



America's Children



Antoine of Oregon

by James Otis

This edition published 2023
by Living Book Press
Copyright © Living Book Press, 2023

ISBN: 978-1-76153-008-1 (hardcover)
978-1-76153-009-8 (softcover)

First published in 1912.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any other form or means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner and the publisher or as provided by Australian law.



A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia

Antoine of Oregon

by

JAMES OTIS



CONTENTS

1.	The Fur Traders	1
2.	Why I am Not a Fur Trader	3
3.	Striving to Plan for the Future	4
4.	An Inquisitive Stranger	6
5.	An Unexpected Proposition	7
6.	I Set Out as a Guide	9
7.	John Mitchell's Outfit	11
8.	Making the Bargain	13
9.	We Leave St. Louis	15
10.	The Hardships to be Encountered	16
11.	The Camp at Independence	18
12.	A Frontier Town	20
13.	The Start from Independence	22
14.	Careless Travelers	24
15.	Overrun by Wild Horses	26
16.	Searching for the Live Stock	28
17.	Abandoning the Missing Animals	30
18.	Meeting with other Emigrants	31
19.	A Tempest	34
20.	Facing the Indians	36
21.	Teaching the Pawnees a Lesson	37
22.	The Pawnee Village	39
23.	A Bold Demand	41
24.	I Gain Credit as a Guide	42
25.	A Difficult Crossing	44
26.	Wash Day	46
27.	Indian Pictures	48
28.	A Plague of Wood Ticks	49
29.	Another Tempest	51

30.	The Cattle Stampeded Again	52
31.	Difficult Traveling	54
32.	Colonel Kearny's Dragoons	55
33.	Disagreeable Visitors	57
34.	Driving away the Indians	58
35.	Turkey Hunting	59
36.	Eager Hunters	61
37.	Antelope Country	62
38.	Shooting Antelopes	64
39.	A Pawnee Visitor	66
40.	The Pawnees Try to Frighten Us	68
41.	Defending Ourselves	70
42.	Scarcity of Fuel, and Discomfort	71
43.	Lame Oxen	73
44.	An Army of Emigrants	74
45.	The Buffalo Country	77
46.	Hunting Buffaloes	78
47.	My Mother's Advice	80
48.	Ash Hollow Post Office	81
49.	New Comrades	83
50.	Fort Laramie	84
51.	A Sioux Encampment	86
52.	Indians on the March	87
53.	The Fourth of July	88
54.	Multitudes of Buffaloes	90
55.	We Meet Colonel Kearny Again	92
56.	Across the Divide	93
57.	Fort Bridger	95
58.	Trading at Fort Hall	100
59.	Thievish Snakes	101
60.	The Hot Springs	102

61.	The Falls of the Snake River	104
62.	Signs of the Indians	105
63.	Beset with Danger	107
64.	Hunger and Thirst	108
65.	Nearly Exhausted	109
66.	Arrival at Fort Boise	111
67.	On the Trail Once More	113
68.	Cayuse Indians	114
69.	The Columbia River	115
70.	An Indian Ferry	117
71.	The Dalles of the Columbia	118
72.	Our Live Stock	119
73.	My Work as Guide Ended	120
74.	I Become a Farmer	121

A NOTE TO THE READER

This book was written in the early 20th century, a time when societal attitudes and language were significantly from what we recognize today. As you delve into its pages, you might come across terms and descriptions that our modern sensibilities find offensive or inappropriate. These echo the beliefs and biases of that era, some of which were fueled by ignorance, fear, and misunderstanding.

We've chosen to preserve the original text, providing an unvarnished window into the past. It's essential to approach this reading with an open heart and mind, recognizing the historical context that shaped these terms and views. While we've made progress as a society, the shadows of these old attitudes sometimes persist.

By recognizing and reflecting on the profound impact such perspectives have left on our culture, we can deepen our understanding of history and chart a course towards a more inclusive and compassionate future.

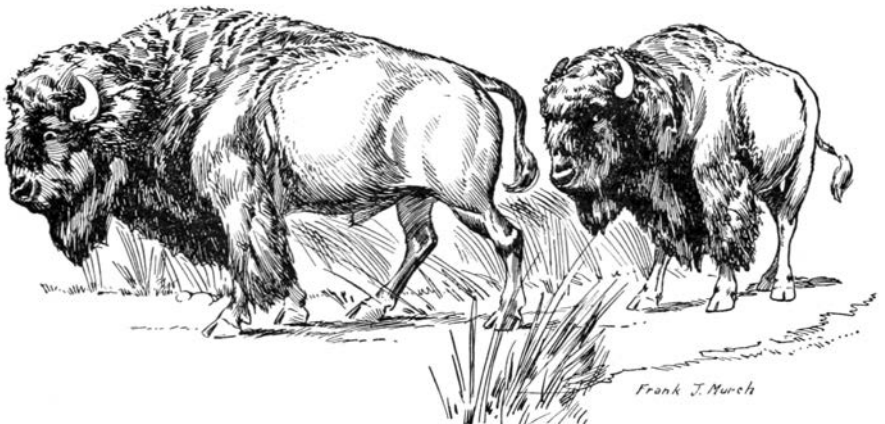
THE FUR TRADERS

THERE is ever much pride in my heart when I hear it said that all the trails leading from the Missouri River into the Great West were pointed out to the white people by fur buyers, for my father was well known, and in a friendly way, as one of the most successful of the free traders who had their headquarters at St. Louis.

