Se cre ts of the Magic Valley

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Fur trappers and mountain men lifted the veil of mystery from the Far West in their first attempts to establish a route to the Pacific. The future Magic Valley provided a conspicuous setting for many important incidents that were part of the quest for empire in the Pacific Northwest. Euramerican impact on the Snake River Indians would forever change both cultures. The Snake near Salmon Falls supported several riverbank encampments of native people who were prominent in the early historic accounts. These people identified themselves as the Agailuka (Salmon Eaters), Ko'a agaideka (Trap Salmon Eaters), and Pia agaideka (Big Salmon Eaters) but would become known by the names Euramericans assigned to them—Shoshone, Bannock, and Paiute.
The Pacific Northwest

The Snake River natives had, over millennia, developed a finely honed way of life. During the early 1800s, their way of life began undergoing unimagined transformations as Canadian and American trappers entered the Snake country. The vicinity of Upper Salmon Falls and Hagerman Valley provided the setting for some of the earliest, most vivid and detailed descriptions of Indian life on the Snake River Plain. British and American visitors recorded an invaluable and enduring legacy of ethnographic descriptions before the area was irrevocably changed.

The Snake River Plain was seen as a vital trade corridor linking the Missouri with the long-sought River of the West—the mythic Northwest Passage—and the markets of China. In *Voyages through the Continent of North America* (1801), explorer Alexander Mackenzie wrote, “Whatever road one follows, on leaving the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, one must join the Columbia in order to reach the Pacific Ocean; this river is the line of communication which Nature has traced between the two seas.” The Snake River Plain occupied the only feasible passageway between South Pass and the Columbia River. The Middle Snake was squarely situated on Mackenzie’s “line of communication.” Between 1811 and 1843, the valley was criss-crossed by many of the most celebrated trappers and mountain men of the fur trade era. Wilson Price Hunt, Donald McKenzie, John Reed, Alexander Ross, Peter Skene Ogden, Jedediah Smith, Captain Benjamin L. E. Bonneville, Kit Carson, and John Frémont all became familiar with the area’s striking features such as Salmon Falls and the myriad springs and creeks.

The favorable natural environment of Hagerman Valley provided a diversity of faunal and floral resources conducive to human settlement, while geographic and historical imperatives made it part of an avenue that permitted the United States continental expansion. The fur trade was everywhere in the West. It was dynamic and ruthless with cutthroat competition. Its appetite required, said historian Bernard DeVoto, “a stone age economy that meant a vast new market—beaver as common as dirt and the untouched Farther On to keep supplying it.”

In 1798, Alexander Mackenzie of the Montreal-based Northwest Company became the first Euramerican to cross the North American continent north of the Rio Grande. Mackenzie failed in his efforts to trace the course of the Columbia; instead he wound up following the Peace and Bella Coola Rivers to the Pacific coast. Nevertheless, Mackenzie’s epic feat of exploration gave the British a strong claim. In 1801, Mackenzie advocated a British civil and military establishment at Nootka on Vancouver Island with a “subordinate” post on the Columbia.
Mackenzie’s heroic exploration and his passionate arguments failed to win appreciable support among the British leadership, which was becoming increasingly preoccupied with the Napoleonic Wars on the European continent. Mackenzie’s account, however, was avidly read by Thomas Jefferson, who passed it along to Meriwether Lewis, who carried a copy to the Pacific coast during the Lewis and Clark Expedition. But it was John Jacob Astor who came the closest to actually creating the vast trade network advocated by Mackenzie. Astor had made an immense fortune in the Great Lakes fur trade dealing with the two British Canadian fur giants, the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Northwest Company. Astor recognized the portentous nature of Mackenzie’s exploration and realized that if he did not act immediately, the Northwest Company’s drive to the Pacific could very well result in the British achieving total control of the Northwest’s vast resources.

