

I. Ezekiel Williams.

the Arkansas about four hundred miles, trapping for beaver the most of the way. I could proceed no further because of low water. About the first of June [1813] the water raised and I started down until the last (nearly) of said month. I was taken by the Kansas; they soon distributed my little property among themselves and bound me fast. Luckily I had but little except the skins I had caught descending the Arkansas. I had hid all my furs before that I left the Arrapahows, and expected to see it again. The Kansas kept me with them. A party of the Osages were in that country and heard the Kansas had a white man prisoner, and sent Messrs. Daniel Larisson and Joseph Larives, with ten Osages, to demand me from the Kansas. They would not give me up to the Osages, but would keep me until they returned to their town and send me home. After forty days we set off. I gave my gun, etc., to a mulatto man to be my friend and speak for me. The Indians returned me part of my furs; the balance was since demanded by the Governor <sup>[Clark, through Indian Agent B. C. Sidney]</sup> and surrendered. Four Indians and the mulatto brought me in. On the first day of September [1813] I arrived at Boons Lick. I was shortly afterwards in St. Louis, where I seen Manuel Lisa, who told me all the above difficulties they had with the Indians at the post where he was; that my comrades had not got in, but were certainly killed if they went that road of which they talked when we parted. In the month of May following [i.e., of 1814] I started from Boons Lick to go and bring in my fur from the Arrapahows, in company with Morris May, Braxton Cooper, and 18 Frenchmen called Phillebers [Philibert's] Company. When we arrived at the Arrapahows I called a council of the chiefs in the presence of all the aforesaid men, two of whom, Durocher and La France, served as interpreters, and asked 'what has become of Champlain and Porteau whom I left in this village last year?' The chief said they had stayed with them three days after my departure, then went up the river hunting, saying they intended to wait to see if some white man would come there; that they came back again to the village after being gone some time and determined to wait no longer, but tried to go back to the fort on the Missouri. That they bought two other horses, loaded all their furs, etc., having then eleven horses, and started toward the Missouri; that they were seen on the road by two parties of their nation, and that the Crow Indians told them they seen two white men dead in their camp, which they believed were my companions. The Arapahows, in the same council, confessed that it was their nation that killed our three men in the cove before we took protection among them. They also told us that three ~~new~~ white men had come from the south, wintered with them,



and went back the same way with furs loaded on three mules and a jack; that they had left their traps. I insisted these were my companions. They produced the traps, but they were not the traps of our company. I despaired now of ever finding them; hired Michael La Clair, one of Philleberts company, and with my two companions, Cooper and May, collected part of my fur and started down the Arkansas. We travelled down it about five hundred miles and could proceed no further on account of low water. There we hid the fur and came home on foot, intending to return in the spring following and get it. Some time in the winter [of 1814-15] I had information that my man La Clair had told of my fur and that a company were about to start to steal it, to be piloted by said La Clair. In consequence of that information, I got two men to go with me; they were Joseph and William Cooper.

*Prescott  
Chasemore  
OKLA.*

~~When I arrived at the little Osage village I was told that La Clair~~  
~~and the aforesaid company were then at the Cheniers, on their way.~~  
I pushed with all force and got there first, and waited the coming of the plunderers; but they did not appear. When the water raised in the Spring, we set off, with my fur, down the Arkansas; and when I arrived at the settlement I met Messrs. John and James Lemon's, who told me they were at the Cheniers when the party returned which went to steal the fur, and were told by said party that they (said party) were employed by certain men in St. Louis, and <sup>that</sup> their orders were to kill us if we got there first, and take the fur and bring it in. That they were to have as many Indians to assist them as necessary; that they had hired a large party, but had not told them the particulars of their business until they had got within a few miles of the fur. When the Indians were informed of it, they abruptly left them and went back home. Messrs. Lemon's asked the party the reason why they were directed to kill us; they told them that the fur belonged to a company in St. Louis; that I had stole it, and if they killed us they would not be hurt for it. The above is a true and succinct statement of facts the most important and material parts of which I am still able to prove by good men as any of our country. I refer my fellow citizens to all men of my acquaintance in Kentucky, where I was raised, for my character and conduct from the cradle until I came to this country. I beg leave to refer them to Mr. Reuben Lewis, brother of the late Governor Lewis, and to Andrew Henry of the Mines, and to all others who recollect the facts relative to the circumstances of the company that went with me towards the south from the fort on the Missouri. I refer them to the depositions of Braxton Cooper and to Morris May and Phillebert's company relative to the facts stated in council by the Arapahow



