

i. A DIARY OF JULES DeFOE WHO TRAVELED IN IDAHO IN 1789

Because truth is stranger than fiction Bess Foster Smith of Weiser has carried on extensive correspondence in attempting to uncover a diary written by Jules DeFoe, a French-Canadian trapper. Jules DeFoe, according to the diary was employed by the Northwest Fur Co. and traveled through Idaho in 1789, fifteen years before Lewis and Clark. If such a trip can be varified he will have been the first known white man to enter this state. In the diary many landmarks which he described have been identified. Mrs. Smith received the diary from Floyd Howard, a prospector who at present lives in Boise. His partner, Harry Price had received it from someone in Montreal, Canada who knew that Price was interested in early Idaho history. Price died several years ago. The copied manuscript received by him was destroyed in a fire. Howard however, had made a copy of the manuscript in his own handwriting which he turned over to Mrs. Smith. It was understood by Howard that Price's friend in Montreal had uncovered the diary while carrying out research for a book. Mrs. Smith has written the library at Montreal but they were unable to find anything there. She has also conferred with Hudson's Bay Co. but none of them have records of early day trappers. If such a manuscript is in existance somewhere it is very valuable, and if anyone, after reading the following diary, can shed any light on it's authenticity, he is asked to contact Mrs. Smith.

June 27, 1789

Today I crossed that high range that I have been climbing towards for the past several days. From the summit I could see that I was crossing to a different water shed, as the canyons ahead taking a cross almost opposite of the one I have been following. *While on top of the summit I again took my bearings as best I could, as near as I can tell this place is about 115.0 west longitude, 43.45 north latitude. Descending the mountain the trail I have been following led me to the little **valley which at no place is more than half a mile wide with the very noisy stream flowing through it. Here I will stay awhile and let my animals rest, their feet are torn so bad they are hardly able to walk. * The summit between the head of the South fork of the Boise and Stanley Basin. ** The valley between Bear Creek and the Smokies.

June 29, 1789

For two days I have been exploring this valley. The valley floor is heavily covered with a tall slender specie of pine which shades a thick carpet of green which my animals seem to like very much. Down the valley not more than three miles below my camp another *stream enters from the east more than doubling the amount of water and making what was a creek into a small river. There are signs of fur everywhere with beaver predominating. It may be that I am getting close to my destination and this could be the beginning of the river of the beaver. There are also an abundance of other game, the deer will come almost into my camp. I have seen bear, herds of elk; and tracks of what I believe to be lion, although I have yet to see one. All last night I could hear splashing and slurring in the creek which flows rather placidly for it's near my camp and this morning I was astonished to see it packed with fish. They actually jammed the river as they fought their way upstream. **They are large trout, or a small salmon and are very good to eat. And yesterday in exploring down the stream below the forks I found a stream of hot water. I will move to that place in the morning. It will mean leaving the trail I have been following but as this may be the stream I have come so far to find, I will stay with it until I am sure. There is no evidence that this stream has ever been trapped and although the trail I followed into here is an old and much used one on the Indian route, I am probably the first white man to look upon this place, and if it proves to be the river of the beaver, will I ever be able to get the report back to my father? It is a certainty that Verne and Pierre will never return. It has been almost 18 months since I left them to bleach their bones on the bank of the great river. For days they had pleaded with me to turn back, but by then the spirit of adventure had taken hold of me, their pleading fell upon deaf ears, then when they tried to desert me I brought them back and gave Verne the thrashing of his life. Pierre would have gotten the same only he gave me his word that he would go along and cause me no more trouble. I must not brood about that which I cannot help as I only fought to preserve my own life so now I will think no more about it.

* Big Smokey Creek

** Steelhead salmon coming upstream to spawn.

July 12, 1789

For 12 days I have loafed here at this hot spring and while my beasts rested and grew new hooves I have once more become clean on the outside at least. As for my conscience, well time only can erase the rather shabby trick I played on Moon Flower and Yellow Buffalo. But even then I had asked them for nothing. All of their kindness was forced upon me as surely Moon Flower knew I would not linger long, that as soon as my wounds were healed and I was strong again I would be on my way. Then that morning when the Sioux attacked the camp and I found myself out from Yellow Buffalo and the rest of the tribe, I left them to fight without me and came away to take up the trail of the mystical river of the beaver. Time can only dim the memory of the happy days I spent in that Indian camp on the banks of the great river, of the time Moon Flower found me nearly dead from wounds I had received in my fight with Verne and Pierre and helped me to her father's lodge where she cared for me until I was well. Of Yellow Buffalo and how he stood between me and the braves of his tribe, decided that I would become one of them. Yellow Buffalo took me to his own lodge to become the son, Prairie Moon, his wife couldn't give him. But even if my conscience isn't so clean my body is. This hot water would wash the dirt from even an Indian. From the signs I have found here many Indians have used this place, some as early as last summer and they can have it again as I will leave tomorrow.