Astor’s grand scheme to further expand his fur empire was comprehensive in scope and bold in design. The plan’s goal was to occupy and trap the Columbia River and Rocky Mountains. The logistics were staggering, involving land and sea transportation routes in order to connect the Great Lakes with the Northwest, Russia, and China. Astor formed the Pacific
Fur Company with his own money and, with a group of Canadian and American partners, embarked on the first endeavor to establish a fur trading post at the mouth of the Columbia by sea and by land. In September 1810, Astor's ship, the *Tonquin*, sailed with men and supplies on an eventful and contentious voyage around the Horn and via Hawaii to the mouth of the Columbia, arriving in March 1811. At approximately the same time that the seaward Astorians began to construct Fort Astoria at the Columbia's mouth, the overland expedition left St. Louis. Led by merchant Wilson Price Hunt and assisted by Donald McKenzie, Ramsay Crooks, and John Reed, the party numbering sixty-five headed for the Arikara villages on the Missouri. The overland Astorians included French Canadian voyageurs, American hunters, interpreter Pierre Dorion Jr., son of the Lewis and Clark interpreter Old Dorion, and Dorion's pregnant Iowa Indian wife and two children.

Originally, Hunt had planned to follow a course similar to the one taken by Lewis and Clark six years previously. He significantly altered his plan after meeting up with three veteran trappers, John Hoback, Jacobi Reznor, and Edward Robinson, who had been with Andrew Henry at the forks of the Missouri the year before. The three explorers alerted Hunt to the dangers of trying to travel through the territory of the hostile Blackfoot and advised the Astorians to leave the Missouri at the Arikara villages, obtain horses, and cross the Rockies to the south toward the headwaters of the Yellowstone. In July, the Hunt party left the Arikara and the Missouri River with all their baggage packed on eighty-two horses.

Now guided by Hoback, Reznor, and Robinson, the Overland Astorians traveled westward to a tributary of the Powder River to hunt buffalo and gather an adequate supply of meat. From there they crossed through Crow tribal territory in the vicinity of Wind River, then southwest to the Green River where the Three Tetons, or Pilot Knobs, marked the headwaters of the Columbia's principal tributary, the Snake River. Here the three former Henry men suggested moving on to Henry's fort on the Snake's north branch. Hunt detached four trappers to start hunting beaver, and the Astorians, now guided by Shoshone, struggled on through the wilderness labyrinth of the Snake River's south branch, which the American trappers named Mad River. At some point during this phase of the trek, the Astorians entered present-day Idaho.

Hunt's party crossed over to the Henry's Fork of the Snake River and found the abandoned cabins and corrals built the year before by Henry's men. Here they saw a stream approximately one hundred yards wide with a strong, westward current. Not realizing it was a branch of the unnavigable river just recently labeled "mad," they decided to "pursue our journey by water." Hunt, believing he had found a safe and practical access to the Columbia, had the voyageurs start felling cottonwoods for canoes, while another detachment of trappers, including Hoback, Reznor, Robinson, and Martin Cass, was sent off into the wilderness to trap.
On the 19th of October, Hunt left the horses with two Shoshone Indians that had recently attached themselves to the expedition. The Overland Astorians, now numbering fifty-five and consisting primarily of the French Canadian voyageurs including Madame Dorion and her two children, climbed into fifteen canoes and pushed off into the Snake River's current. All of the party's hopes were staked on the conjecture that the broad and placid waters of the Snake River would take them to Fort Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia. It was a decision, commented James P. Ronda, that "put the Astorians on a collision course with suffering and death."

Hunt's canoe-borne party made fast and steady progress during the first days on the river, but as they progressed down the Snake, the river began to alternate between a smooth, fast "highway to the Columbia" and a treacherous, terrifying course that courted disaster. Near the mouth of Raft River, the Astorians saw Indians fishing along the riverbank. When Hunt went ashore and attempted to meet with them, the terrified Shoshone fled at the sight of the strangers. Hunt was able to trade knives for fish with one Shoshone, but "his fear was so great that I could not persuade him to indicate by signs the route I ought to take."

Unaware of the rapids and canyons still ahead of them, the Astorians proceeded downriver in their cottonwood canoes. Disaster struck with sudden fury when, as Hunt tersely described, "On the 28th [October], our journey was less fortunate. After passing several rapids, we came to the entrance of a canyon. Mr. Crooks's canoe was upset, one of his men drowned, many goods were lost." Near the present location of Milner Dam, where the Snake begins its tumultuous descent into a spectacular canyon, the canoe carrying Ramsay Crooks struck a boulder, smashing it and drowning Antoine Clappine, who was one of the expedition's most experienced voyageurs. Hunt and his party found themselves stranded in a basaltic canyon along a terrifying stretch of the Snake River that the awestruck Scottish Astorians gave the Celtic appellation "Caldron Linn." Lost and bewildered, Hunt and clerk John Reed spent the next several days desperately scouting the Snake River Canyon, only to find that the unmerciful river continued its course through a deep canyon that prohibited further travel by canoe.