chief respecting Champlain and Porteau, and the other three men which were killed. I refer them to Mr. John and James Lemon's respecting the facts stated, in which their names are mentioned; and finally I refer it to the impartial, unbiased opinion of all good men if I was the murderer of my bosom friend Champlain?

"I profess myself an honest man and good citizen, and I believe have been so reputed and taken, until the aforesaid libellous and malicious charges have been propagated against me. I demand justice of my countrymen. I call upon the base liar who published the aforesaid ~~charges~~ slander, to put his name out publicly. Let him no longer stab me from behind the scene.

"Ezekiel Williams.

"Boonslick, 7th August, 1816.

"Missouri Gazette, September 14, 1816."

*The above letter is here given as published in Vol. IV of Missouri Historical Society Collections, but with certain alterations.*  
A contemporary and absolute record of the time of Ezekiel Williams, getting back ~~the property restored~~ at Arrow Rock, ~~by the Kansas Indians,~~ *has also* been uncovered by the Missouri Historical Society; in Volume IV of whose "Collections," is the following: *and manner*

"Mr. George C. Sibley, a trustworthy gentleman and United States Indian Agent,....in charge of Fort Osage on the Missouri, in what is now Jackson County, appends to his report to Governor Clark upon the numbers and condition of the Indian tribes, a note which is as follows:

"Ezekiel Williams, hunter of the Missouri Fur Company, was on his way from the Rocky Mountains with a considerable quantity of fine fur.

"He struck the Arkansas River below the mountains and descended that river within about 150 miles of the Verdigrise when a band of the Kansas found him on the 23d of June last, who robbed him of all he had with him, and very much abused him, as he says, and kept him prisoner to about the 15 Augt., when they released him and restored the greater part of his property. The balance (except a few articles they deny having taken) I have this day caused the Kansas to refund and pay for \* \* \* \* \*

"Arrow Rock on the Missouri, November 30th, 1813."

"Coyner says that Mr. Sibley came up the Missouri from St. Louis as far as Cooper's Fort, but was not able to get to Fort Osage on account of the ice and the severity of the winter. The Indians were therefore compelled to come down the river for their annuities to a place called Arrow Rock, and that Captain Williams was there to meet them.

"It may be taken as settled, therefore, that the date of Williams' return from his most adventurous journey was in the fall of 1813."

This date of his return, taken in connection with his fully accounted



I. Ezekiel Williams

two years' adventure in Colorado and eastward, and with the two years which he says he spent in hunting upon the upper Missouri before going south to the Platte and Arkansas rivers, takes the time of his coming to Colorado, back to 1811, and that of his ascending the Missouri River with the <sup>St. Louis</sup> Missouri Fur Company, back to 1809; and it shows that in writing out his story, his memory slipped a cog when he wrote "1812" and "1810." 6

Since so little dependance can be placed in "The Lost Trappers" by David Coyner I shall append it to this account for comparison with Williams' own letter.

It is known that Coyner staid some time in the Boone's Lick neighborhood and had doubtless interviewed persons more or less conversant with Williams' Adventures. It even seems probable that he found ~~there~~ a portion left there by Williams himself and obtained from it his story of the 1813 descent of the Arkansas. In assembling the details of Williams' adventures Coyner puts in some true, half true and others entirely fictitious. He builds his tale from what he had heard and still more from what he imagined must have been the experiences of the "lost trappers". He works the greatest confusion with dates and the order and relation of events. Some parts of his story seem to be made out of the whole cloth or borrowed from irrelevant events. Williams was a prisoner among the Kansas from about the 23rd of June to the 15th of August - i.e. seven or eight weeks. He reached Ft. Cooper on the 1st of September - not as Coyner says, "at the beginning of winter", although the later time (November 30) was that of the restoration of his furs at Arrow Rock.

