

The Fur Trade in Colorado: A Selected Bibliography and Chronology

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Brief Chronology

- 1806 Returning from their journey to the Pacific, Lewis and Clark meet trappers heading west
- 1815 A.P. Chouteau and Jules De Mun party first large fur brigade to upper Arkansas and southern Rockies
- 1822 William Ashley's famous call for "enterprising young men"
- 1823 Arikara Battle temporarily closes Missouri River to trade, inspires "Rocky Mountain trapping system" whereby trappers travel overland to interior West and rely on rendezvous for re-supply
- 1825 Rocky Mountain Fur Company's first rendezvous
- 1826 Ashley sells Rocky Mountain Fur Company to William Sublette, David Jackson, Jedediah Smith
- 1830 Smith, Jackson, Sublette sell Rocky Mountain Fur Co. to Thomas Fitzpatrick, Jim Bridger, Milton Sublette, Henry Fraeb, Jean Baptiste Gervais
- 1830 William Sublette takes first supply wagons to mountains, does not cross Divide
- 1831 Jedediah Smith killed by Comanches on Cimarron Cutoff, Santa Fe Trail
- 1833 Bent's Fort constructed
- 1834 Astor's American Fur Co. buys out Rocky Mountain Fur Co.
- 1835 Fort Vasquez established on the South Platte by Andrew Sublette and Louis Vasquez
- 1836 Fort Lupton established on the South Platte by Lancaster P. Lupton (possibly 1837)
- 1837 Fort Jackson established on the South Platte by Peter Sarpy and Henry Fraeb
- 1837 Fort St. Vrain established on the South Platte by Bent and St. Vrain
- 1838 Bent and St. Vrain purchase Fort Jackson from Sarpy and Fraeb
- 1842 El Pueblo established on Arkansas River
- 1843 Fort Bridger established, marks traditional end of the fur trade era, though limited trapping and fur/hide trading continues

Bibliography

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Primary sources

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Elias Willard Smith collection, MSS #580, Colorado Historical Society, Denver, Colorado.

Published as “With Fur Traders in Colorado: The Journal of E. Willard Smith,” *The Colorado Magazine* (July 1950): 161–188.

Articles

Fynn, A. J. “Furs and Forts of the Rocky Mountain West,” *The Colorado Magazine* (November 1931 and March 1932): 209–222, 45–57.

Over-generalized and dated at times, but worth reading as an introduction to the subject.

Gray, John S. “Young Fur Trapper: Phillip Covington Travels to the Rockies with William Sublette,” *Colorado Heritage* 1 (1982): 11–25.

Reprint of Covington’s reminiscences of the everyday life of a trapper from 1827 to 1829 that originally appeared in the *Greeley Sun* in 1879. Contains previously unknown information on Sublette’s winter re-supply expedition of 1827.

Hafen, LeRoy R. “Bean-Sinclair Party of Rocky Mountain Trappers, 1830–32,” *The Colorado Magazine* (July 1954): 161–171.

_____. “Colorado Mountain Men,” *The Colorado Magazine* (January 1953): 14–28.

Anecdotal biographies of Colorado mountain men, including Bill Williams, Pegleg Smith, Andrew Sublette, etc...

_____. “Fort St. Vrain,” *The Colorado Magazine* (October 1952): 241–255.

_____. “Fort Vasquez,” *The Colorado Magazine* (Summer 1964): 198–212.

History of the fort through its 1930s reconstruction with brief biographies of Louis Vasquez and Andrew Sublette.

_____. “Fraeb’s Last Fight and How Battle Creek Got Its Name,” *The Colorado Magazine* (May 1930): 97–101.

Well-documented account of Fraeb's violent demise.

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With an excellent introduction and footnotes by LeRoy Hafen, this is one of the best sources on the twilight of the fur trade in Colorado.

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