By now it was November and they had only enough food for five days. As Washington Irving described the ordeal, "To linger in the vague hope of relief ... would be to run the risk of perishing with hunger. Besides, the winter was rapidly advancing, and they had a long journey to make through an unknown country ... they were yet, in fact, a thousand miles from
Astoria, but fore and around them was vague and conjectural, and wore an aspect calculated to inspire despondency.” Hunt decided the party must break up into smaller groups and try to walk out, staking their hopes on finding Indians willing to trade for food and horses. On November 9, after caching their supply of trade goods, the Astorians broke up into three groups and set out for Astoria: Donald McKenzie marched north with four men; Hunt led twenty-two, including the Dorion family, along the north bank of the Snake; Ramsay Crooks took a group of twenty along the south bank.
The next day, while Crooks's party likely traversed the Hagerman Fossil Beds as they followed the south bank of the Snake, Hunt's party on the north bank found a trail leading down to the river where they met two Shoshone. These were the first Indians Hunt had encountered since Raft River. One of the Shoshone had a knife he had received from another of the Astorian parties. Hunt wrote, "One of them led us by a path that took us away from the river. We crossed a prairie, and arrived at a camp of his tribe," probably in the vicinity of present-day Hagerman. The camp Hunt visited was fairly populous for a winter encampment, with a
number of dwellings or lodges shaped like haystacks: "Their habitations were very comfortable; each had its own pile of wormwood at the door for fuel, and within was abundance of salmon, some fresh, but the greater part cured. ... About their dwellings were immense quantities of the heads and skins of salmon, the best part of which had been cured, and hidden in the ground." Hunt's brief account of this first encounter with a band of Shoshone living on the north side of the Snake River in November 1811 is the earliest historical and ethnographic account of the Hagerman Valley:

"The women fled so precipitately that they had not time to take with them such of their children as could not walk. They had covered them with straw. When I lifted it to look at them, the poor little creatures were terror-stricken. The men trembled with fear as though I had been a ferocious animal. They gave us a small quantity of dried fish which we found very good, and sold us a dog. One of these Indians went with us. We were soon back at the river. It was bordered by their tents."

We halted nearby. Some fifty men came to see us. They were very civil and extremely obliging. The river, as on the previous day, was intersected by rapids. On the 12th, I visited some huts at which was a large quantity of salmon. These huts are of straw, arc shaped like ricks of grain, and are warm and comfortable. We saw, at the door, large heaps of sagebrush which serve as fuel. I bought two dogs. We ate one of them for breakfast. These Indians had good robes of bison skin, which, so they told me, they
obtained in exchange for their salmon. On leaving them, we marched some distance from the river and crossed a small stream [the Malad River]. We saw mountains to the north.

Just as Nez Percé generosity helped preserve the Lewis and Clark Expedition on the Wippe Prairie in 1805, the Shoshone camped in the Hagerman Valley provided Hunt’s Overland Astorians with food and provisions in a country that was destitute of game. Some of the Shoshone bands on the north side of the Snake River were apparently more prosperous than the bands living on the southern bank. Downriver from Salmon Falls, in the vicinity of King Hill, Hunt observed that most of the Shoshone had garments made from buffalo and reported seeing some horses that were a form of wealth that had to be vigilantly protected from roving war parties. Hunt had no opportunity to trade for horses because their protective and wary owners “took great pains to keep them out of our way.”

Hunt had more success getting food on the Snake’s north bank than Crooks had on the river’s south side. When Hunt and Crooks met up near the present location of Homestead, Oregon, Crooks and his twenty companions were on the verge of starvation, having subsisted for the last nine days on “one beaver, a dog, a few wild cherries, and some old mockasone sole.” Before the ordeal was over, the Snake claimed another of the Canadian voyageurs, and Madame Dorion gave birth to a baby that died a few days later. Hunt’s party arrived at Astoria on February 15, 1812. The emaciated Crooks party appeared several weeks later.

