

CHAPTER ~~XX~~ XX.

THE OLD DIVIDE TRAIL.,

THROUGH JIMMY CAMP AND THE BLACK SQUIRREL PINERIES.

From the Arkansas river, over the divide by way of Mountain and Jimmy Camp creeks, across ~~heads of~~ heads of Black Squirrel and ~~Kiowa~~ Kiowa, and thence down Cherry creek to the South Fork of the Platte, led formerly a noted trail. It was the main thoroughfare between the Arkansas river and the South Platte, and was by no means for the first time a well travelled road when, in June of 1858, ~~the~~ ^{red men and} the caravan of the combined Cherokee and Georgia parties, under Hicks and Russell, passed over it as the vanguard of the great immigration to what was then known as "the Pike's Peak country", of which the junction of Cherry creek with the South Platte was destined to become the center. The span of its usefulness ^{to white men} was from time immemorial till the ranch fences blocked it.

~~This~~ This old trail -- especially in the sixties and later -- was often called "the Jimmy Camp Trail", or "Jimmy Camp Road". It formed one ~~of the~~ ^{of the} series of roads collectively known as "the Cherokee Trail", ~~and~~ leading from the Cherokee country to California, and was therefore, in the fifties especially, sometimes rather misleadingly referred to as "the Cherokee Trail".

In his Annual Report of the United States Geological Survey of the Territories for 1888, referring to the Cherokee Trail proper, in ^{southern} Wyoming, Dr. F. V. Hayden says, "The old Cherokee trail derives its name from the fact that a party of these Indians cut their way through the thick pines, about thirty years ago, with a train of about 300 wagons." Doctor Hayden ^{did not claim exactness} ~~was, however, in error~~ as to the time; ~~the year was in fact 1850.~~ the year was in fact 1850.

s greater"; the discrepancy in estimates

*114 miles according to Marcy, and 119.5 miles according to Loring, being found in that part of the road north of Jimmy Camp Spring, and especially in that north of Black Foot Camp.

The camping places on this trail, as named in these itineraries, are: Fort el Pueblo; Fountain creek, where ^{from the southeast} reached by the "Chico cut-off", ^{linearly opposite the} present railway station of *Buttes*, something over 20 miles north of Pueblo; Fountain creek, where the Old Divide Trail left it, near the present town of Fountain; Jimmy's Spring, or Jimmy's Camp, which the several authorities agree in making 45 miles by trail from Fort el Pueblo; Black Squirrel creek, which the trail crossed a short distance west of present Eatonville, and which was, by the trail,

This and following place-names and distances ^(so called in the forties) are as given by Colonel Loring. Black Squirrel ^{is} ~~is~~ Loring.

Notes of Jimmy Camp Trail

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13 miles* north of Jimmy Camp; Point of Rocks*, known more commonly, since May, 1858, as "Pugin's Grave", on the dividing ridge, at the head of Kiowa creek, 6 or 7 miles* north of Black Squirrel; Black Foot* (called "Blackfoot camp" by Sage), about 12 miles* north ^{Point of} of Rocks, and "still on the dividing ridge", this camp having "water" (now called Running creek, and then called Blackfoot creek?) about three-quarters of a mile* west of the road; points on Cherry creek; junction of Cherry creek with the South Platte. In 1842, apparently near the Colorado Southern railway station, present ~~name~~ of Parker, Sage found a camp where were living four families: those of three squaw-men and a Blackfoot Indian. He evidently erred in making the distance of this squawmen's camp 15 miles from Black Foot and 15 from the mouth of Cherry creek, since these two distances would be inconsistent with each other, the measured distance between Black Foot and the mouth of Cherry creek being, according to Loring, 42.8 miles. But as Sage seems to have considered it about midway between those two points, we place it near Parker.

Neither travel nor trail, of course, stopped at the mouth of Cherry creek ~~as a terminus~~, prior to 1858; but the route between that point and Fort el Pueblo was distinctively ~~known~~ "the Divide Trail". The main road went on through present Denver and down the South Fork of Platte river, past the old trading posts, Fort Vasquez of the later thirties and Forts George, Lancaster, and Lock and Randolph of the early forties, whose ^{commerce} ~~business~~ in their times it accommodated, and thence down the main Platte to the Missouri, and by another branch, to Fort Laramie on the North fork of the Platte.

