

by those officers with great intrepidity, judgment, and fidelity; their journal furnishing a large amount of useful information relative to the geography, the Indian tribes, and the animal, vegetable, and mineral productions of those vast regions. Having crossed the mountains early in October, 1805, they descended, in their canoes, Lewis River to its junction with the Columbia, and down that river to its mouth, where they arrived on the 14th day of November. Having selected a proper site, they built the houses necessary for their accommodation, and a fort for their protection during the winter, which was passed in making such examination of the surrounding country as the season would permit. Early in the spring, being seriously apprehensive of want of provisions, they anticipated the period originally fixed for their return. Before leaving the country, they gave certificates to several of the chiefs, as "traces and evidences" of their having been there. With the same view, a paper was also posted up in the fort, to the following effect: "The object of this last is, that through the medium of some civilized person, who may see the same, it may be made known to the world that the party consisting of the persons whose names are hereunto annexed, and who were sent out by the Government of the United States to explore the interior of the continent of North America, did penetrate the same by the way of the Missouri and Columbia rivers, to the discharge of the latter into the Pacific ocean, where they arrived on the 14th day of November, 1805, and departed on the 23rd day of March, 1806, on their return to the United States, by the same route by which they had come out." On their return homeward, they divided into two parties: Captain Lewis carefully examining Clarke's River and its principal branches; while Captain Clarke, crossing over to the Yellow Stone, descended that river to its junction with the Missouri, where the two parties reunited; thence they proceeded to St. Louis, and the two officers reached Washington in February, 1807. The practicability of crossing the Rocky Mountains being thus satisfactorily established, the attention of our citizens was attracted to this quarter by the quantity and quality of the furs, which were said to be excellent and abundant.

"The earliest attempts made by citizens of the United States for similar purposes (trading establishments) were those of an association, formed at St. Louis in 1805, called the Missouri Fur Company. At its head was an enterprising Spaniard named Manuel Lisa, through whose exertions, chiefly, several trading posts were, within the two ensuing years, established on the Upper Missouri, and one beyond the Rocky Mountains, on the head-waters of the Lewis, the southern branch of the Columbia. The post on the Lewis appears to have been the first ever formed by white men in the country drained by the Columbia.* The enmity of the savages in its vicinity, and the difficulty of procuring a regular supply of food, however, obliged Mr. Henry, the superintendent, to abandon it in 1810."

In the same year (1810) Mr. John Jacob Astor, of New York, formed an association for the purpose of occupying positions on the Columbia River favorable to a successful prosecution of the fur trade. It was known as the Pacific Fur Company. The plan was to divide the forces intended for this enterprise; to send part by sea round Cape Horn, and part by land across the continent. Accordingly, the ship *Tonquin*, with the first detachment, sailed from New York in 1810; and in January following, the second detachment left St. Louis, under the direction of Mr. Wilson P. Hunt.

The *Tonquin* arrived at the mouth of the Columbia in March, 1811, and establishing their principal factory on the south bank of the river, they gave it the name of Astoria, made familiar to every ear by the elegant and interesting narrative of Mr. Washington Irving. As the object of the committee is only to show the continual claim and actual possession of the territory, from the time of its discovery in 1792, it will not further our design to give an account of the commercial and trading transactions of the association. They occupied Astoria, and their different hunting and trading establishments on the river, until the 16th day of October, 1813; having thus been in actual possession from March, 1811—two years and six months. At the latter period, having received information, upon which they could rely, that a British

* *Greenhow*.—Permanent post must be meant; for Lewis and Clarke had erected Fort Clatsop, in 1805, as we have seen, at the mouth of the river.