It is a curious fact that Coyner gives no account, whatever of the return of Captain Williams to the Rocky Mountains, in 1814 with his two engages, Morris May and Braxton Cooper, accompanying Philibert's eighteen trappers, to raise his "caches" on Fountain Creek and bring down the furs left there in 1813; but it is a fact well nigh incredible that he gives what purports to be and what he evidently conceived to be - an account of such return - but which is really a narrative of a journey of 1815 made by Captain Williams and William and Joseph Cooper to certain other caches located on the Arkansas River several hundred miles below the mountains and thence down that river to the white settlements of the Arkansas. Those other caches were where the said furs had been buried the second time, when, in bringing them down from the caches at the mountains in 1814, progress was halted somewhere near the Kansas-Oklahoma line, by a season of water too low for canoe navigation on that part of the Arkansas. "Mutilated" indeed must have been the "old musty, mutilated journal" of Capt. Williams, which Coyner says he consulted. Fortunately Captain Williams has given us, in his letter to the Missouri Gazette an authentic account of his 1814 journey with May, Braxton Cooper and the Philibert Company, to bring in his furs from his caches in the Arapahoe country on Fountain Creek (which Coyner with characteristic inaccuracy calls "an upper tributary of the Great Arkansas and refers to it in another instance, as interlocking with the Platte). As we have seen Williams' letter contains a description of his interview with the Arapahoe chief concerning the fate of Champlain and Porteau; and of his descent of the Arkansas with May Cooper and one Michel La Clair of Philibert's company; and finally to the event which led to his hurried trip of 1815 with the two Cooper boys to his lower Caches on the Arkansas and voyage thence down that river to the white settlements in the present Pulaski County Arkansas.



The subjoined notice of an "Early Suit" is from the National Historical Co.'s "History of Howard and Cooper Counties Missouri":

"Among the early suits we find the following, which we copy because of the peculiar and ancient contract upon which the suit the suit was instituted:-

"Wesley G. Martin

vs

In debt.

"Ezekiel Williams, Braxton Cooper and Morris May

"The defendant, by M. McGirk, their attorney, comes into court and defends the wrong and injury, and craves oyer of the said writing obligatory mentioned in the said plaintiff's declaration, which was read to them in the following words. to wit:

July 24th, 1814.

"On our arrival at the post of the Arkansas, we, or either of us, promise to pay or cause to be paid unto Fraceway Licklier or his assigns, the just and full sum of three hundred dollars, it being for his service to the above place, as witness our hands and seals.

Ezekiel Williams (seal)  
Braxton Cooper (seal)  
Morris May (seal)

From this it would seem that Williams and party had intended in 1814 to descend the Arkansas to its mouth taking with them the Rocky Mountain Furs, to sell there or to ship to New Orleans: but that after shallow water had halted them in their voyage, Williams, Cooper and May came across Licklier, and made with him a contract for conveyance to Post of the Arkansas. But it appears that this transportation was not rendered, or at least completed in 1814; for in his letter of August 7, 1816, to the Missouri Gazette, Williams affirms, "There we hid the fur and came home on foot;" necessitating a new expedition in 1815 to get the fur to its destination.

Vide; Ezekiel Williams letter. Page 10.

The "good farm" on which is stated by the Renick letter quoted herein, Captain Williams was living very comfortably in 1819 or 1820, when he entertained Mr. Renick, was on the left bank of the Missouri in the old Boone's Lick quarter of the present Howard Co., Mo. and near old Fort Cooper. It was on the Boone's Lick - Arrow Rock road and like that fort nearly opposite Arrow Rock itself. Later Williams removed to La Mine Township, Cooper Co. Mo. and still later to Texas. Texas was the state in which he was heard of as still living in 1843. He was certainly living there at Gonzales in the spring of 1835 as we learn from the glimpse we get of him in the following story from Brown's "Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas"; ?

