company trouble, when some of its enemies reported to Washington that it was usurping the functions of the government in their distribution. Some correspondence resulted but the matter was never carried up. Mr. Chouteau stated in his reply to an inquiry from Washington that "before the die for the Astor medals was struck the matter was submitted to Governor Cass, then Secretary of War, who gave his consent to the measure and a sample of the medals was deposited with the department accompanied by letters of the President of the American Fur Company." The privilege of using these medals was discontinued by order of the Secretary of War, March 22, 1844.²¹

Whiskey was an essential article of trade although it was forbidden by law. In the region contested by the Northwesters, Chouteau could justify the use of liquor by pointing out that if the American companies were forbidden its use as

¹⁹ Chittenden, op. cit., p. 341.

²⁰ These medals are undoubtedly a collectors item today.

²¹ Loc. cit.

an item of trade they would lose the trade, for the North-westerners were allowed to use whiskey in their trading activities.²² Many dodges were employed to get the whiskey to the Indians "when the difficulty in getting the contraband stuff up the river past the government inspector at Fort Leavenworth proved too serious, a distillery was set up at Fort Union and fire-water, 'as fine a liquor as need be drunk,' was made from the corn grown by the natives."²³ Another trick employed by Chouteau is revealed in a letter dated April 25, 1825, addressed to Kenneth McKenzie.

"The government does not allow us to use liquor in our trade with the Indians. On the contrary it is expressly forbidden. But it is permitted to take one gill per day for each boatman during the period of their absence--that is, for twelve months. It is on this ground that I have obtained permission to take an amount corresponding to fifty men, twenty-seven of whom set out from here twenty-three are now up the country. I took the names of those who are with you, without knowing whether you will keep them or send them back. That makes no difference, however, for I explained the matter to General Clark." In this way about three hundred gallons of alcohol went up the river to relieve the necessities of the various posts.²⁴

The fur trade had so increased by 1830 as to require a better method of transportation, and besides, such improvements had been made in the construction of the steamboat as

²² Goman, op. cit., p. 351.

²³ Loc. cit.

²⁴ Chittenden, op. cit., p. 26.

to lead the fur companies to believe that they could successfully be used in navigating the upper river as well as the lower.

In 1831 Pierre Chouteau, who was then at the head of the American Fur Company, built a boat called the Yellowstone, intended for the mountain trade. She was the first (steam) boat to ascend the Missouri river above Council Bluffs.²⁵

Chouteau's steamboat hastened the withdrawal of the Hudson's Bay Company; the Northwestern Company had annexed the Hudson's Bay Company but retained the older name, and proved the feasibility of steamboats on the Missouri. Coman relates the events in this manner:

Pierre Chouteau contended that the upper river could be successfully navigated by stern-wheelers, such as the Long party had used with entire success, and that the saving in time and in operating force would be great. Under his auspices, the Yellowstone made her virgin voyage in the spring of 1831, achieving the round trip from St. Louis to Fort Tecumseh in three months. Two months up and one month down. In the following year, the little craft ascended the river as far as Fort Union. The saving in time and labor was sufficient to justify the adoption of steam but the impression produced upon the Indians was perhaps the most significant gain. They said that "the British might turn out their dogs and burn their sledges, as they would no longer be useful while the Fire Boat walked on the waters." They began bringing their furs to the Americans by preference, and thenceforth the loss of trade from Hudson's Bay Company competition was no longer dreaded.²⁶

²⁵ Phil. E. Chappell, "A History of the Missouri River," Kansas Historical Collections, 1903-04, 8:280.

²⁶ Coman, op. cit., p. 350.

A detailed description of the boat is given by Isely:

The back-breaking labors of the keel-boat voyagers induced Chouteau to study the river and its problems until he devised the steamboat Yellowstone. She was 130 feet long, 19 feet beam, with paddle wheels on either side and so designed that when loaded with 75-ton cargo, she drew only 6 feet of water. Astor supplied Chouteau with the \$7000 necessary to construct the boat.²⁷

Pierre Chouteau was very kind to the early missionaries and through his half-brother, Charles, aided the energetic Father De Smet in his missionary efforts. Father De Smet in a letter to Father Boone describes a voyage up the Missouri.