July 19, 1789

Two years ago today since I started this record. Two years of constant battle against all the forces of this hard country where life is the cheapest thing there is and only the fittest survive, and now my fitness is going to be tested as never before. While spending my last morning at the great hot springs I had planned to resume my journey the coming morning. Then I saw a long line of Indians coming down the river, lucky for me there was some higher timber ground they must pass before coming into the little cove that shielded my camp which they were bound to find, and this gave me time to get away before they had discovered me, but no time to hide the signs of my camp. So hastily tying the pack to my animals I headed down the river as fast as I could drive them. Below the hot springs the river enters a very steep and narrow canyon but from previous scouting trips I knew I could get through it by taking my time in crossing the river several times. By dark I had gotten well into the canyon and had seen no sign of pursuit. As soon as the darkness had overtaken me I had stopped driving my pack animals, and tying them together I was now leading them. I had come to a place where the current, striking squarely into the face of the bluff, would force me to once more cross the river. I looked and found a place that in the darkness looked smooth and quiet enough to cross. The river was just to my arm pits and very swift, but I was making it fine with the lead animal close to my heels when there was a jerk that almost tore the lead rope from my hands and glancing back I could see both my animals were down and struggling in the water. Bracing myself against the swift water I held on with all my strength and I believe I could have saved them, but just as they were commencing to swing toward the bank the rope broke near my hands and in a moment they were gone, swallowed up in the dark water. And gone with them was everything I had possessed, even my rifle. I had tied it on the pack when I had started to lead the animals at dark. Now as I stood there my only weapon was my belt axe and knife, and knife and though they are deadly at close quarters, they could be useless in procuring meat to keep this great body of mine alive and going. Climbing on the bank I sat down to wait for daylight hoping I might find that they had gotten out or maybe find something I could save of my equipment. But when morning came I could find nothing of them. Just below where they had floundered was a large deep pool and no doubt on the bottom of the hole the bodies of my faithful pack animals and all of my equipment lay far beyond my reach. Nor could I spend much time searching the water for any minute I might hear the yells that would tell me the Indians had caught up with me. One advantage the loss of my outfit gave me was I could travel with more speed and at the same time make better use of the natural cover that the canyon afforded. Traveling as fast as I could it was not long before I was through the roughest of the canyon and far below where I had previously explored. Then as I climbed out over a low cliff that jutted out into the river a scene met my eyes that caused me to drop flat on my belly. Just below the ridge I had climbed, another ***stream entered the canyon flowing in from the northeast and almost paralleling the main river. Here at their junction the stream had formed a large delta. And seated

Skelton Creek

on their ponies in the flat no more than a hundred yards from me were seven Indian warriors. While I watched, not daring to move, two of them dismounted and handed their bridles, which consisted of a rawhide line tied to the animals lower jaw, to one of the mounted Indians. They proceeded to come directly towards where I was laying, while the other five rode towards the river. Then just as I was starting to slip back down the side of the ridge to where I could make a run for it, a yell from the mounted Indians who had reached the river drew the attention of the two climbing towards me. Another yell caused them to turn and hurry to the party on the river bank who were now engaged in pulling something from the water. Then as an answering yell from up the river caused me to look back the way I had come and there coming down the canyon were six more warriors. They were on foot but coming fast and as they were on the same side of the river as I was on they were sure to climb the bluff to the exact spot I was occupying. This left me only one thing to do; rising to my feet I ran as fast and quietly as I could down off the ridge and across the delta to the willows and trees that bordered the stream flowing across the flat and by the good grace of God I was not seen. Reaching the stream I plunged in and crossed the stream where the flat extended on down the river, and here supported a heavy cover of brush and timber. Pushing my way into this small jungle only far enough to gain cover I stopped and waited to see if my presence had been discovered but evidently the two parties had so distracted each other's attention that they had overlooked my trail. So I decided that the safest thing for me to do was stay here until the Indians moved on or until I could leave under cover of darkness. Hearing voices I peered cautiously from my leafy cover to see the Indians, both parties combined now, coming up the flat from the river and as they passed within a hundred feet of me, I saw at least part of what had caused their excitement. Across the withers of one of the ponies dangled my fine robe that had been carried all the way from Montreal, so it was one of my pack animals or part of a pack that had been responsible for my good fortune. Across the stream from my hiding place grew a large pine tree, under it the Indians dismounted, and on being joined by the six unmounted warriors, were immediately engaged in an excited council. This argument was very brief for suddenly gathering their weapons four of the dismounted Indians started on a trot back up the main canyon from which they and I had come. One went toward the place where they had found my robe and the others followed the seven who had now dismounted their ponies up the stream near where I was hidden. Then I heard the sound of their ponies crossing the stream, and peering through the tops of the bushes I saw the lone Indian climbing the mountain side almost directly above me. Once more I had to move fast and quietly, for from only a few hundred feet up the mountain side which is very steep, he would be able to look almost straight down upon this thicket and not even a mouse would be able to move without being seen by those sharp eyes. Dropping to my knees I crawled deeper into the thicket and then my luck still holding, I found a large bunch of willows that had been bent over by some heavy weight until their tops touched the ground forming a perfect screen that no sight could penetrate. Carefully making an opening and crawling inside I lay listening for I could no more see out than I could be seen, and I did hear the sound of ponies down the main canyon as they skirted the thicket and once more they had me between them, but I was sure they didn't know it. Then just when I had begun to think myself safe for awhile, I was startled by a long wail from the mountain side above me. It was quickly answered by a sharp whistling bird call from the lower end of the thicket and was being directed in a thorough search of the delta by the watcher on the hill side. One thing I haven't mentioned was that when I entered so quietly and had then lain still only one or two had dropped on me to investigate, and finding me laying quietly found no reason to fight and paid me no more attention--this was the gray coned shaped nest of a colony of black hornets. They were a large black bee, very bad tempered and always ready to fight man or beast. That peculiar whistling call was not coming close. I could hear the soft swish of the bushes as they brushed against the legs of the searcher and then he had stopped beside the bushes under which I was lying. Watching the side of my shelter near where he had stopped, I saw his hand appear as he grasped the willows to part them so that he could see under, then as I tensed myself and was readying to grasp that browned hand it was suddenly withdrawn and with a yell of pain the Indian was going away from there as fast as he could, and not quiet about it either.