Scottish-born Robert Stuart, who had gone to Astoria by sea on the Tonquin, made an even more significant contribution than Hunt to exploring what would become the Oregon Trail. In June 1812, Stuart and five fellow Astorians left Fort Astoria and embarked on an eastward trek to carry dispatches back to Astor in New York. Stuart kept a journal documenting the overland journey of what Alexander Ross called “this little, bold, and courageous party.”

From Astoria to the Snake River, Stuart traveled the same route in reverse that Hunt had used. He and his party passed through the vicinity of the Hagerman Valley and Lower Salmon Falls during the last days of August, a time of year Stuart described as “the prime of the fishing season in this Country.” These midsummer salmon runs were capable of temporarily supporting fairly large tribal gatherings in the Hagerman Valley, and the Astorians had the incredible opportunity to witness the Shoshone harvesting salmon. Stuart reported “about one hundred lodges of Shoshonies busily occupied in Killing & drying Fish” near Lower Salmon Falls. “The Fish begin to jump soon after sunrise,” Stuart continued. “Indians in great numbers with their spears swim in, to near the centre of the Falls, where some
placing themselves on Rocks & others to their middle in Water, darts on all sides assail the Salmon, who struggling to ascend, and perhaps exhausted with repeated efforts, become an easy prey. With the greatest facility prodigious quantities are slaughtered daily and it must have been from this place that the dead & wounded came which we saw picked up by the starving wretches below; am completely at a loss to conceive why these [poor] creatures do not prefer mingling with their own nation at this immense fishing place (where a few hours exertion would produce more than a month's labour in their own way); rather than depend on the uncertainty of a Fish ascending close along shore or catching a part of what few make their escape wounded from these Falls.”

Stuart and his men traded with the Indians at Lower Salmon Falls and then recommenced their journey up the river and onto the hilly uplands overlooking the Upper Salmon Falls and possibly the fossil beds. From this vantage, Stuart could see the Upper Salmon Falls, which he described as “considerable rapids.” As they left the vicinity of Salmon Falls Creek bound upstream for Hunt’s caches, Stuart was joined by “two Indians their Squaws & one child” who had five horses. These five
Indians were also headed eastward and wanted to accompany Stuart’s party, perhaps seeking protection from any Blackfoot war parties that might attempt to steal their horses. Four days later, Stuart and his party were at Caldron Linn and located the nine caches that Hunt had left; six of the caches had been opened, but the three remaining caches still contained dry goods, ammunition, and traps, all of which the Astorians took.

The remainder of Stuart’s crossing was fraught with peril and difficulty; the Crow stole their horses, and they almost starved to death near Jackson Hole. But on the way out of Jackson Hole, they chose to follow an Indian trail west of the mountains instead of following Hunt’s trail north. This route led to Stuart’s accidental discovery of South Pass on October 23, 1812. The consequences of Stuart’s discovery would be momentous. South Pass was the ideal passageway for wagons to cross through the Rocky Mountains and would become “the hub of transportation in the Far West.” Stuart’s discovery of South Pass was kept a company secret for years afterward by Astor. Jedediah Smith’s 1824 rediscovery of the gap, offering an easy crossing of the Rockies, made the public first aware of "a passage by
which loaded wagons can... reach the navigable waters of the Columbia River.”

What the Astorians saw of Indian life was a less than pristine aboriginal culture. By the early 1750s, Blackfoot firepower had pushed as many as 3,000 to 4,000 equestrian Northern Shoshone and Bannock back onto the Snake River Plain. Many of these mounted Indians visited the fisheries of the Middle Snake and in the process brought their enemies with them as well. The few horses seen by Hunt and Stuart may have belonged to Shoshone or Bannock visiting local Shoshone who were relatives, or the animals may have been gifts.

Fort Astoria on the Columbia was meanwhile dogged by a series of disasters. After depositing men and supplies at the mouth of the Columbia, Astor’s ship, the Tonquin, sailed north to Vancouver Island to trade with the coastal tribes.

While anchored off the island, the entire crew was massacred and the ship blown up. A few months later, war broke out between Britain and the United States.

