

## DAVID THOMPSON'S JOURNEYS IN IDAHO

In September of the year 1809 just two white men were enjoying life, health and the pursuit of happiness, or, to express it in one word of six letters, "living" in the wide area of country between the Pacific Ocean and the Rocky Mountains and the 42d and 49th parallels of north latitude, now embraced within the boundaries of Washington, Oregon and Idaho; and those two men were David Thompson, an Englishman of Welch descent, and Finan McDonald, a full-blood Scotchman. This statement is based upon our present knowledge of that period. Many students of the history of the Columbia River Basin are hardly yet alive to the important contributions made to the early geographic knowledge of the northerly half of this great interior basin by David Thompson, the pathfinder for the North-West Company (fur traders) during the years 1807-1812, inclusive. More than one hundred years elapsed before his name even became known to many people in this region. In volumes VIII, IX, and X of this *Quarterly* the writer contributed a series of studies and annotations under the title "David Thompson's Journeys in the Spokane Country." He is now in a position to compliment that series with another, and, through the courtesy of Mr. J. B. Tyrrell, to present a transcript of the survey notes written by Mr. Thompson in daily journals while within the boundary lines of the present state of Idaho. Lewis and Clark, in 1805-1806 passed across Idaho by way of the Lolo trail, a road commonly used by the Indians but never yet made of practical use for white men. David Thompson's travel and observation were along the route later adopted by the engineers of one of our transcontinental railroads.

Their entries in the journal now to be presented are of some especial interest because they contain the written record of the building of the first log houses, (used as a trading post) occupied by white men and situated west of the Rocky Mountains and south of the 49th parallel; called "Kullyspell House." They also contain the record of the first commercial transaction to take place within the present state of Idaho. Lewis and Clark had bartered with the Indians for food and other things but not for gain. The date was September, 1809, and this series therefore antedates that in the previous volumes of this *Quarterly*, which began with June, 1811.

By way of introduction it is well to outline the activities of David Thompson in 1809 prior to his arrival in Idaho in September of that year. He had spent the previous winter at a trading post in British Columbia near the source of the Columbia River, and as soon as possible in the spring had crossed the ridge of the Rocky Mountains with furs purchased that winter, taking these to a trading post of the Company on the Saskatchewan to be sent to Fort William. He then gathered together there sufficient trading goods for his own use (another trader was to follow him with more goods later in the year) and returned over the Rocky Mountains to the Columbia River; from the source of the Columbia portaged over to the Kootenae River and descended that river in canoes as far as the present location of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. From there with pack animals he crossed the divide to Pend d'Oreille Lake. Mr. McDonald had been sent on ahead from the Kootenae River to tell the Indians of his arrival and to get the pack horses needed, and there is good reason to presume that the Indians had been previously informed and were waiting to meet him.

The story told by the journal entries to follow is very quickly summarized. The party came across the divide on the regular Indian trail which connected the two watersheds, then mapped by Mr. Thompson as the "Lake Indian Road," to where the line of the Northern Pacific railroad runs along the north end of Pend d'Oreille Lake and followed the route used by the railroad easterly to the mouth of the Clark Fork River, to a large Indian camp there. The railroad as first built ran close to the lake shore between Sand Point and the mouth of Pack River instead of inland as it now runs, and Hope, Idaho, was for many years a divisional point of much importance. From the Indian camp Mr. Thompson examined the lake shore and selected the place for his trading post with reference to being directly on the line of all canoe travel by Indians upon the Lake. He remained with his clerk and men until the first building, the warehouse to protect the goods and furs, was well on toward completion and then made a journey of exploration down the Pend d'Oreille River and back, going on horseback by land. Returning again to the House on October 6, he at once began to make preparations for a journey up the Clark Fork River, to select the site for a trading post among the Flathead Indians, and started off on that journey on the 11th of October. His clerk, Mr. McDonald, was left in charge at Kullyspell House.

T. C. ELLIOTT.

JOURNAL OF DAVID THOMPSON, SEPTEMBER 8, TO OCTOBER 11, 1809

September 8.

*Friday.* A fine day, but very cold night. Ice was formed, but the leaves are yet everywhere very green, except a few on the Ground, which in places are a little faded. At 7½ a. m. set off, Co. S. 20 E. ½ m. to a Brook<sup>1</sup>, which we followed, S. 40 E. ½ M. then crossed it. It is 15 Yds. wide, deep & very easy Current. Co. S. 20 E. 6 M. to a Rill of Water which we followed down S. 40 E. 1½ M. to the Lake.<sup>2</sup> I do not pretend to take any Courses farther as I hope for a better opportunity, we went abt. 1 M. then met Canoes who embarked abt. 20 pieces of Lumber & Goods. We held on S.E.D. 4 or 5 M. & Put up at 2½ p. m., the wind blowing too hard for the canoes to hold on. Killed 2 Geese, Mr. McDonald<sup>3</sup> 1 do. & Bouche 1 do. Beaulieu<sup>4</sup> 1 Crane & the Flatheads<sup>5</sup> 3 Ducks.