Laying there now, being afraid to move on account of the hornets, I could hear the lookout as he shouted taunts at the searcher, and although I could not understand him it was easy to follow the crux of their conversation. The lookout was telling the searcher to go back further, and the searcher was telling him to do his own hunting, especially in the neighborhood of the hornet's nest. Again my luck had seen me through, and never again will I molest a hornet, not even if he strikes me first. That was a long day I put in under those willows, although the sun would not reach me, neither could the air and it was soon stifling hot, and the presence of the hornets did not help matters for since their tempers were riled they seemed to resent the slightest noise, so to humor them I lay as still as possible. About mid afternoon I heard the sound of the ponies' feet and I surmised it was the mounted warriors returning from the river. This proved to be correct as they were soon calling to the lookout who, with the hunters soon joined them. After some talk the noise of their departure died away as they made their way up the canyon from which they had come. And soon I crawled from my hideout and quietly as possible made my way to the edge of the thicket. Here I found a well used trail that came from the side canyon, and even in the dark I could see that many Indians had passed over it recently, all headed down the canyon. This then must be the trail I had left in the upper valley. I had blundered when I had failed to scout the trail far enough to see where it lead. Now it was plain it was only a detour around the canyon that had cost me so dearly, and during the two weeks I had been resting at the hot springs it had become a regular highway, but good trail though it was, I dared not follow it, so being careful to leave no tracks on the trail I crossed it and took to the hillside climbing slightly as I made my way down the canyon. This proved to be a slow hard road to travel, as I was forced to climb above or below the cliffs, fight my way through dense brush and clamber in and out of numerous side canyons. Then just at midnight when I had climbed from out of the roughest and deepest canyon I had yet encountered, I suddenly saw ahead and below me the light of many campfires. I was looking into what appeared in the night to be quite a large valley and the fires, of which I could count 31, were burning in almost a line for at least 2 miles. Tired and hungry and with another of these deep side canyons facing me, I decided to stay here and rest the night. So back tracking a short distance I found cover in a small but dense thicket. And after eating from my scanty supply of jerked venison I made myself as comfortable as possible and in no time was asleep. When I awoke this morning it was daylight, and taking stock of my position I found I could not have picked a better place from which to view the valley below me. It is an oval shaped valley that I estimate to be about 3 miles long by $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles at the widest place. Directly across from my point of vantage the mountains are much lower and are covered with dense evergreen forest and looking over the top of them I can see in the hazy outline a higher range of mountains. The valley itself is only sparsely timbered. A line of willows which follow the river, and near the center a grove of large evergreen trees that may be pine. Although camps are strewn the entire length of the valley, it is at this grove that the main camp is located. As nearly as I can tell there are more than five hundred Indians and two hundred ponies in this valley. And then I perceived what they are doing, they are watching these trout-like fish that are swimming up the river in such vast numbers. And now, having for the first time a few moments of leisure, I took stock of my worldly goods. At my belt hung my knife and small belt axe, which in fact is only a narrow bladed hatchet. In my light waterproof pack are my watch, compass, writing material, a pair of moccasins and about two pounds of dried venison. I also have my powder horn and shot pouch which contains about a pound of powder and 70 or 80 balls, and although now only excess baggage, I will keep them as they might be of use sometime. What I need most now is weapons, and what better place to get them than right here. Tonight I will visit the valley and see what I can find. It took me two nights to obtain what I wanted from the Indian camp. The first night, although I penetrated the encampment to the river bank I was unable to secure anything and came back empty handed except for a smoked fish I lifted from a rack where it had been left today. Last night I had better luck, the Indians were holding a dance and feast at the grove and I roamed unmolested through the rest of the camp. From one lodge I secured a fine bow and 20 well made arrows. From another I took one of those short light throwing spears, and although it is tipped with flint arrow head, it is really a fine weapon and a good addition to any man's fighting equipment. I also borrowed some much needed clothing, but on account of my size I had a hard time

Centennial trail

Bungarten

finding any I could use. I finally found the lodge of a man near my size and helped myself to a nice soft deerskin jacket and a pair of moccasins and a really fancy pair of leggings, and I was surprised to find the leggings were plenty long enough for me. It is seldom I can find a fit for this 6 foot 5 inch 200 pound carcass of mine. I stayed ~~there~~ visiting one deserted lodge after another until the feast was breaking up and I was forced to leave. Somehow even the crude home of these Indians looks good to me after so long a time of trying to enjoy my own company. It was almost dawn when I arrived here at my mountain refuge, and after a short sleep I have spent the time watching the camp. As far as I can see there has been no undue excitement so if the stuff I have taken has been missed the theft has probably been laid to some misguided neighbor. Tonight after dark I will resume my journey down the river, armed as I now am I will not need to fear going hungry or not able to protect myself from enemies of any kind, be they man or beast. Somehow I hate to leave the presence of this camp, for although I can only watch from afar, it relieves the loneliness that has been with me for so long a time, and I would like to be there beside them. So at dusk I will bid them and their lovely valley goodbye and head once more into the unknown.

* Now known as Lightfoot Hot Springs, (east of Featherville) named for grandfather of the late Austin Lightfoot of Boise.

