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

Selected sources on the fur trade in Colorado, with general works on the fur trade in the Rocky Mountain West.

Primary sources

Thomas Fitzpatrick collection, MSS #240, Colorado Historical Society, Denver, Colorado.

Lancaster P. Lupton collection, MSS #398, Colorado Historical Society, Denver, Colorado.


Articles


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


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.


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


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

Well-documented account of Fraeb’s violent demise.

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A short piece demonstrating how trappers working the southern Rockies from New Mexican towns benefitted from the trail at the end of the fur trade era.


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.


**Books**


Though it focuses on western Canada and the northwestern U.S., it provides insights into women’s roles in the fur trade, some of which are applicable to Colorado and the southern Rocky Mountain region.