The old trail that continued ^{that with it} the Divide trail northward and, ^{in the days of the fur trade,} ~~constituted~~ ^{constituted} the "artery of commerce" between ~~Manitou and Bent's Fort~~ Bent's Fort, Fort El Pueblo, Taos, and other ~~points~~ ^{points} ~~at~~ the south, and the ~~motherly~~ ^{at the north,} posts of the Platte, became later a military and general road between the United States army posts in those respective regions; and Smiley, in his ~~his~~ excellent, ~~and laboriously wrought~~ History of Denver, tells us that it "passed through the site of 'Denver City' along the general line of Fifteenth street, crossing Cherry creek at the intersection of Blake street, and the Platte river at the foot of Eleventh (old Ferry) street".

There was also a trail, ~~practically continuous~~ ^{a northwesterly connection} of the Divide Trail, that branched off to the left at the yet-to-be Denver, crossing to the west side of the river below Cherry creek, and keeping nearer the mountains (a few miles west of ^{present} Loveland, and ~~by~~ ^{present} La Porte and Virginia Dale), passed around the Medicine Bow range and thence northwestward to the Oregon trail, ~~and~~ ^{and by another branch} westward to Fort Bridger; but the history of these trails, so far at least as

*Carson
with
squad*

X Supply of the Caravan

well known, dates from subsequent to the discovery of gold in California. Such a trail, in 1850, was travelled by a party of Cherokees, as part of their route (the so-called Cherokee Trail) from the Cherokee Nation to California; other parts of the Cherokee Trail being formed ^{parts of} by the much older Santa Fe Trail and by the ~~and~~ Bent's Fort branch of the latter and ^{by} the ~~and~~ Old Divide Trail, etc.

In closing April and early May of 1858, during the "Mormon War", Captain Randolph B. Marcy had passed over ^{Old Divide Trail} ~~the~~ with a force of soldiers and "about a hundred of the best trailers, hunters and Indian fighters in New Mexico", escorting a large relief train of provisions and supplies for the army of Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston in Utah.

Prior to that, and back to 1849, it had been used every year by some portion of the great influx to "golden California", including Norton's party of 1853, the Cherokee party of 1850, and many others; and still earlier by some of the immigration to Oregon. In ~~all~~ ^{and earlier} those years it was also traversed by many trappers and traders — Anglo-American, French and Spanish, with and without pack-trains and wagons — and by semicivilized Cherokee, Shawnee and Delaware hunters, and by Indians of the wild tribes, singly and in parties.

In the summer of 1853, Kit Carson, with two friends and a number of hired shepherds, drove a flock of 8500 sheep from New Mexico over the Old Divide Trail to Fort Laramie, and thence to California, where he realized on them handsomely, sheep at that time commanding exorbitant prices at the Golden Gate.

Chase

In the spring of 1847, ^{the Old Divide Trail} ~~the~~ was travelled by a community of Mormon families, bound to Salt Lake, from the temporary (log cabins) village in which they had spent the previous winter at what is now Pueblo, Colorado.

~~On this~~ ^{a bit earlier, namely,} ~~the~~ ^{and four others against the Indians — an} ~~the~~ ^{the} Abner Chase family, ^{with some "literary license" by a participant,} ~~the~~ ^{the} English traveller, Ruxton, in his "Life in the Far West". ^{had taken place the fight,} ~~related~~

^{the} Abner Chase family ^{were} Gentiles. ^{Although, with} ~~the~~ ^{Chases of the} Mormon faith they had wintered in ^{a temporary} ~~the~~ ^{village} near Fort El Pueblo, ~~left the~~ ^{Somewhat in advance of the Mormons, they had} to continue their journey to the Pacific. ^{The mid-winter, however,} Following the trail northward, they had made ~~camp~~ ^{camp} at Black ^{Point, near} ~~Running~~ ^{Running} creek, when they were attacked by some Arapahos. Old Mr. Chase was wounded,

two of his grandchildren killed, their lonely grave to be marked and protected from wolves by a simple cairn on the bank of the ~~small~~ ^{small} creek, ^{where} ~~where~~ their ashes now rest; and his daughter, Mary, was ~~well~~ ^{well} high taken prisoner by the Indians.

and belongs to the waters of the Platte.