** Skelton Creek

*** This is the old Indian trail leading from Salmon River.

**** Bumgartner Park and the Howland ranch.

July 21, 1789

It is now 5 days since I left the little valley with its Indian camps. Five days, and I have traveled not more than seventy miles, but I have entered a new world. I am with white men again, and though they are Spaniards and I have found only one who understands and speaks English, they are white men with white men's thoughts and actions. They have taken me in and shown me all the hospitality their limited accommodations allow. In leaving my retreat above the Indian camp I forged my way through the darkness crossing canyons. Finally becoming discouraged with climbing in and out of this steep and deep canyon I turned toward the river. I was surprised to find no trail and I could see no sign that the Indians have ever been here, although it was no more than 7 or 8 miles below their encampment. Here the canyon was wider than above the valley. The canyon floor is covered with timber, large pine and cottonwood, and under all this is a dense growth of willows. Everywhere I look there are signs of game. One can follow their trails through the willows without any difficulty and the beaver are working everywhere. I had traveled probably five miles when I made my great discovery. The canyon has now widened into another valley, the river flowing near the center and small bench lands on either side. Rounding a bend of the river I came suddenly upon it. At first I could not believe what I saw was real, and it must have taken minutes before I realized the meaning of what I was looking at. It was a headgate. A massive structure of sawed lumber and logs built there to regulate the flow of water from the river into a canal that led across the valley, and there on the ground were fresh tracks, tracks made by men wearing boots, not moccasin tracks of the Indian, but boots that only white men would wear. I must have lost my head completely, for when I recovered my senses I was running wildly down the bank of the canal, and there ahead of me were two men. Even as I saw them they were taking aim at me with rifles, and before I could shout, two reports rang out. I felt a hard blow on my side and then something seemed to tear my head apart. When I came to, I was here in this cabin, lying on a bed made of soft fur robes, and though I had the world's biggest headache I was not badly hurt. One ball had passed under my left arm, plowing a deep furrow across my side, and the other had literally bounced off my head, but other than rending me unconscious for a few hours, had done no great damage. My host, who is the governor of this settlement, informs me that this is the Spanish colony of *Eldorado, that the settlement was founded here 18 years ago and their purpose is to recover the gold that lies in the gravel and sand of Feather river, a small stream that enters the valley from the north. The main river they have named the Trinity. He promised me as soon as my head quit hurting he will show me the work they are doing, and that I am welcome to stay here as long as I wish. At least I will stay until my appetite is sated.

Boise River

Imagine if you can, that after two years of eating like an animal, to get real food cooked and seasoned and served to you on a plate! I can tell you that this alone makes it seem like heaven. Today I left the cabin and the Governor, whose name is Ortez, and who is the only man in camp who can speak English, showed me some of their work. First the camp itself consists of what he calls the barracks which are three long cabins built like an open square, with a fourth cabin nearly filling the open part of the square. Then the remaining part of the opening is cleared and closed by a massive gate made of logs. Though weighing more than a ton, it is balanced so that when unbound it will swing easily on the hinges. Scattered around the near vicinity are 80 or more cabins, some large, some small and all look well built and comfortable. All this on the bench overlooking the Trinity which here makes almost a 90 degree bend and now flows almost due south. Across the river and on the bench, or rather the lower river bottom they have cleared their farm. Here they are growing fodder for their horses of which they have more ~~than~~ a hundred. At each end of the meadow are their fields of grain and vegetables, of which they are growing a good variety, and plenty to last them from one season to the next and a surplus of the ones that will not stand storage. Ortez tells me the winters here are long and cold with the snow attaining depths of 6 feet and lasting from November to May. He says they had a hard time the first few years but now their colony is self-supporting in every way. Nor are they bothered with the Indians. He says that in the 18 years that they have been here no Indians have ever come below the camp to the left, in the little valley, that their trail leaves the river, there is another much greater camp and that there are many Indians but they never venture into the valley here, why he does not know. Back at the settlement again and he showed me their workshop. Here they are making chairs, tables, beds and many other articles. Here is maintained their smith, tannery, clothing and boot shop. He tells most of this work is done in the winter when it is too cold to work at the mine. Slightly separated from the other is the smokehouse where they cure their meat. Here he showed me great quantities of cured game and much smoked and cured fish. All this combined with the forage from an ample supply of food for the long winters ahead. Then we inspected the barracks which is the fort for the settlement and also the quarters for the single men of the community. Here too their firearms are kept, and I was surprised at the armaments they possessed, and also the variety. They seem to have everything necessary for a first line soldier and are plentifully supplied with ammunition. Their swords, halberd and pikes are fine weapons, but their rifles are the old heavy muskets of the Spanish army type which throws a heavy ball but only a short distance. I noticed the molder balls had a hard shiney look not like the dull gray of the lead ball. I asked Ortez about it and he told me when they first came here that keeping a supply of lead had been one of their greatest problems, as they had been unable to find any native lead in the country but that only about a days journey across the mountains to the north* they had found a sufficient amount of this metal for all their needs, that it contains no lead at all but is nearly pure silver I asked him why they were not mining it along with the gold. He said the main reason was they were getting all the gold they could transport to the coast and that a vicious tribe of Indians inhabited a nearby village, and although they never crossed to this side of the mountains, they never hesitated to kill anyone they found on their side. So the only time they could safely get there was very late in the autumn after the Indians had left for their winter quarters, but some day they would drive the Indians out of the valley and make it safe to work the rich silver mine that must be there. This evening he showed me the place where he gets the gold for which they are working here. **There on the bench between the forks of the Feather and Trinity rivers they have built long lines of flumes through which flows water brought from both streams. In the pits more than 300 men are digging the gravel and dumping it into flumes to be washed free of the gold. The gold being so much heavier than the gravel, goes to the bottom where it is held by small checks while the lighter gravel is washed away. And here I got my first look at raw gold, and I wondered what there was to that dull yellow metal that lured men to such far off places, and made them toil at such back breaking labor. I asked Ortez what inducement he make to the men to get them to work like that. He told me that first the Spanish government gets half of all the gold they discover: that he, as governor gets part. The remainder then is divided equally among the men. But, I asked, what good will gold do a men here? There is nothing to buy, nothing to spend it for. He informed me that the