Early in the May, 1862, I left St. Louis in the steamboat Spread Eagle of the Honorable St. Louis Fur Company. (Pierre Chouteau, Jr., Company probably called the American Fur Company.) The boat was bound for Fort Benton, in the Rocky Mountain region and upwards of 3,000 miles, by the Missouri River, from the mouth of that stream. The river was bank-full at the time, and a great deal of power was required to stem the current. We were six weeks in making the trip.²⁸

On another occasion and in a letter to the same person Father De Smet gives us an estimate of the cost of freighting on the Missouri. "My little cargo amounted to nearly 1,500 pounds. The captain of the steamboat gave me free passage a

²⁷ Isely, op. cit., pp. 236-7.

²⁸ Hiram Martin Chittenden and Albert Talbot Richardson, Father De Smet's Life and Travels Among the North American Indians (New York: F. P. Harper, 1905), 2:783.

charity on his part, which would otherwise have cost me upwards of \$1,000."²⁹

Decline of the Fur Trade

In 1834, John Jacob Astor, then in London looking into the European markets, became convinced that the profitable days of the fur trade were past. The beaver meadows were nearing exhaustion, and the market for the fur was declining. "It appears that they make hats of silk in place of beaver."³⁰ He returned ready to sell his interest in the American Fur Company, and it was taken over by Ramsey Crooks, who had for some time been in charge of the New York department. He was now backed by Pratte, Chouteau & Co., of St. Louis. The new firm bought out Fitzpatrick, Sublette, and Bridger this same year and the Union Fur Company in 1845.³¹

Hafen summarizes for us the effect of changing styles and depletion of beaver on the fur trade.

With the falling price of pelts and an increasing scarcity of beaver, this branch of the business dwindled toward extinction. Many of the trappers left the country; others changed occupation. From beaver pelts, fur men turned to buffalo robes, which soon became the chief article of far western commerce. The coming of wagons aided this development

²⁹ Ibid., 3:803.

³⁰ Coman, op. cit., p. 368.

³¹ Loc. cit.

on the high plains at the foot of the central Rockies, where no navigable streams exist. Buffalo robes, too bulky and cheap for carriage on pack animals, could be profitably handled by wagon train. Methods of fur trade changed. Whereas beaver skins had been garnered largely by white trappers, tanned buffalo robes were obtained by trade with the Indians.³²

Ramsey Crooks retired from the business in 1838 and the company's name was changed to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company. This company carried on business until about 1866.³³

Chouteau, like every successful man, adapted his methods to conditions as he found them. He made no attempt to introduce a higher standard of business morality into the trade. He stood solidly behind his agents on the upper river on the questionable measures to which the exigencies of competition frequently obliged them to resort. In short his code of business morals was sufficiently elastic to fit the situation with which he had to deal.

Strict and severe in the discipline of his business, he was nevertheless generous and fair to all who served him well. His most trusted steamboat masters he would permit, without loss of salary, to take service with other boats after their return from the annual trip until the company

³² Hafen and Rister, op. cit., pp. 228-29.

³³ Stella M. Drumm, "Chouteau's Trading Posts," Dictionary of American History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 1:369.

again required their services; but let one of them have the temerity to set up in trade for himself where the company was doing business and the whole force of that huge concern would be used to crush him.³⁴

Summary of Chapter IV

Pierre Chouteau, Jr., entered the fur trade at an early age. He grew up in the pattern and tradition of a trade established by his family. With his background and innate business abilities it is not amazing that the leading fur trading concerns of the St. Louis selected him as leader of the Missouri trade.

He directed and owned a large portion of Astor's American Fur Company, Western Department. With the decline of the beaver trade came the sale of the American Fur Company, the Western Department became Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company.

Chouteau introduced the rendezvous and built forts, of which at least two have become important cities. He aided exploration and missionaries whenever possible. But two contributions stand out above all others; these are:

- (1) The introduction of the steamboat on the upper Missouri

³⁴ Chittenden, The American Fur Trade of the Far West, 2:382.

and (2) forcing the withdrawal of British companies from the upper Missouri, thus aiding the United States in the acquisition of the Pacific Northwest.