"In the autumn of 1833, John Castleman, a bold and sagacious backwoodsman from the borders of Missouri, with his wife and four children and his wife's mother, settled fifteen miles west of Gonzales, on the San Antonio road and on Sandy Creek. He was a bold hunter, much in the forest, and.....was ever watchful for indications of Indians, and thus served as a vidette to the people of Gonzales and persons traveling on that exposed road. Many were the persons who slumbered under his roof rather than camp out at that noted watering place.

"In the spring of 1835, a party of thirteen French and Mexican traders, with pack mules and dry goods from Natchitoches, Louisiana, en route to Mexico, stopped under some trees a hundred yards in front of the cabin. It was in the forenoon, and before they had unpacked, Castleman advised them that he had that morning discovered 'Indian signs' near by and urged them to camp in his yard and use his house as a fort if necessary. They laughed at him. He shrugged his shoulders and assured them they were in danger, but they still laughed. He walked back to his cabin, but before he entered, about a hundred mounted savages dashed among them, yelling and cutting out every animal of the party. These were guarded by a few in full view of the camp, while the main body continued the fight. The traders improvised breastworks of their saddles, packs and bales of goods and fought with desperation. The engagement lasted four hours, the Indians charging in a circle, firing and falling back. Finally, as none of the number fell, the besieged being armed only with Mexican escopetas (smooth-bored cavalry guns) they maneuvered till all the traders fired at the same time; then rushed upon and killed all who had not previously fallen.



I. Ezekiel Williams.

Castleman could, many times, have killed an Indian with his trusty rifle from his cabin window, but was restrained by his wife, who regarded the destruction of the strangers as certain and contended that if her husband took part, vengeance would be wreaked upon the family—a hundred savages against one man. He desisted, but, as his wife said, "frothed at the mouth" to be thus compelled to non-action on such an occasion. Had he possessed a modern Winchester, he could have repelled the whole array, saving both the traders and their goods.

"The exultant barbarians, after scalping their victims, packed all their booty on the captured mules and moved off up the country. When night came, Castleman hastened to Gonzales with the tidings, and was home again before dawn.

"In a few hours a band of volunteers, under Dr. James H. C. Miller, were on the trail and followed it across the Guadalupe and up the San Marcos, and finally into a cedar brake in a valley surrounded by high hills, presumably on the Rio Blanco. This was on the second or third day after the massacre. Finding they were very near the enemy, Miller halted, placing his men in ambush on the edge of a small opening or glade. He sent forward Matthew Caldwell, Daniel McCoy and Ezekiel Williams to reconnoitre. Following the newly made path of the Indians through the brake, in about three hundred yards, they suddenly came upon them dismounted and eating. They speedily retired, but were discovered and, being only three in number, the whole crowd of Indians furiously pursued them with such yells as, resounding from bluff to bluff, caused some of the men in ambush to flee from the apparent wrath to come; but of the whole number of twenty-nine or thirty, sixteen maintained their position and their senses. Daniel McCoy, the hindmost of the three scouts in single file, wore a long tail coat. This was seized and tightly held by an Indian, but "Old Dan," as he was called, threw his arms backward and slipped from the garment without stopping, exclaiming, "Take it, d—n you!" Caldwell sprang first into the glade, wheeled, fired and killed the first Indian to enter. Others, unable to see through the brush till exposed to view, rushed into the trap till nine warriors lay in a heap. Realizing this fact, after such unexpected fatality, the pursuers raised that dismal howl which means death and defeat, and fell back to their camp. The panic among some of our men prevented pursuit. It is a fact that among those thus seized with the 'buck ague,' were men then wholly inexperienced, who subsequently became distinguished for coolness and gallantry."

The selection of Caldwell, McCoy and Williams as scouts, ~~was~~ was of course owing to their experience and courage as frontiersmen;