Cherokee

Atlanta Mine
Yuba River

men did not stay long, that each year when the outside company arrived a new supply of men were brought in and a like number of the men allowed to leave, that none of the men I saw working had been here more than 3 years, and in that time have accumulated enough

gold to make them rich when viewed from the level of a common Spanish soldier. Ortez, himself had been here six years with six more years to serve until his term of governor expires. Then he too will be forced to give way to a new man. Near the mines he showed me where they saw their lumber. This they saw by hand, or while rolled over a pit and while one man is working in the pit another is on top of the log. They saw it into boards or timber as they desire. Most all work is done in the winter. Today I took a bearing to ascertain my position on this old earth, and although my methods are crude this is about 115:15 west longitude, 45:57 North latitude. This position was taken about half way between the mine and the village. *115 15" 45 57*

enclosed reading
 * This could be the Atlanta Mine on the middle fork of the Boise River. Later the Spaniards did establish a settlement near there. It was deserted when found by the first prospectors about 1863. This settlement was called Yuba Town, (on the Yuba River.)

** Though overgrown by timber and brush, traces of this old works can still be found.

July 29, 1789

Ortez
 It was a week today that Ortez invited me to his cabin and introduced me to his daughter and since then I have had no more sense than a lovesick ass. At first the shock of seeing a beautiful well kept woman here in the wilderness must have caused me to stare stupidly, for it was not until she asked if she looked so awful that she scared me that I recovered enough manners to perform the duties of a gentleman. And it helped me not at all when she discovered the wound on my head, and nothing could restrain her from removing the bandage and examining the wound which had by then almost healed. Then I had to sit while she replaced the bandage with a clean one, and all the time berating her father for not letting her know that there was a wounded stranger in camp that she should have been doctoring instead of Pablo, who she said, didn't know how to doctor a sick horse, that by all rights I should have died but that now she had found me, I might be well again. Ortez took his scolding very mildly and when she had finished dressing up my head he called for the evening meal which was soon set before us by Marie (yes, that is her name, Marie,) and a half-breed girl. Then Marie sat with us while we ate, and when the repast had been cleared from the table and Marie had poured us each a large mug of wine, she asked me to tell them about myself, and there under the spell of her bewitching charm I told them how I came to be here, leaving nothing out except the cause of the fight in Montreal and my relations with Moon Flower. It was only after I had taken my leave and was on the way back to my cabin that I remembered the startled glances that they gave each other at the mention of the North Western Fur Company. Although it was only a glance I sensed danger. Sharpened by constant battle with this wild country has sounded an alarm in my mind, and I wonder if I have talked too much, but I cannot see how they could know anything about the NW Fur Co. Needless to say I saw her that day and every day since. Twice I have spent the entire evening at the Ortez cabin and only the untimely arrival of Ortez kept me from holding her in my arms. If Ortez has noticed our adoration for each other he either does not care or else it pleased him, for he is an example of courtesy and kindness in all his contact with me. Today I had an experience that has left me puzzled and I must admit slightly worried. I was passing one of the cabins when my attention was drawn to a blanket hanging on the line. Stepping closer I examined it, and it is one of the fine woolen robes that are woven by the NW Fur Co. and one issued to their hunters only. They are not allowed to be used in trade. A lighter and cheaper blanket being used for that purpose. As I was examining the blanket a woman emerged from the cabin and hastily gathered it from the line. I tried to question her about it but she only shook her head, and taking the blanket into the cabin closed the door thus stopping any chance for information there. Of course I told Marie about what I thought I had found thinking she might be able to shed some light on the problem, but she only laughed at what she called my imagination and scolded me for wasting my time about old blankets when she was there to claim my attention.

When Ortez came for the noontime meal Marie told him about the incident. He assured me I was mistaken, that it had been brought to Eldorado 2 years ago by the husband of the woman at whose cabin I had seen it. He said he had asked to buy it but that the man did not want to let it go, that he had brought it all the way from Spain. I knew that he is lying and once again I have the feeling that all is not as it should be. This evening Ortez came to my cabin and made me an offer of a position here with him. Of course he knows how I came to be here and what I am here for, and he said that knowing I could not return to Montreal for 8 years if I would stay here he would agree to give me in gold an amount equal to 600 pounds a year. He did not outline what my duties would be, only that I would not have to work in the mine pits. I asked for a few days to think over his proposition and he very graciously told me to take all the time I wanted. There could be nothing more alluring than the thought of being here with Marie, but I have an obligation to my father that I must fulfill, no matter what my heart wishes. I must get to the great valley below here and if this proves to be the river of the beaver I must get the report to my father as quickly as possible. If I find this is not the stream I have been looking for I will give up my search and stay here forever. Just to be able to bask in the sight of Marie's smiles would be all the pay I would ask for. So tonight I will slip away and explore the river so I will know what to do. I will not tell them I am going but when I return I will have the answer to whether I stay or not. I will take nothing with me except my weapons and an extra pair of moccasins for I want to travel light and swift. So now I will put out my light and as soon as the village is quiet I will be on my way.