Trends in this chapter show (1) a move from small trading companies and free traders to highly capitalized and well organized companies, (2) the adoption of mechanized equipment to ease the hardship of the men in the field, and (3) the final decline of beaver trapping and a turn toward other peltries and hides.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The origin of the western fur trade was in St. Louis. Pierre Laclède and Auguste Rene Chouteau were its founders and also established the western fur trade. It was upon this foundation that Auguste Pierre and his brother Pierre "Cadet" Chouteau built their lives.

The Chouteau-De Munn expedition seemed to affect Auguste Chouteau's remaining life for after this incident, he was ever reluctant to hazard any ventures which might come into conflict with foreign powers. He spent the remainder of his life on the lower Arkansas River being content with the smaller gains of the Arkansas fur trade. Perhaps the sobering effect of his imprisonment and confiscation of his property by the Spanish government made him overly cautious and less inclined to introduce new methods or initiate daring gambles. Since Auguste controlled the Arkansas trade it would be logical to assume that this would explain in part, the absence of such wild orgies as the rendezvous which were characteristic of the Missouri trade. In fact the trade of the Arkansas was much like Auguste, it was ordered and efficient, its posts were homes and not mere trading posts.

Trends in A. P. Chouteau's fur trading activities were: (1) An early venturing spirit which sought out one of the richest beaver regions in the present United States, Colorado, and a later life of serene contentment as lord of the Arkansas trade. (2) He tried the white brigades system quite early and found it lacking; as a substitute he used the central post system which depended on the Indian for the peltry supply.

Pierre "Cadet" Chouteau was a driving force in the western fur trade from the founding of the Upper Missouri Outfit in 1822, until his retirement in 1866. He introduced the rendezvous and the upper Missouri steamboat. An unusual feature of Pierre's business dealings was the issuing of company stock to the key men of his company. He furnished free transportation to missionaries and aided scientific exploration. Possibly his greatest contribution was to historians for he kept accurate accounts and records of his fur trading ventures. The papers have only been partially explored.

In pointing out trends in the fur trading ventures of Pierre Chouteau we must, of necessity, point out movements within the fur trade. The first noticeable tendency is economic, in that lack of capital forced consolidation of small traders. The Missouri Fur Company was one of such consolidations, but even this arrangement could not meet the

needs of the industry. Astor entered the western trade and combined with the St. Louis merchants, giving the fur trade its first American company with adequate capital and able men.

The second trend was largely concerned with transportation. In 1822, keelboats and piroques were the principal up-river craft. Some parties depended on pack trains and horses for transportation; however, almost the entire fur trade was carried on the rivers. In 1831, the Yellowstone, built by Pierre Chouteau, overcame the waters of the Missouri and replaced the piroques and keelboats as up-river craft. The wagon was introduced as the means of collecting hides and furs hitherto inaccessible by water.

A third trend, like the first was economic. In 1834, Astor, the shrewd fortune maker, sold his interest in the American Fur Company because he saw the hat styles change from beaver to silk. It is well that hat styles did change for the beaver meadows were depleted to a point where it was economically unfeasible to trap them. Beginning around 1836, a shift was made to buffalo robes and such peltries as marten, mink, and fox. This shift marked the decline of the western fur trade.

Conclusions

We must admit, in conclusion, that these men were influential in the fur trade. To Auguste goes the credit for developing the Arkansas or southern limits of the western trade; to Pierre goes the credit for solving the transportation problem of the Missouri or northern limits of the trade. From north to south and on to the west these men have left their names; Chouteau's Island, Chouteau's Bluff, Pierre's Hole, and Pierre, South Dakota, all bear testimony to the influence of these once prominent, nearly forgotten men.

Their innovations, while limited, had a tremendous effect on the western fur trade. Although Auguste contributed nothing original, he did introduce into the American trade the central post system. This system was used by the Hudson's Bay Company and was found wanting when placed in competition with the brigade system employed by the Northwesters. Fortunately, Auguste was never forced to pit his Americanized central post system against a brigade organization. Pierre, and Astor too, was perhaps one of our first "robber barons". He controlled the Missouri and squeezed the beaver from the Missouri, in much the same way he crushed those who opposed him. In his search for wealth he was forced to seek cheaper methods and to introduce machinery so as to save time and money.