Fearing a British naval assault, Astor’s partners sold Astoria to the British Canadian Northwest Company. Since many of the Astorians were Scottish or Canadian, most simply switched sides and went back to work as “Nor’westers.” The new owners of the post changed the name to Fort George and assumed what amounted to virtual British control of the Northwest, but the founding of Astoria as an American outpost would continue to provide the United States with a strong claim to the Oregon Country.

The Northwest Company launched the first of a series of Snake Brigades that systematically began trapping the tributaries of the Snake River. For a time between the years 1815 and 1821, Nor’westers pushed deep into the Snake River Plain and beyond to the Rocky Mountains, dominating all the land west of the Rockies and north of the Great Salt Lake.

Donald McKenzie, the massive 300-pound former Astorian whom Alexander Ross called “Perpetual Motion,” led the first expedition into the Snake Country in 1818 for the Northwest Company. The first Snake Expedition consisted of fifty-five Iroquois, Abenaki, Hawaiians, and French Canadians, equipped with 195 horses and 300 beaver traps. For the better part of three years, McKenzie sent trapping parties throughout the country between the Snake and Green Rivers. McKenzie passed through the Hagerman Valley in 1818 and may have trapped in the vicinity during 1819. The killing of three of McKenzie’s Hawaiian trappers in what is now southwest Idaho gave the river there the name Owyhee, which was then the spelling for Hawaii. His most notable accomplishment was revolutionizing the Northwest fur trade, and he certainly ranks as one of the period’s most important explorers.

By the time McKenzie arrived in southern Idaho in 1818, the Indians on the Snake River Plain were experiencing serious threats to traditional food resources while simultaneously finding themselves living in a combination war zone and trade thoroughfare. McKenzie was forced to broker a peace agreement between various factions of Shoshone, Bannock, and Nez Percé before he could set his traps in the Snake country. Meanwhile, Blackfoot war
First Encounters
parties roamed southcentral Idaho at will. From these early encounters, Native Americans and trappers became intertwined in a complex pattern of exchange. From the Indians, the fur trappers received guidance, food, and horses. Access to the white man's manufactured goods had a staggering impact on Indians. Trade goods such as metal awls, fishhooks, knives, cloth, beads, bells, buttons, and brass rings were very much in demand, and Indians also avidly sought firearms and tobacco. It is not known to what extent such trading proved genuinely advantageous for the Salmon Falls Shoshone. The trade goods came with a steep
price. increased exposure to predatory foes, loss of food resources, and disruption of the traditional seasonal rounds.

The Snake Brigades made the Hagerman Valley a focal point for the dramatic cultural changes and the diffusion of cultural traits and materials that irrevocably altered the Indian way of life. Several examples of trade goods were among the items looted by relic diggers from burial sites located near the east side of Lower Salmon Falls. Many of those burials may have been the result of epidemics from diseases introduced by Euramericans. The white man's diseases had preceded even Lewis and Clark by a hundred years. Measles, whooping cough, smallpox, tuberculosis, and diphtheria had ravaged Missouri River village tribes, and epidemics also swept through the Spanish settlements in California and the Russian outposts in Alaska. Former Idaho state archaeologist Tom Green has estimated that half of North America's indigenous people died of European diseases before any Europeans saw them. Indian populations living in constant and close contact with one another, such as the communal fishing camps in the Hagerman Valley, would have been especially vulnerable to the exotic diseases introduced by the early fur trappers.

Between 1818 and 1845, the United States and Great Britain made several unsuccessful attempts to negotiate a partition of the Oregon Country. In 1821, the Northwest Company and the even more powerful Hudson's Bay Company merged in order to end a trade war. The newly combined fur trade conglomerate kept the name and charter of the Hudson's Bay Company and received from the British government a monopoly over all British trade in the Oregon Country. In 1824, HBC reorganized its Columbia department. The company moved its headquarters from Fort George, formerly Astoria, inland to a more strategic location on the north side of Columbia near the confluence of the Willamette. The new base was named Fort Vancouver, and its new chief factor was Dr. John McLoughlin, a man who would dominate the affairs of the Oregon Country for the next two decades.