September 9.

*Saturday.* A fine day, the wind moderating, the Canoes got off & we followed, but the wind rising, the Canoes were obliged to Lighten & reload part of the Horses. We all at length arrived in safety, thank God, at the mouth of the River<sup>6</sup> at 2 p. m., where we camped for the night. They all smoked, say 54 Flat Heads, 23 Pointed Hearts<sup>7</sup> & 4 Kootenae, in all about 80 men. They there made us a handsome present of dried Salmon & other Fish with Berries & a Chevril &c.

September 10.

*Sunday.*<sup>8</sup> A very fine day. Early set off with 2 Flat Heads to look for a place to build a House, we at length found a place somewhat eligible but Labours under the want of good earth. I returned & we got all the Goods embarked by the Flat Heads & landed the whole by 3 p. m., when we set up our Lodge & Tents &c.

1 Pack river, Bonner County, Idaho; a name applied during the Kootenae mining activities in the sixties.

2 Our Pend Oreille Lake; a name applied by the French-Canadian hunters and trappers and traders who first met the Indians in this vicinity (See the Henry Thompson Journals by Coues, Vol. 2, pages 711-712). David Thompson called it "Kullyspell Lake," after the native name of the Indians who resided for the most part on the river below it.

3 Finan McDonald, ranking as a clerk in the North-West Company; Ross Cox describes him at length at pages 164-168 of his book entitled "Adventures on the Columbia River."

4 See Wash, Hist. Quar. vol. 8, page 185, note 10, for mention of this man, a French-Canadian who was one of the very first residents in the Spokane country.

5 These Indians were more often called the Saleesh by Mr. Thompson but here are called Flatheads. The name seems to have been used in written form first by Sergeant Ordway of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1806, but Mr. Thompson was familiar with it. The real origin is obscure.

6 Clark Fork River, as now officially designated by the National Geographic Board. David Thompson called it the Saleesh and the Flathead river, without discrimination.

7 As far as known to the writer this is the first written use of the name Pointed-heart referring to Coeur d'Alene (awl-hearted or stingy-hearted), the name applied to the Indians of the well-known lake in Idaho when the French-Canadian trappers first fell in with them. Elsewhere in his journals David Thompson calls these same Indians the "Skeetshoo's," and Lewis and Clark mentioned them as the "Skeetshumish." It is noticeable that no Kullyspell Indians were in this group.

8 The site of Kullyspell House has now been quite positively identified at what is locally known as Shepherd's Point near Memaloose Island on the north shore of the Lake. Detailed discussion on this item is deferred until later entries of the journal appear.

September 11.

*Monday.* A cloudy day with a little Rain—we made a scaffold for our Provisions & got Birch for Helves, which is very scarce—& Helled our Tools &c. &c.

September 12.

*Tuesday.* A rainy night but very fine day—began our warehouse. The Ground is so very full of small stones that the Holes for the Posts &c. &c. is a long time making. Got the Posts and needles ready—& threw down a Red Fir of 2 fm. round to make a canoe for fishing &c. 16 Canoes of Pointed Hearts passed us & camped with the other Flat Heads.

September 13.

*Wednesday.*<sup>9</sup> A fine Morning, but abt. 10 a. m. a heavy gale from S. W. which soon brought on moderate Rain, which lasted nearly all night. Bouche & the Chein Foux brought 2 Chevrui, cut & hauled wood, the Needles & arranged a Horse Collar which broke towards evening we then got wood for another. Spent much of the day in trading with the Indians who brought abt. 120 or 130 skins. Put out the Fire the Indians kindled.

September 14.

*Thursday.* A blowy day, but fine. Wind S. Ely. Sat up the Posts & the Needles & raised the Warehouse abt. 2½ ft high, made a Horse Collar, which is, however, too narrow. The wood is so very heavy that it requires the force of 4 or 5 men to lift a single piece of 10 or 11 ft. Traded abt. 20 skins & looked for wood for a Horse Collar &c.

September 15.

*Friday.* A fine day but blowy South. 3 Canoes arrived last night & put up at the Island.<sup>10</sup> They made us a present of berries which we paid for. Put the House up the intended height 7 feet. Indians traded a few things &c. & promise to bring all they have presently. Traded a Canoe for fishing &c.

September 16.