In conclusion then, we may safely state that the Chouteau brothers, Auguste Pierre and Pierre "Cadet", did have a noticeable degree of influence on the fur trade and that they did introduce some important innovations into the American fur trade of the far west.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

Andreas, A. T., History of the State of Kansas. Chicago: A. T. Andreas, Publisher, 1883. 1807 pp.

A description of forts built by the Chouteaus, in Kansas.

Billington, Ray Allen, Westward Expansion. New York: The Macmillian Company, 1949. 873 pp.

The general history of the American fur trade and a summary of the life of Pierre "Cadet" Chouteau are in this text book.

Chittenden, Hiram Martin, The American Fur Trade of the Far West, 2 vols.; second edition. New York: The Press of the Pioneers, Inc., 1935. 1121 pp.

A thorough study of the western fur trade; contains some excellent material about the Chouteaus.

_____ and Albert Talbot Richardson, Father De Smet's Life and Travels Among the North American Indians, 4 vols. New York: F. P. Harper, 1905. 3046 pp.

The description of steamboat traffic on the Missouri River, some references to the Chouteaus.

Coman, Katharine, Economic Beginnings of the Far West, 2 vols. New York: The Macmillian Company, 1912. Vol. 1, 482 pp., vol. 2, 433 pp.

Presents a study of the economic aspects of the fur trade.

Dick, Everett N., Vanguards of the Frontier. New York, London: Appleton-Century Company, 1941. 675 pp.

A generalized view of the fur trade, its organization and operational area.

Foreman, Grant, Indians and Pioneers. Norman, Oklahoma: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1933. 393 pp.

The study of relations between the Indians and traders; abundant material about A. P. Chouteau.

Foreman, Grant, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest. Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1926. 430 pp.

Presents an unusual description of the Southwest and how A. P. Chouteau affected this region.

Hafen, LeRoy R., and Carl C. Rister, Western America. New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1941. 647 pp.

A study of the social effects of the fur trade.

Isely, Bliss, Blazing the Way West. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939. 482 pp.

A summary of the Chouteau-De Munn fur trading expedition.

Thwaites, Reuben Gold, Early Western Travels, 20 vols. Cleveland: Clark, 1905.

Original documents edited; with commentary. Communications related to Chouteau-De Munn expedition.

Winsor, Justin, The Mississippi Basin. New York, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin and Company, 1895. 525 pp.

Relates the founding of St. Louis and the contributions of the Chouteaus.

B. PERIODICAL ARTICLES

Minnigerode, Meade, "Butcher, Baker, Fortune Maker," Collier's, 79:24-25, April 2, 1927.

An analysis of John Jacob Astor and the American Fur Company.

Pratt, Julius W., "Fur Trade Strategy and the American Left Flank in the War of 1812," American Historical Review, 40:246-73, January, 1935.

The importance of the fur trade in holding and acquiring territory.

C. PUBLICATIONS OF LEARNED ORGANIZATIONS

Seventeenth Annual Report, 1895-1896, U. S. Bureau of Ethnology. Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1896. Part i, 171.

A description of the founding of a fort near Purcell, Oklahoma; enumerates some treaties negotiated by A. P. Chouteau.

Chappell, Phil. E., "A History of the Missouri River," Kansas Historical Collections, 1905-06, 9:246-296. 831 pp.

A study of transportation on the Missouri River and a description of the Yellowstone.

D. ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLES

Drumm, Stella M., "Pierre 'Cadet' Chouteau," Dictionary of American Biography. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930. 4:93-94.

A biography of Pierre "Cadet" Chouteau.

_____, "Chouteau's Trading Posts," Dictionary of American History. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940. 1:369-70.

Locates and describes posts built by the Chouteaus.

Ghent, William J., "Auguste Pierre Chouteau," and "Jean Pierre Chouteau," Dictionary of American Biography. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930. 4:92-93.

Biographical material on Auguste Pierre and Jean Pierre Chouteau.

E. NEWSPAPERS

The Kansas City Star, June 4, 1950.

A feature relating the early history of Kansas City and the contributions of the Chouteau brothers.

111 213

