

By the 1930s, however, the American Fur Company, under the control of John Jacob Astor, and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, under the control of the Jim Bridger and his associates, were locked in a struggle for control of the fur trade in the Rockies. The Astor group won this competition, but not before the area had been over-trapped and the fur trade had declined to such a level, that it eventually disappeared altogether.

The large expeditions were gone by the 1840s. They were replaced by individual traders and guides. Most of these men had formerly been fur trappers, but when the high profits of the fur trading era were gone, they turned their talents to other means of making a living. They usually established themselves in one spot and traded with the Indians or immigrants. The guides, of course, were more mobile. They hired themselves out to eastern farmers who were heading for Oregon or California and earned livelihoods by helping these inexperienced western travelers get to their destinations.

Osborne Russell and Miles Goodyear were two of the trapper-turned-trader types. Russell came to the Rockies with Nathaniel Wyeth in 1834.<sup>18</sup> He had some education and was one of the few trappers that kept a journal of his experiences. During the spring of 1841 he reported that he was in Utah Valley trading with Ute chief Wanta-a-sheep. After a short but pleasant stay, he left the valley to return to Fort Hall.

Miles Goodyear spent some time in Utah Valley prior to the coming of the Mormon settlers.<sup>19</sup> Goodyear was just a young boy when he met the Marcus Whitman wagon train in 1836 and worked his way west with it. He left the train at Fort Hall to stay in the Rockies and engage in the fur trade. Goodyear did not have much of a stake so he worked as a camp tender and roust-about for a few years. When he had the stake and experience necessary, he became a trapper.

Goodyear traveled throughout much of the West. He visited the Sevier, Great Salt Lake, and Utah Valley area many times, in fact, he even married an Indian girl named Pamona from the Payson area. She was the daughter of the Ute chief, Peteetneet.

This young, wily man had the distinction of being one of Utah's first white settlers. In the summer of 1846 he built a small fort on the banks of the Weber River and was firmly established before the coming of the Mormon advance company led by Brigham Young.<sup>20</sup> His fort, called Buenaventura by Goodyear and later renamed Browns Fort by the Mormons, was sold to Captain James Brown November 24, 1847, for \$1,950. After the sale Goodyear left for California to advance his fortune. His wife stayed in Utah, but after Goodyear passed away in 1849, his children were taken to California

by his brother Henry.

Another man, Jim Bridger, had been in Utah Valley many times prior to the coming of the Mormon settlers. Bridger came west with the first Ashley-Henry fur expedition and stayed in the mountains for many years before retiring near Kansas City, Missouri. He traveled extensively throughout the west just as Goodyear and Russell had done, and like them, he turned to trading after the beaver trapping profits dwindled. He established Fort Bridger on Blacks Forks of the Green River in the summer of 1843. This was the fort established to take advantage of trade with the western bound emigrants as well as the Indians.<sup>21</sup>

Jim Bridger knew a great deal about the Rocky Mountain West, and he was talkative enough about what he knew to allow people to get information from him. This made him the perfect person to talk to when the Mormon advance company met him on his way to Fort Laramie on June 28, 1847. The Mormons had been studying Fremont's report and maps describing the Great Basin area. When they met Bridger they had a long talk about what was in the region around the Great Salt Lake.<sup>22</sup>

Bridger, who later had his problems with the Mormons, was helpful. He told the Mormon leaders about the Indians in the Great Basin and described the types of crops that could be grown. He also called the Utes that lived around Utah Lake "bad Indians," but he gave a very favorable report of Utah Valley. He described it as the best country in the Salt Lake area, with plenty of timber, grass, fish, berries, flax, good soils, and rainfall.<sup>23</sup> The famous mountain man also informed the Mormon leader of Miles Goodyear's fort located on the Weber River. This report seems to have concerned the elders somewhat, but when the advance scouts ran into Goodyear a few days later, Orson Pratt and the others were not surprised.

The trappers and other mountain men did a lot of exploring in pursuit of their vocation, but only a few of them tried to outline routes for people or make maps for settlers to follow. Government explorers and guides provided some reports but even these left many questions in the minds of the readers. Those who anticipated western travel tried to get hold of information in as many ways as they could.

A good example of this thirst for information was the Mormon Pioneer Company. The leaders had studied the guide by Lansford W. Hastings and John C. Fremont's reports. And they still stopped and talked to Moses Harris, Jim Bridger, and Miles Goodyear before making their drive into the valley of the Great Salt Lake.<sup>25</sup> The Mormons had placed a lot of faith in the reports of Fremont and his evaluation of the Great Basin area because this is the area that Bridger and the others were quizzed about the