*Saturday.* A tolerable fine day. Put the Beams, Plate & Roof Tree on the Warehouse & cut wood of birch for Helves & trenails, also Cedar for Net Floats. We arranged & set 2 Nets to the Northd.

September 17.

*Sunday.* A fine Mornng, but very rainy Day. All the Indians arrived with what they have remaining to trade, abt. 1¾ packs & much berries. We spent the whole day in this Business &c. 6 Mulletts & 2 small Trout, Thank God.

<sup>9</sup> Here is the record of the beginning of commerce in Idaho. The use of the term "Horse Collar" is for a kind of yoke for hauling logs with horses.

<sup>10</sup> Memaloose Island, upon which there is a boulder the Indians consider sacred and were accustomed to honor by depositing gifts near it. Bodies of their dead were also deposited here.

September 18.

*Monday.* A rainy Night & Mornng. & till 2 p. m. when it ceased. We arranged 3 other Nets & set them & began cutting the roofing of Cedar which must be hauled abt. 400 yds. as the wood abt. us is too large & too heavy. Traded a Horse for 15 Skins value.

September 19.

*Tuesday.* A blustering Mornng, but fine day. Caught 20 Mulletts from the small Net at the Door & 4 from the other. The Nets of 4½ in. Mesh are much too large & catch nothing. In the evening set 3 Nets at the mouths of the Channels of the River, as the Indians say there are plenty there. Traded 3 Horses, which now makes 7 for the Company. Pointed Hearts to their own Country.

September 20.

*Wednesday.* A very fine day. Visited our Nets. The small one here caught 3 small Trout & 8 Mulletts. Those at the River Channels 1 good Trout, 1 small, & 2 Mulletts. Took all the latter up & set them near at hand about us. The Flat Heads broke up their camp & parted, pitched away to the Southd.

September 21.

*Thursday.*<sup>11</sup> A very fine day, caught 24 small Fish from the 2 small Nets. Working at the small Net, roofed the Magazine & brought Grass for to work in the Mud that the roofing is to be made tight with—took a walk around the Peninsula on which we are, which took me 4 hours. In the evening Jaco<sup>12</sup> & Family arrived. Set the Large Nets at the Isles.

September 22.

*Friday.* A very fine day, caught 15 small Fish in the small Nets, but nothing in the others, we find them useless in this Lake. Men Making Mud [MS. illegible] for the Roof of the Magazine, & Mousseau & me working at the Nets. Mr. McDonald hung the Door & put the windows of the Magazine in &c. Much Thunder & Lightning.

September 23.

*Saturday.* A stormy Night, fine day, Mudding the covering &c., working at Nets. 15 strange Indians arrived from the westd., they are quite poor in every thing seemingly, they each made us a small present of dried Trout or Salmon. 13 small fish from the Nets. Obsd. Os LL, 82° 4' 8½. Error 1' 30"—Latde 48° 12' 14" N. Decn 7' 44" long. 116.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The word magazine refers to the warehouse. Shepherders Point is only a small part of the wooded peninsula at the NE. end of Pen d'Oreille Lake. The Isles are Warren Island and others in the Lake opposite the town of Hope.

<sup>12</sup> Jaco Finlay (Jacques Raphael Finlay) who built Spokane House in 1810; a half-breed who with his family had been residing among the Saleesh and other Indians as a Free Trapper for at least two years prior to this time. See Vol. 8 of this quarterly for further mention of him.

<sup>13</sup> This latitude agrees almost to a second with that on the U. S. Geological Survey map of the Priest Lake Quadrangle. The longitude is some fifteen minutes too far west as shown by said map.

## September 24.

*Sunday.* A rainy Mornng. till 10 a. m. 2 Green Wood Indians arrived, they made me a present of a Bear skin, 1 Beaver do & 5 Rats with 2 parcels of dried Fish & 2 Mares, for which I shall pay them. A Lad brought 1 Beaver in Meat, Beaulieu 1 Duck, 7 Mullets.

## September 25.

*Monday.* A fine day, finished mudding the Roof & got all the Goods &c. in the Warehouse, Thank Heaven. The lower Indians went away, gave each a bit of Tob. & an Awl, showed them how to stretch the different Skins & they promise to be here by the time the Snow whitens the Ground. Rainy Afternoon & Eveng.

## September 26.

*Tuesday.* A blowy Day with cloudy cold weather in the evening Rain which lasted all Night. Men cutting, hauling & squaring wood for the upper floor of the Warehouse. Got ready to set off the Morrow to examine the Country below us.

[Here is a hiatus in the transcript to include the days of Mr. Thompson's absence on his exploration of the Pend d'Oreille River.]