It is not for me to say, nor for you to believe, that the fur traders were really the first to travel over these trails, for, as a matter of fact, they were marked out in the early days by the countless numbers of buffaloes, deer, and other animals that always took the most direct road from their feeding places to where water could be found.

Then came the Indians, seeking a trail from one part of the country to another, and they followed in the footsteps of the animals, knowing full well that thereby they would not lack for water, the one thing needful to those who go to and fro in the wilderness.

Thus it was that the animals and the Indians combined to mark out the most direct roads that could be



made, with due regard to the bodily needs of those who traveled from one part of the Great West to another.

As the traders in furs journeyed from tribe to tribe of the Indians, or sought the most favored places for trapping, they learned how white men could go westward from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean without fear of dying from hunger or thirst.

My father, Pierre Laclede, was, as I have said, a free trader, which means that he went out into the wilderness with his crew of boatmen and trappers, free from any bargains or duties to the great fur trading companies, such as the Hudson's Bay, the Northwest, and the X. Y.

There were regular battles fought between the hunters and trappers of these great companies in the olden days, when St. Louis was under Spanish rule and had become a famous gathering place for the fur traders.

There were many like my father, who, hiring men to help them, carried into the wilderness goods to be exchanged with the Indians for furs, and, failing in this, set about trapping fur-bearing animals throughout the winter season.

Wonderful sport these same traders had, as I know full well, having been more than once with my father over that trail leading from the Missouri River to the Oregon country.

Then there was the home-corning to St. Louis, when every man forgot the days on which he had been cold or hungry, and no longer heeded the half-healed wounds received in Indian attacks, when he had been forced to defend with his life the furs he had gathered.

Once in St. Louis, what rare times of feasting and

making merry, while the furs were being shipped to New Orleans, or bartered to the big companies that were ever on the watch for the return of the free traders!

WHY I AM NOT A FUR TRADER

I, Antoine Laclede, would have followed in the footsteps of my father, becoming myself a free trader after the treacherous Blackfeet Indians killed him, had it not been



that my mother, with her arms around my neck, pleaded that I remain at home with her. Therefore, instead of carrying on my father's business as a lad of fifteen should have done, I strove to content myself at St. Louis, to the pleasure of my dear mother.

However much affection there might be between us, it remained that we must be supplied with food, and that my mother should have the things necessary for her comfort.

But if I did not take up my father's business after he had lost, with his life, the store of furs which he had been eight months in gathering, as well as what remained of the goods he had carried into the wilderness for trading, then how could I rightly fill the position as head of the

family, when all I had in this world were my two hands and the desire to make my mother happy?

We lived on a street near the old cathedral, and it may be that our small home was not the most pleasing to look upon of all the houses in St. Louis; but in it I was born. My father had built it, paying for every timber with furs he had gathered at risk of his life, and I would not have yielded it in exchange for the finest house in the land.

The evil days fell upon us, meaning my mother and me, very shortly after the news of my father's murder was brought to St. Louis, for we soon came to know that we had neither goods nor furs enough to keep us one full year.

STRIVING TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

THEN it was that I went out one day alone to the river bank, where I might have solitude and think how I could care for my mother as the only son of a widow should care for that person whom he most loves.

I had lived fifteen years. There was no trapper in the Northwest Company who could take more furs than I could. To ride and shoot were my pleasures, and my unhappiness was in being forced to set down words with a pen, or to puzzle my poor brain over long rows of figures which must have been invented only for the sorrow of Antoine Laclede.

My rifle and Napoleon, a small spotted pony that could outkick any beast this side the Rocky Mountains, made up all I owned of value, and yet with them I must earn enough to support my mother and make her comfortable.



The truth is, I might have joined with some free trader who had known my father, working for a small wage, which would not be more than enough to supply my mother with food and clothes such as had been provided by my father; but I must earn more than that, lest the day should come when, from wounds or sickness, I could not hold up my end with my companions on the trail or with the traps.

All this made my heart heavy as I sat there on the river bank asking myself what there was a lad like me could do.

Just at that time, when I was most downhearted, a man, tall of stature and spare in flesh, came up close beside me, and, as it seemed, looked down with much mirth in his heart, perhaps because I carried such a woe-begone expression on my face.