Ruxton: Chase

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From these strong affirmations there can be no doubt that the Chase party was attacked by the Arapahoes on the Old Divide Trail, on or near the crest of the divide; though Ruxton, who seems to have been ~~present~~ a witness of the affair, has taken liberties with some of the details, to make his story a little more romantic. The only question that concerns us here especially, is as to the exact place; or in other words, as to the identity of Ruxton's "Black Horse creek". There neither is nor was, so far as the present writer can learn, any creek of that name between the Arkansas and Platte rivers; and by "Black Horse," Ruxton must have meant either Black Foot (the then current name of a well-known camping place on the ~~Aras~~ Old Divide Trail, near the head of what is now called Running creek, and apparently also for the latter creek itself) or Black Squirrel* His letter to the

Footnote

*He makes a similar substitution in the first chapter of the book (page 9, second edition) where he ~~states~~ ^{states} ~~the~~ ^{the} apparently the same locality, as "Black Tail". Confusions in fact abound, apparently to a needless extent, in Ruxton's writings. To cite another example from among the many, both in "Life in the Far West" and in his "Adventures in Mexico and the Rocky Mountains" (the latter a record of his travels), he makes it William Bent who was killed in the Taos massacre (night of Jan. 19, 1847), whereas it was William's older brother, Charles, (first ~~governor~~ United States governor of New Mexico) who was so killed. William, the long-time and noted trader of Bent's Fort, did not die till 1869. Such an error as the latter, seems at first almost inexcusable, in view of Ruxton's actual visiting of Taos, Bent's Fort, etc., in that part of the country; but we are more than willing to condone the mistakes of so interesting a writer, and it may be said, that his observations at any one place were usually brief and his writings hastily composed under difficulties, and printed without due opportunity for ~~the~~ revision.

editors said that the Chases were "stamped" upon the waters of the In 1845, Col. Stephen W. Kearney traversed this trail with a command of five well mounted and equipped companies (each of 50 men) of the 1st Regiment of U. S. Dragoons, in his expedition from Fort Leavenworth to the Rocky Mountains. His route was westward up the Platte and its North fork to South Pass; thence back to Fort Laramie; thence south, by way of the Old Divide Trail, to the Arkansas river; and thence eastward down the latter stream and by the Santa Fe and branch trails, to Fort Leavenworth. With this command were conveyed two mountain howitzers. The writer has seen ~~many~~ ^{but few} details of this expedition.

Insert # IV

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~~the~~ 1858 Report of the Secretary of War, and Cooke's Scenes and Adventures in the Rocky Mountains. The map of the official report of the expedition shows route and dates of camps.

Footnote

~~the~~ the two journals of it that were kept, having never been published.* Camp was made ^(1st) a few miles up Cherry creek, ^(2d) on upper Cherry, ^(3d) on the divide at head of a small creek mistakenly called Bijou, ^(4th) and at present ~~known~~ ^{known} Mountain, on July 22nd, 23rd, 24th and 25th, respectively.

Insert #

Only by
Wootton

The abandonment of ~~the~~ Fort St. Vrain.

For a while previous to this, in the early forties, there was maintained over this highway, between the great Bent's Fort and its auxiliary establishment, Fort St. Vrain, a regular weekly express, for the conveyance of correspondence, money and other valuables between the two posts, — a sort of "pony express", as the frontier carriers of a later day would perhaps call it, but rather slower generally than the pony express of the sixties, as the horseman was often encumbered with one or two pack-animals when a considerable quantity of merchandise or specie was to be transmitted. It was established, says "Uncle Dick" Wootton, (who for a while was one of the express-messengers), in 1842; and was continued through the ~~summer~~ winter of '42-'43 and possibly through the winter next following.

In ^{the summer of} 1843, Fremont's second expedition to the Rocky Mountains used part of this old thoroughfare in proceeding from Bijou Basin to ~~the~~ Fort el Pueblo, ~~at the mouth of the Fountain~~, and retraced the whole of it on his way back to Fort St. Vrain.