Aug. 9, 1789

So much has happened since I have left Eldorado that night of July 29 and I have such short time in which to relate it, but also knowing this may be my last chance for God knows when, I will try to tell all the story as briefly as possible. I had no trouble leaving Eldorado that night undiscovered, and having already explored the river some ten miles below the village I passed through this country as fast as I could. After traveling about 4 miles, or rather 4 hours, and being then beyond my farthest exploration, I stopped and rested until daylight. At dawn I proceeded down the river traveling at a leisurely pace and finding the beaver more numerous as I went. I made short trips up two small streams that enter the valley. Both streams were heavily populated with beaver. By midday I had traveled the part of the river valley running south to a point where another large stream enters from east and there the main river turns and flows just a few degrees north of west. This stream entering here is the largest since Feather River. I followed up the course about a mile and found plenty of beaver. It was on returning from this side trip that I got my first hint that all was not well in Eldorado. I had climbed a low ridge that projects out into the valley and thought it might afford a good view of the valley both up and down the river, and also surrounding land marks. As I expected, this was an excellent place from which to see, and as I gazed up the valley I suddenly spied a group of mounted men riding swiftly toward me. They were barely a quarter mile from me, and probably 400 feet below my point of vantage. Even if I could not have recognized the men the mounts were unmistakably from the Spanish cavalry and armed to the teeth. When I last looked upon them they were working in shops and on the farms at Eldorado. There would be only one thing they were looking for and it was me. That was why I left so quietly. I knew Ortez would try to dissuade me from making the trip but I did not expect him to send a young army to bring me back, and by the looks of their armaments they really mean business. But now that I was warned they had no chance to even see me. As for trailing me, I knew that none but an Indian could find the tracks I made. The best way to beat these Spaniards was to just sit here until they returned up the river, so as soon as they were out of sight I found a spot and settled down to wait and think of the reason, but on my return to Eldorado I soon knew the answer. It was almost dark when the troopers returned. I had to peer closely to be sure they were all there and then I watched them as they proceeded up the valley until the darkness hid them from my view. Leaving that point the next morning I continued my journey, being careful to leave no trail. By mid morning I had left the valley and entered a very narrow canyon.

From Valley

Same Creek?

** I followed down this canyon for 4 days and though steep and rough as this river is there are beaver on every little flat or sandbar. They are working. Then on the afternoon of the fifth day I came to the mouth of this stream or at least to where it enters into a stream larger than itself. Here between the rivers is a high mountain. I spent the evening climbing. From the top I had a fine view of the river, canyon and the country on either side. After studying this view I decided I must go on down the river ~~For I~~ did not think it would be far to the big valley Ortez had told me about. Although the mountains on the north seemed to gain in altitude the ones on the south are getting to be mere hills and I believe another day or two would put me into the valley. While here on top of this mountain I again took my bearing. The reading is 115:25 west longitude, 43:34 north latitude. According to these readings since leaving Eldorado I had traveled in a half circle. Here also the river is holding a course for the valley, and what a ***valley it was! And here I knew I was looking at what I had come so far to see. The search was ended. What a trapper's paradise I have found. Not only beaver, but muskrat, otter and mink are everywhere I look. I have penetrated about 40 miles from the upper end of the valley which will average 5 miles wide and it is all the same. On my third day in the valley I came upon a broad and well used Indian trail, and not wishing to be discovered I turned back. At that point I took another compass reading. The reading is 116:00 west longitude, 43:40 north latitude. This reading was taken at 12 O'clock noon on August 6, 1789. By night fall I was well on my way back to Eldorado and wondering how I would be received there. I thought of giving it a wide berth as my good sense told me I should do, but my heart longed for one more sight of Marie, and although my heart has always lead me into trouble, I once more followed it's dictates. Arriving back at the forks of the river I decided to explore the new fork, keeping always in view the lofty granite peak that I knew was at the course of the Feather river. I would watch for a likely place to cut through the mountains shortening my route back to Eldorado and at the same time explore new country. I found this stream a regular canyon all the way but like the Trinity plentifully supplied with fur and game. I followed this stream for about 40 miles above the forks. Here I found the first ****valley that amounted to anything. Here also were fresh Indian signs and I also was at the very base of the peak that sheltered the headwaters of the Feather river. And that evening I stood on the *****summit between the two watersheds. Looking up the stream I just left is the barest, roughest *****mountain I have ever seen. Toward the Trinity river the mountains are lower and covered with a dark forest. I could easily follow the course of the Feather river with it's junction with the Trinity, and only the distance kept me from seeing the settlement of Eldorado itself. I had spent so much time looking over the country that when I started to leave the summit it was getting dark in the canyons and I suddenly noticed a light coming from the floor of the Feather river canyon. As I watched it grew larger until I could see that it was caused by fires. This light was no more than 3 miles from this summit and at least 12 miles from Eldorado. Ortez had told me Indians never crossed the summit and he had never hinted at another camp. I watched until quite dark but the fire continued to burn just about the same so I decided to investigate from whence it came. Two hours of traveling in the dark and I knew I was close. Although I could see no light I could smell the smoke of the fire. I could also hear an eerie noise a creaking, grinding noise that seemed to come and go on the currents of air and then as I anxiously rounded a bend a scene met my eyes and will be imprinted upon my mind forever. A scene that could have no counterpart except in the inferno of hell itself. Here in a small clear space and lighted by the fire was an arrastra*****. The sweeps to which the grinding stones were fastened were being operated by men. I stopped just outside the circle of light cast by the fire. There were 14 men working on the sweeps. One was feeding what seemed to be small pieces of broken rock into the arrastra at regular intervals. Another seemed to be directing the men on the sweeps, and still another was working at a rough like box into which the overflow from the arrastra was falling, this he rocked to and fro much the same as a mother rocking her babe. Then as I watched there was a sharp order in Spanish and the mill stopped. The three began busying themselves with the men on the sweeps and for the first time I perceived that they were bound to the sweeps with leg chains. As each man was unloosened his chain was placed in the hand of the man next to him and then one lifted his head and turned his face directly toward me.