The Hudson's Bay Company also changed the way the Snake Country Expeditions were conducted. HBC governor George Simpson ordered the Snake Country stripped of beaver. "The more we impoverish the country" reasoned Simpson, "the less likelihood is there of our
being assailed by opposition." Between 1822 and 1824, three HBC brigades were sent into the Snake Country from Flathead Post in what is now northeast Montana. Michel Bourdon led the 1822 expedition, and Finian McDonald led the 1823 Snake Brigade. Former Astorian and Nor'wester Alexander Ross was given command of the third Snake Brigade.

Ross's contributions to the early history of southern Idaho and the Snake River country were impressive. In 1824, Ross named the Malad River at the northern end of Hagerman Valley after most of his fur brigade took ill while camped along the stream from eating beaver that had eaten hemlock. He was the first Euramerican to cross the divide between the sources of the Big Wood and Salmon Rivers and the first to explore Wood River Valley. In 1824, Ross also recorded an observation concerning the impact of the fur trade and the horse culture on the region's tribes. While in the vicinity of the Camas Prairie, a Shoshone (or possibly a Bannock) told him, "We can never venture in the open plains for fear of the Blackfoot and Piegan, and for that reason never keep horses. Six of our people were killed last summer. Were we to live in large bands, we should easily be discovered."

At this time William H. Ashley's men began canvassing the Far West. These were the free American trappers who would become the legendary "mountain men." One of Ashley's men, Jedediah Smith, met up with Ross's Snake Brigade in October 1824 and followed him back to the Flathead Post. In essence, Ross inadvertently provided Smith with a guided tour of the HBC's Rocky Mountain domain. Ross was replaced by the ruthless Peter Skene Ogden, who led the Snake Brigades for the next six years.

Smith's incursion into the British-dominated Snake Country marked the beginning of a relentless American campaign that would eventually drive the British from the Snake and Columbia Rivers. While exploring the northern Great Basin for the mythical Buenaventura River during the spring of 1826, Smith crossed the barren Salt Flats of Utah, entering what is now eastern Nevada, but near starvation drove him to follow Salmon Falls Creek north to the Snake River. After crossing the Snake below the Lower Salmon Falls, Smith headed north to the Boise River. He continued on to the Payette before retracing his route back to the Boise, east to the Big Wood, then to the Big Lost River, and on toward the Cache Valley.
Peter Skene Ogden, Smith's rival, hated the Snake Country. "A more gloomy country I never yet saw" is how he once described it in his journal. For six long years, Ogden led the Hudson's Bay Company Snake Brigade with courage and skill. No other trapper, mountain man, or explorer saw as much of the Oregon Country and the Great Basin as he did. During his years in the Snake Country, Ogden passed through the Hagerman Valley on at least two occasions. Like Stuart and Ross, he was an astute and keen observer; the journal recording his second expedition is one of the great accounts of western exploration (the journal from Ogden's first Snake expedition is another of the West's great missing documents).

The American trappers were more opportunistic than the British, constantly searching for more economic possibilities than hunting beaver. New England ice merchant Nathaniel Wyeth attempted a mercantile scheme on a scale as grand as Astor's. In 1832, Wyeth visited a Shoshone encampment near Salmon Falls. "From these Indians," he wrote on August 30, "I procured fresh salmon spawn which was very encouraging as we are nearly out of provisions and the country would afford us scanty subsistence."

Wyeth returned to the West in 1834 with supplies and merchandise for the annual Rocky Mountain Fur Company rendezvous. But competitor William Sublette reached the rendezvous site first, and the late-arriving Wyeth was able to dispose of only a small portion of his merchandise. He moved on westward to the valley of the Snake and located a site to build a trading post near the mouth of the Portneuf. On August 4, Wyeth completed construction of Fort Hall. In a countermove, Hudson's Bay built a rival trading post, Fort Boise, on the mouth of the Boise River. Both forts became famous and important trading posts on the emigrant trails. In 1837, Wyeth sold Fort Hall to the Hudson's Bay Company. Even though Wyeth's Oregon venture ended in failure, he significantly influenced the direction of the American westward movement. In historian Hubert Howe Bancroft's assessment, "It was [Wyeth] who, more directly than any other man, marked the way for the ox-teams which were so shortly to bring the Americanized civilization ... across the roadless continent."

