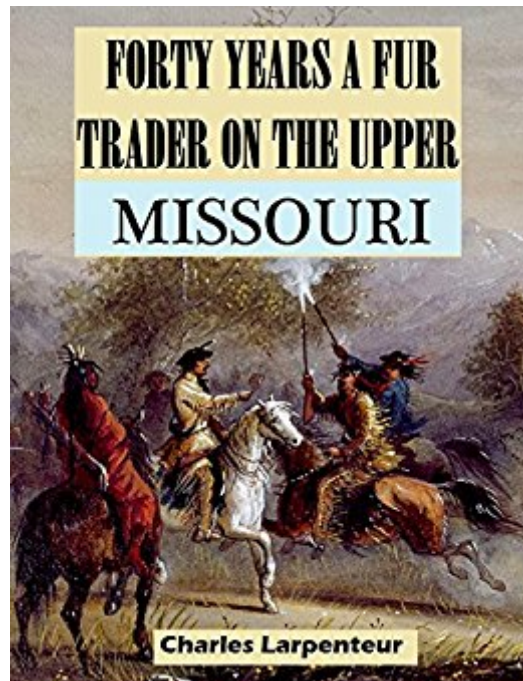




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Forty Years A Fur Trader On The Upper Missouri (1898)



Synopsis

The son of French immigrants who settled in Maryland, Charles Larpenteur was so eager to see the real American West that he talked himself into a job with the Rocky Mountain Fur Company in 1833. When William Sublette and Robert Campbell sold out to the American Fur Company a year later they recommended the steady and sober young Larpenteur to Kenneth McKenzie, who hired him as a clerk. For forty years, as a company man and as an independent agent, the Frenchman would ply the fur trade on the upper Missouri River. Based on Larpenteur's daily journals, this memoir is unparalleled in describing the business side and social milieu of the fur trade conducted from wintering houses and subposts in the Indian country. As Paul L. Hedren notes in his introduction, Larpenteur moved comfortably among Indians and all levels of the trade's hierarchy. But he lived during a time of transition and decline in the business, and his vivid recital of his personal affairs often seems to bear out his feeling that he was born for misfortune. • His lasting legacy is this book. This pre-1923 publication has been converted from its original format for the Kindle and may contain an occasional defect from the original publication or from the conversion.

Book Information

File Size: 725 KB

Print Length: 388 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publication Date: September 6, 2014

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00NDLEBLC

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #112,555 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #7 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > United States > Regions > Central #30 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > United States > Regions > West > Mountain #44 in Books > Travel > United States > Central

Customer Reviews

I found this account insightful not only for what the author describes, but for what he does not. He lived a rough life, but he also led quite a free adventurous existence. The earlier journey of Lewis and Clark was admirable for its documentation and survey of lands in the West, but when it comes to difficulties, these traders continuously repeated journeys that were probably just as difficult as that of Lewis and Clark. On one such journey, the author mentions he had walked for 900 miles. It was nothing for these traders to build another boat if they found themselves without. Since fur traders and the companies who employed them were interested more in trade with indigenous peoples than with taking land and destroying resources, the relationship the author describes with American Indians is one of both mutual trust and mistrust. Larpenteur is a simple man, who married an indigenous woman, had children with her, and learned some of the native culture. However he was also often away from his family for his trading. He describes various tragedies to either himself, his family, or to his fellow traders simply as facts and considers it unseemly and indulgent to delve into personal matters or to convey much emotion on any of these matters. He set out to write a factual account of his life, and that's what he did. Sometimes it is difficult to keep straight all the names of people in the fur trade, but the setting of those times is still well conveyed. Of course this account is not a complete history of the times, but it offers interesting perspectives. In the last chapter, he provides an insightful opinion of how the government managed Indian Affairs, sending one incompetent agent after another from Washington, and posting forts in the most desirable lands, thereby forcing Indians to live elsewhere. The government interacted so little with indigenous peoples as to have no insight into the culture. In the second to last chapter the author offers his own observations of Indian culture, which he observed had simpler rules than his own but seemed to work pretty well. The account describes an adventurous, dangerous life, in which men lived by their wits. Women pretty much lived a separate life from these traders, and their exclusion from most of his recollections is another aspect of the historical perspective. I read this account simply for what it is, one man's recollection of a harsh but productive life in a specific historical time, and I was fascinated.

Very informative and descriptive book. Wish there was a map included showing the locations of the forts since the names of some were changed at various times. The author knew his geography and gave insight into the life during those years. Very interesting narratives of Indian fights, etc.

After reading the experiences of Commanders in the far Western Plains and biographies of Red

Cloud, Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse it was interesting to see the experiences of the gentlemen who rode the line between them, the traders. I first read Jim Bridger and then Charles Larpenteur. The thing that most struck me was that they were literate, actually well educated for the period. They not only understood the Indians but respected them, in the Indian way. Unfortunately, the white men who were sent to "tame" or kill the Indians never took the advice of these men. This book is insightful as well as entertaining and is an easy read. I hope you will enjoy it.

enjoyed the book.....recommended

Loved it! very hard to put down once you started reading. ã ã ã^ã

One of my favorites from this genre. I'm re-reading it for the 3rd time in 40 years.

Intriguing, insightful, educational. Customs, values and lifestyles of American Indians and early trade practices narrated by one who was not only there, but understood them and recorded a credible narrative that kept me so intrigued I stayed up way too late many nights to read of the author's latest experiences of an era soon to be lost

Larpenteur provides an inclusive account of his many years' experience as a trader on the upper Missouri river in the 1830s through the 1860s. This book is a must-read primary source for anyone interested in the history and ethnography of the American West.

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