## October 6

*Friday.* A cloudy misty Mornng. At 7 a. m. set off. Co.  $\frac{1}{2}$  m., then open out on the lake.<sup>14</sup> Co. to a large Point, the one this side of the Rivulet is abt. E. 5 m., but then to the other Point S. 70 E. 3 m., then to the House Point about S. 40 E. 6 m., having rounded the Bay to the gravel point, we baited at 10.35 a. m., from hence the Co. to the Point we left is abt. West  $1\frac{1}{2}$  m. Obsd. Merid. Altde. of O LL,  $72^{\circ} 32\frac{1}{2}$  Good. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  p. m. set off & at 3 p. m. arrived safe, thank God we found all well. Mr. McDonald had traded abt. 2 packs of good Furrs in my absence, mostly from the Pointed Hearts, of whom there are abt. 44 men, several women & children here, they have abt. 110 horses, & have traded 3 of them with us. Rainy Evening. Latde  $48^{\circ} 16' 55''$  N.<sup>15</sup>

## October 7.

*Saturday.* A rainy night & cold blustering Mornng. Wind S. W. The men had cut & hauled all the wood for the House<sup>16</sup> & this Mornng. began to dig the Holes for the Posts &c. which will be all up to-day I hope. Very rainy cold blowy Afternoon. Set up all the Posts &c. & Needles.

## October 8.

*Sunday.* A cloudy blowy Day. Snowed last night & the Hills are laden with it almost down to the level of the Plains & Lake. Early most of the Pointed Hearts went away, they had all along wished

<sup>14</sup> Sand Point, Idaho, the two "points" mentioned being on the north shore of the lake between Sand Point and Pack river.

<sup>15</sup> Observation taken at noon when near the mouth of Pack river and almost absolutely correct according to U. S. Geological Survey maps.

<sup>16</sup> The dwelling house.

to exhibit a Dance &c., but the Weather was very unfavorable. By noon all the Pointed Hearts were gone.—but very unfavorable weather all day. 23 Fish.

October 9.

*Monday.* Almost continual smart Rain all night & all day, with difficulty got the House 4 Logs high & dried & reset the Nets, 2 do., preparing for my Journey notwithstanding the very bad weather.

October 10.

*Tuesday.* A rainy night & morning till 10½ a. m., when it ceased to light drizzling Rain. Looking after the horses for the Voyages, but could not find them till 2½ p. m. & one of the best still missing. However, got a Guide engaged & brought here, but am on acct. of the Horses obliged to defer my Voyage till the Morrow.

October 11.

*Wednesday.*<sup>17</sup> A fine night & fine day. Early looked for the strayed Horse but could not find him. Sent for another, which being brought we got ready & at 10½ a. m. set off. Came to the Indian Tents. Co. by the Compass S. 81 E. 2 m. Sent the young man across for his Father, who is to be our Guide. Our Co. will be S. 66 E. at ½ p. m. set off & by 2 p. m. we were on the top of the River Hills, having crossed 2 Brooks, from hence we see the House Point Clearly.<sup>18</sup> Set the Compass & find the straight Co. to be S. 62 W. abt. 6 m. Our Co. up the River S. 70 E. 5 m. I think. In the S. 66 E. 5 m. course 3 m. gone a Brook of 10 yds across, 4½ m. gone<sup>19</sup> a Brook of 6 yds across Crows calling we sent the young man to see what it was, who returned at 4½ p. m. with a good Cord of fat Chevrul, which he took from the Wolves. At 4¾ p. m. put up on the top of the Hills with snow for water, as the Grass for the Horses is distant. The Mountains are about 2 to 3 m. distant & loaded with snow. We see from the camp with a Birds Eye View the Road of the Morrow S. 80 E. 5 m. thro' seemingly thick woods. The road we have come to-day is mostly thro' very fine woods, especially Cedar, many of 4 to 5 fm. round & tall in proportion, but the latter part over high rocky Hills, in many places dangerous for loaded Horses, on the whole this part may be Co. S. 70 E. 5 m. The river appears deep, with a steady Current.

<sup>17</sup> Mr. Thompson now starts off to travel over a route that had not been traversed by white men, as far as we know. He has an appointment to meet the trader who was coming with the rest of the trading goods and he also wishes to establish a trading post among the Flatheads.

<sup>18</sup> Looking back from rocky ridge at foot of Antelope Mountain just east of railroad station of Clark Fork, Idaho. The camp for the night was on the hills at Cabinet rapids six miles further southeast. The Indian trail kept to the north of the river instead of where the railroad now runs.

<sup>19</sup> The word "gone" is used by Mr. Thompson to indicate that when they had traveled three miles they crossed a brook and when 4½ miles they heard the noise of the crows and sent an Indian to investigate. This is his way of expressing himself in all his journals.