Captain Bonneville and Lt. John Charles Frémont, two of the West's most notable military engineers, were agents of continental expansion. Bonneville spent 1831 to 1835 in the West on a leave of absence from the U.S. Army, ostensibly as a private fur trapper but in actuality a semioff-
cial spy. He traversed the central and northern Rockies and the Oregon Country, all the while ascertaining the courses of principal rivers, the location of Indian tribes, the disposition of)

Hudson’s Bay Company operations in Oregon, and the activities of Mexicans south of the 42nd parallel. Bonneville’s journal has since been lost, but Washington Irving used Bonneville’s account as the basis for his 1837 book, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*.
"[Their] dress," wrote Irving of the Shoshone, "consisted of a mantle about four feet square, formed of strips of rabbit skin sewed together; this they hung over their shoulders, in the ordinary Indian mode of wearing the blanket. Their weapons were bows and arrows, the latter tipped with obsidian, which abounds in the neighborhood. Their huts were shaped like haystacks, and constructed of branches of willow covered with long grass, so as to be warm and comfortable. Occasionally, they were surrounded by small inclosures of wormwood, about three feet high, which gave them a cottage-like appearance. Three or four of these tenements were occasionally grouped together in some wild and striking situation ... sometimes they were in sufficient number to form a small hamlet. From the people, Captain Bonneville’s party frequently purchased salmon. This seemed to be their prime article of food; but they were extremely anxious to get buffalo meat in exchange."

Like Bonneville, John C. Frémont was an army officer sent west who had his subsequent adventures well publicized. Frémont became one of the preeminent explorers of the American West in the nineteenth century, leading five expeditions between 1842 and 1853. Known as "the Pathfinder," Frémont was actually "the Great Publicist" who lured settlers west with his vivid reports, maps, and narratives of the routes to Oregon and California. On his second expedition, in 1843, Frémont reconnoitered South Pass and explored the Great Salt Lake. He then traversed the Oregon Trail to Fort Vancouver, ventured into southeast Oregon and northwest Nevada, crossed the Sierra Nevada range and wintered with John Sutter, toured various California towns, and returned to the Rockies by a southerly route.

Frémont’s contingent of thirty-nine men was mostly French Canadian, but the party also included cartographer Charles Preuss and mountain men Kit Carson, Thomas "Broken Hand" Fitzpatrick, and Alexis Godey. Preuss served as the expedition’s scientist; he mapped the topography of the entire route, collected plant and mineral specimens, and sketched scenes depicting the landscapes, including one of Thousand Springs entitled "Outlet of Subterranean River." Frémont’s report included a vivid description...
of Salmon Falls, while Section VI of Preuss's topographical map clearly delineates the location of Fishing Falls 1,300 miles from Westport Landing. The Shoshone were quite numerous, "strung along the river at every little rapid where fish are to be caught, and the cry haggai, haggai (fish), was constantly heard whenever we passed near their huts, or met them in the road."

Cartographer Preuss kept a diary that was discovered in 1954. While Frémont was often grandiose and theatrical, Preuss was grouchy and terse. When Frémont brought along a twelve-pound brass cannon for no other reason than its symbolic value, Preuss complained, "If we had only left that ridiculous thing at home." For Preuss, the Snake River Plain was "terrible," the weather cold and windy, "the road rocky." Preuss, however, was impressed by the Hagerman Valley. "Yesterday we passed the Fishing Falls. Now we can purchase salmon to our heart's content. ... One hears nothing but the word haggai, fish. ... This Snake River is interesting, I must confess, no matter how awful the country around it may be. The most beautiful little waterfalls, twenty to forty feet high."

In 1845 the publication of Frémont's report began an era that would culminate in the fulfillment of America's manifest destiny. Oregon overlanders relied extensively on assistance and trade from the Shoshone at Salmon Falls, just as Hunt's 1811 Overland Astorians, Wyeth in 1832, and Frémont had done. Historian Elioït West's description of the frontier as "a place of accommodation and exchange," a shifting and unstable "zone of exchange and mutual influence," was certainly applicable to the future Magic Valley during the early fur trade era. Zones of exchange such as the Middle Snake were critical during the early years of contact, for within these designated areas Euramericans and Native Americans depended upon each other for articles of trade, lived together, learned to speak to each other, ate each other's cooking, and engaged in mercantile exchanges. But in the end, the Native American people lost their autonomy as their subsistence-based culture was undercut by the overwhelming currents of Euramerican westward migration and a growing market economy.