What I saw in that face made my blood run cold for there was only red glaring holes where the eyes should have been. That man and the other thirteen that worked the sweep with him were blind! It was then that I noticed the heavy leather whip that hung about the neck of the man directing them. As soon as they were all unfastened they were led away and another gang led in to take their place. There were only eleven in this gang. These three quickly fastened to the sweeps, and leaving them returned into the darkness. There were sounds of a commotion out there in the dark and then into the firelight they came dragging another. He was not coming along docile and beaten like the others, but fighting every step of the way, and what a magnificent creature he was! He was fully as large as myself and built like Apollo and it was all the three could do to get him bound to the sweep. Then a rawhide line was attached to his groins and fastened to the sweep ahead. Then at an order the eleven leaned against the sweep and they began to turn. As the line tightened on his groins the big fellow was forced to follow and now the driver was using that ugly whip, keeping pace with the sweep and seemingly putting everything he had into the blows. For three full turns of the sweep this continued before the big fellow gave up and grasping the sweep, began to push. It was when his hand closed over the sweep that my eye caught the gleam of metal on his hand, with that came recognition and a horrible sickness came over me. I still wonder why I did not give away my position. For the only time in my life my strength left me and I had to slump to the ground. I had found Able Doss, the man who since childhood had been my bosom friend. We had played, fought and grown up together. No brothers were ever closer than us, and when the Hudsons Bay Co. had fired me because my father had taken a management job with the N W Fur Co. post Able had quit too and taken a place with my father. I had become dazzled by the glitter of the city and such women as Annette and had heard nothing about Able until the day before I left Montreal on this mission. I had inquired of my father if I could have him with me on this trip and father told me that he had been killed. But he had not been killed for there could be no doubt that this bound and blinded slave was Able. As the shock left me and my strength returned, a burning rage possessed me and for the first time in my life I wanted to kill. Sure, I had killed before, but it was only to preserve my life. Now I wanted to be the aggressor, and when the driver brought his whip down on another helpless back I shot an arrow through his throat. I drove it hard enough that it went clear through his neck and on into the darkness. He dropped without a sound and I got the next, the one at the cradle, before he had time to move. The other seemed to be stunned and stood there gaping until I drove an arrow through his heart. The blind men on the sweep seemed to sense something wrong and stopped, all but Able, who only pushed the harder trying to take the entire load alone. I was at his side in an instant, calling his name but it seemed only to excite him more, so closing my fist I stepped in close and stunned him with a blow. All this time the rest of the slaves had stood quiet, not making a sound, their sightless eyes staring into the night. I soon had Able loose and carried out of the light. Then getting him on my back I returned up the canyon and laid him down and forced open his mouth to give him some water to revive him. I made another horrible discovery. His tongue had been removed by the roots. Then after he had regained consciousness I soon realized that his mind was gone and he was a raving maniac and the only way that I could handle him was to tie him up. I sat far into the night thinking how I could get him away. My thoughts kept going back to the days before and visions of a happy laughing face, a voice so quiet and gentle and eyes that always held that look of kindness and understanding. Then suddenly I understood this, I had not rescued Able. The Spaniards had destroyed Able and left only this shell, this husk that had once housed Able. Then I did the only thing possible, and afterwards I buried him near there in a great rock slide, covering him deep with the largest stone that I could handle. Then after saying a prayer for him, I left him there and from that grave went the coldest, most ruthless killer that was ever turned upon a people. All interests of N W Fur Co., my promise to my father, all must be put aside until I erase from the earth these inhuman fiends who have visited such hellish torture on their helpless victims. Ortez shall be one of the first to feel the weight of my wrath because it could be only by his orders that this thing could happen, and no doubt he had the same thing planned for me. I will leave this document here in the rock. I have found a place near Able's grave that will keep it safe and dry until he and those other poor devils are revenged.

* This could be Lime Creek
 ** The canyon from Anderson Ranch Dam to the forks of the Boise river.
 *** Boise Valley?
 **** This must be the valley that is know known as the Boise King mine.
 ***** This summit divides the waters of Warm Spring and Elk creeks.
 ***** Steel mountain.

***** Four miles east of Rocky Ear is the site of the old Spanish town, but Jules DeFoe mentions only one arrastra. Unless they have been torn down recently by placer mining operations, there are four arrastras and two Chilian mills. How those mills were transported into this country is a mystery as some of the single pieces of mining machinery were large and very heavy. There were a few Spaniards living in a Spanish town when the first prospectors came here in 1862. They disappeared, where or how they left none of the old timers seem to know. That the ore they worked is very rich is evident by the pieces the mills and arrastras give evidence of. Though thousands of dollars and years of searching have been expended, they have failed to find the place the Spaniards procured the ore from that they milled here.

Oct. 17, 1789

My mission of revenge is finished. Only a handful of Spaniards are left. They have barricaded themselves here in the Feather river canyon. Here they can stay. The rest are destroyed completely. It was easy to kill those Spaniards. I simply went to Eldorado and hiding near the settlement, I picked them off as the chances came day and night. I even went into the village and made my kills. In no time I had them afraid of their lives. They stopped mining and turned their entire time to hunting me. I merely hid and let them hunt. Then at night I came out and hunted them. Soon I had them cowering. They would ring the entire village with fires and have the women tend them. Then in broad daylight I took their herd of horses and drove them up the river to the valley of the Indians. That the Indians got them I am certain for none of them returned. Though I kept the settlement under watch both day and night I could get no chance at Ortez. I knew he was in his house by the heavy guard he kept around it, and although I killed guards at his very door I could never get as much as a glimpse of him. Although badly scared, they never quit trying to kill me. They even tried using Marie to lure me in range of their muskets. I still like to think that Ortez forced her to be bait for me, but of course I can never know for sure. On Sept. 25th the outside company arrived. There were 50 men and 100 horses in the party. Their arrival seemed to put new courage in the Spaniards and they started hunting me once more. And though they started brave and bold it was not long until I had them cowering behind their fires. Only once did they get to see me. It was when I was trying to get their horses. I came within range of their muskets and had to leave the horses and run for it. Their bullets were all around me but only one touched me. It made a painful crease on my thigh, and one hit my pocket and smashed my compass. That night the fires burned brightly again and the next morning I could see that something of importance was happening. Ortez and his men were leaving the settlement, and just before midday with most of the horses packed and the men all armed, they moved out of the village and headed down the river. Ortez was with them, also Marie who seemed to be the only woman going with the party. For a time I was puzzled. It did not seem possible that they would desert 60 women and twice as many children, leaving them to forage for themselves in this wilderness, but by evening I was sure that they had added this to their list of crimes and I made up my mind that I would follow them to Mexico, or until I had killed Ortez. They followed the river to the point where the canyon turns west. At this place they left the river and climbed a steep slide of canyon to a small plateau. And there was no chance to get to the man I wanted. For five days I followed them through the mountains to the foothills and then to a great plain of grass and sage*, and at no time did they relax their guard. Finally I changed my tactics, during the night I worked ahead and then lay in ambush, but each time scouts on each flank of the party would flush me out, and though I escaped each time without being seen, it kept me from getting a shot at Ortez. It became evident that I would have to wait until they became careless or the country changed before I could complete my job. Then on the 6th day from Eldorado fortune smiled upon me and even my lust for blood was sated. We had crossed the plain and had come to a deep cavern at the bottom