II

In the fall of 1842, Rufus B. Sage, who, like Fremont, was a college-bred man and an intelligent traveller, observer and recorder of his observations, though only an humble hunter, trader and adventurer during his stay in the Rocky Mountains, threaded the old road with a party of five other wilderness wanderers, mounted on stout horses and leading two pack-mules, from Fort Lancaster to Taos, whence he went with ^{Antoine} ~~the~~ Robidoux ^{the trader,} to Fort Uintah, far west of the Rockies.

But a few days or weeks earlier than this, a dozen or more swarthy ~~men~~ Mexicans had toiled ~~carelessly~~ up over the divide, with a pack-train from Taos, "laden with flour, corn, beans, onions, dried pumpkin, salt and [red] pepper, to barter for robes, skins, furs, meat, moccasins, bows and arrows, ammunition, guns, coffee, calico, cloth, tobacco and old clothes", with which ^{latter} precious freight, a short time afterward, they plodded the old road back again.

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Four years before this, in 1838, the heavy ox-wagons of the caravan of Sublette and Vasquez, the traders, had creaked their lumbering way from Independence, Missouri, in one of the driest and hottest of summers, ~~making~~ ~~over~~ over the still more famous old Santa Fe trail to the "Crossing of the Arkansaw", and thence up the latter river, past Bent's Fort, to the mouth of the Chico (or, less probably to the mouth of the Fountain, at which Fort el Pueblo had not yet at that time been constructed), and thence up ~~the~~ Fountain and Jimmy Camp creeks, by ^{The old Divide} ~~this same ancient~~ highway, across the divide, to the South Platte, for the completing and stocking of Fort Vasquez, their trading post.

Before, in the middle or late thirties, the trader James Daugherty had left his name to Daugherty's or Jimmy Camp creek, or to Jimmy's Spring; and ere, in 1834, Fort Laramie (the second "Fort William" of the ^{central} Rocky Mountains) had been built on Laramie river; and ere young William Bent had married into the Cheyenne tribe through a chief's family and induced the Cheyennes to bring their winter villages to the Big Timber of the Arkansas and make there their general headquarters, within convenient trading distance of the firm's location; it is practically certain that the said young Bent, of the firm of Bent, St. Vrain & Company, had for several years used the Old Divide Trail for conveying, by pack-train, company trading goods from Bent's Fort (the first "Fort William" of the central Rocky Mountains, begun in 1828-'29 and finished in 1832) to villages of the Cheyennes in the "Black Hills" country* and bringing back the peltries obtained in his trade. Indeed

*The region of the Laramie hills in what is now ^{southeastern} ~~western~~ Wyoming. These hills then bore the same name as did those between the forks of Cheyenne river in present South Dakota.

it is probable that William Bent or other members or employees of the firm, had similarly used the same trail even from the time of the small pick trading post which is said to have been the great fort's predecessor of 1826, the date of the Bent brothers' first coming to the upper Arkansas valley; and that it was so used by ^{the} Company of Gantt and Blackwell, who made the first treaty of peace and trade with the Arapahoes of the upper Arkansas valley in 1831 or 1832, and in ^{fall of} the latter year built ~~and~~ a post on the north side of the Arkansas, about six miles below ~~the~~ Mountain creek, which post they operated during the winter of 1832-'33.*

The ^{Old Divide} Trail was probably travelled over, in part of its course at least, in the eighteenth century by Spaniards and Frenchmen, and in the earliest decades of the nineteenth century by ^{a considerable number of} ~~several~~ French and American wanderers, such as James Pursley, and

members of the parties of Lalande in 1804, "Zeke" Williams in 1811-'13, Phillibert in 1814, Chouteau and DeMun in 1815-'17, Meriwether in 1819-'20, Silvestre Pratte in 1824 (and perhaps earlier) to 1828, General Ashley in the winter of 1824-'25, and perhaps Louis Vasquez and Antoine Robidoux in the ~~early~~ twenties, besides other Anglo-American and French traders or trappers and Mexicans, ~~but of these early journeys we are known to have penetrated to the Pike's Peak region; but of these early journeys we are~~ not well enough informed to confirm the presumption; and of early journeys over the Arkansas-Platte divide, ~~known~~ ^{in any particular instance} in the Pike's Peak region, the first of which we have any interesting details, is that of the noted fur-trader, William Sublette, which we will here relate, as there can be no reasonable doubt that this hardy trader was travelling by the Old Divide Trail.