

EARLY EXPLORERS LEFT A RICH HERITAGE

By J. B. King

A long time ago, some time in the past between the years of 1673 and 1820, the hills of Pulaski County were first explored by white men. Although written records are scarce, it seems likely that Joseph Roubidoux (1783-1886), a noted trapper and explorer who founded St. Joseph, Missouri, in 1840, passed through here and paused long enough to name a river.

The first known white men to reach Missouri were a French-Canadian trapper named Louis Jolliet and Father Jacques Marquette.

In 1673, they traveled the length of the Mississippi River and stood on the point only seventeen miles from Old St. Louis, where the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers join.

Exploration continued and by 1735 the first established city in Missouri had been founded — Ste. Genevieve. In 1764, a small trading post was set up at St. Louis. During the period 1736 to 1800 the area known now as Missouri was under Spanish control. With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, title to Missouri suddenly went over to the United States of

America.

The famous Lewis and Clark expedition did not travel through Missouri until 1804. With the arrival of 1812, Missouri was a U.S. Territory. The 1804 census listed 10,350 people in Missouri. The 1820 Missouri census recorded 66,586 people.

While written records are scarce as to just who did walk on our ridge tops, we can show you the type of man who first appeared in Pulaski County.

Each October the Kickapoo Trace Muzzle Loaders Club of Pulaski

County holds its annual "Fall Rendezvous." One major requirement of the rendezvous calls for the use of old time equipment. As one club member noted, "If you're hungry, grab your black powder rifle. There's the woods. If you're cold, build a fire, but do it with flint and steel. If you want to smoke, roll your own or bring a pipe. If you're thirsty, the spring starts about fifty yards from camp."

These local men describe their form of fall rendezvous as a combination of a primitive weapons hunt,

weekend campout, and history lesson. If you were to view their camp, you might also add fashion show to the list.

The fashions displayed at the fall rendezvous consist of two basic life styles. The first style usually goes under the title, "The Leatherstocking Look." The second fashion period refers to "The Mountain Man Look."

Starting in 1823, American novelist James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) began his famous series of "leatherstocking" tales, which included the books, *The Pioneers*, *The Last of the*

Mohicans, *The Pathfinders*, and *The Deerslayer*. The series took their nickname from their chief character, Natty Bumppo, who was known as "Leatherstocking."

For these men who first explored Pulaski County, buckskin leather was essential. However, shirts made of flax or linen were permitted since these men roamed just ahead of the westward advancing American frontier. These men could expect to visit a trading post several times a year.

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Bruce Myers of Laquey models the best in fashion from the "Mountain Man" Look. His hat is made from a red fox pelt.

(Photo By J.B. King)



A handmade wooden one gallon water keg.

(Photo By J.B. King)



Bill Miller of Laquey models the best of fashion from the "Leatherstocking" Look.

(Photo By J.B. King)

EARLY EXPLORERS (CONTINUED)

Their weapons were knife, Indian style tomahawk, and a Kentucky rifle. These men used a long barreled rifle in a medium size caliber. The smaller caliber used less black powder and lead. The long barrel obtained the maximum power from the slow burning black powder. The medium caliber was adequate for the deer, black bear, and Indians the pioneer might have to shoot.

The most famous of the men to carry the Kentucky rifle into Missouri was probably Daniel Boone, who settled in Boone and Callaway counties near Jefferson City. He died in Missouri in 1820.

While on an exploration trip into unknown territory, the pioneer usually wore a standard uniform. On his head was a hat made of fur. On a leather strap around his neck hung a small knife for trimming "patches" needed to load the rifle. Other straps held two hollow cow horns loaded with black powder. The large horn held the coarse grain load for the main charge. The small horn held a fine grain powder used for "priming" the rifle. Around his waist, the pioneer carried a shot and patch pouch. He usually carried a large knife for close range combat. He might also have carried an Indian-style tomahawk.

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What is a camp without a few truthful "tall tales"?

(Photo By J.B. King)

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A homemade candle box of the type used by the Pulaski County settlers in the early 1800's.
(Photo By J.B. King)



When your stomach depends on the number of "variments" put into the stew pot, small details suddenly become very important. (Photo By J.B. King)

EXPLORERS (CONTINUED)

His clothing, shirt and pants were made from tough deerskin. Likewise, the calf-length moccasins were worn. During cold weather the moccasins were stuffed with deer hair to act as insulation.

Inside the pouchy shirt, the pioneer carried bread and Johnnycakes, "jerkied" deer meat, and flax fibers for cleaning his rifle. He also carried a waterproof deer bladder. That was used to cover the lock on his rifle to prevent a misfire during a rainshower.

The uniform and lifestyle of the "mountain man" was somewhat different from that of the "leatherstocking man." The mountain man might stay out on a trip for several years. Thus, as a need for a social meeting, the idea of a fall rendezvous was born. A giant party

whose memories would last a man through a cold and lonely winter was held.

Due to the extended trips of the mountain man, all of his clothing and equipment had to be patterned after the fashion of the Western Indian tribes. In fact, one famous painting by the great western artist, Frederick Remington, shows two fierce looking buckskin clad trappers confronting each other. In line with the tradition of the mountain men, Remington titled his painting, "I Took Ye Fer An Injin".

One big change in the equipment carried by the mountain man was the rifle. He needed a shorter length, larger caliber rifle for western buffalo, moose, elk, and the feared grizzly bear. The powder horns, shot pouches, et cetera, stayed about the same.

Other changes saw the western Indian teepee

adopted by the mountain men, because of the ease in moving. Bright beaded shirts and decorations attached to all equipment became the order of the day.

Make no mistake. The life of a mountain man was tough. Perhaps Washington Irving caught the correct spirit of the westward movement when he wrote, "No toil, no danger, no privation can turn the trapper from his pursuit. His passionate excitement at times resembles a mania. In vain may... cruel savages beset his path; in vain may rocks... precipices and wintry torrents oppose his progress; but let a single track of beaver meet his eye and he forgets all dangers... at times he may be found scaling the most frightful precipices searching for springs and lakes unknown to his comrades and where he may meet with his favorite game."



Lunch time in camp, complete with music from a guitar, dulcimer, and zither. The music was good, the stew somewhat unusual. (Photo By J.B. King)



The men behind the stew. Jim Livingston "scalps" a potato while Jeff Pirrane rests.

(Photo By J.B. King)



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