of which flowed a mighty river**. Now my plans were to get across the river first and be waiting when Ortez made the crossing. With this in mind, I started to go up the river, looking for something to aid me in floating across. I am very poor in the water and could never hope to swim a stream of this size, but I could find nothing large enough to support me. I had covered about 6 miles in my search for crossing when I came into a cove that broke back from the river forming a circular valley through which flowed a small stream, and as far up the river as I could see were Indian lodges and the valley was covered with grazing ponies. Instantly a main plan flashed through my mind. I would attract the attention of the Indians and lead them to the Spaniards. Walking boldly towards the nearest lodge I spied a group of children playing in a small stream. I took an arrow, the only original I had left of the ones I had obtained in the camp on the Trinity, and fitting it to my bow, I shot it among the little ones. Instantly one grabbed it and they all ran yelling to the nearest lodge. Knowing my work was done, I turned and made my way back leaving an easy trail to follow. Until almost in sight of the Spaniards, I turned and climbing the canyon wall, waited to see what my plan would bring forth. I did not have long to wait. There were 12 of the Indians, and when they came to the steep rock where I had climbed up the canyon wall, they merely spread out and continued down the canyon, and in a few minutes I heard yells and then the sound of musket fire. I knew my plan had worked. Then the Indians came hurriedly back up the canyon but now there were only nine of them and two were being assisted by their comrades. I climbed to the rim of the canyon and just before dark I found a place from which I could see the Spanish Column. Evidently they had just arrived at the river when the Indians appeared for now some were engaged in unpacking the horses while others were busy erecting a breastworks of rock along the upper side of the little flat where they had stopped. As soon as the horses were unpacked, from the brush where they had been hidden they brought forth boards and poles and began assembling a raft. I could not help but admire the courage of these Spaniards for at some time those planks and poles had to be transported from no closer than Eldorado, which must be 75 or 80 miles from this place. A fear arose in me that they would get across and escape before the Indians could get there in force but as dusk settled in the canyon and their watch fires sprang up, I was sure I had reached the end of my trail of revenge. Then just at dawn, while the mists were still heavy in the canyon, the Indians struck. In two hours it was over. The Spaniards fought as only cornered rats will fight but they had no chance, and when the last charge of the Indians overwhelmed them, I closed my eyes, for there the fight changed to slaughter and when the Indians left they took with them not one prisoner. Hours later as I stood on that battle field and viewed the stripped and mutilated bodies, I had a grim feeling of satisfaction that Able Doss was thoroughly avenged. I could not find Ortez. No doubt his body was there, but so badly were the bodies hacked and beaten that none were recognizable. I found Marie. Even the Indians must have been awed by her beauty for her body was fully clothed, and near her body was the gold--the real cause of all the blood and misery. I worked all night carrying Marie and the gold to the rim, and there on a little butte that overlooks the canyon and miles of purple desert, I buried them in the same grave and built a great cairn of rock, and on a soft slab of stone I carved with my hatchet the word "Marie" and the date October 12, 1789. I hope the Indians will not molest it. The trip that has taken them six days only took me three to return, and as I cautiously neared Eldorado it became evident that it was completely deserted. The women and children had gone and the village was practically stripped. I soon found their trail leading up the Feather river. I returned to the settlement and, with a torch I soon had the entire village in flames. As I watched it burn the lust to kill seemed to leave me and the loneliness that has haunted me so much on this trip was with me again. I found the women and about 20 men barricaded here at the camp near the arrastra. I tried to pass them unobserved as I do not wish to cause them any more fear, and in the morning I will say a prayer and I will ask God who has watched over me so carefully, to help me on this journey.

* Mountain Home desert

** Snake river

Copied from a photostatic copy, very blurred, property of Bess Foster Smith, loaned to Bill Rice, then loaned to Bernice Coon, 313 Ressigue, Boise, who dictated it to Doris Leslie. 9-19-1962.

Eldorado is now called Spanish Town and it is located 2 Or 3 miles south of Rocky Bar. Turn left at Washboard Falls on a good logging road, and it is about 5 Or 6 miles to Spanish Town. There is still a bath tub shaped arrastra on the Yuba river at the junction of the river and a small stream which flows into it from the east. There is a round arrastra on the right hand side of the road near Dog creek below Pine.

Merl
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5834
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MERL SLATER
~~2905 CANAL ST.~~
BOISE, IDAHO

To Merl
From Lital
March 1965