

The first known date of an effort being made by the whites to enter into trade with the Kootenay Indians seems to have been in 1800 when David Thompson, representing the North West Company, got in touch with a small party of them who had come to the plains, south of Rocky Mountain House. He went out and visited them, with the result that he sent two half-breeds back to winter in their country. These are the first known white people to have gone into their midst. Their names were LaGassi and Le Blanc.

The Peigans strongly opposed any and all trade relations being opened up with the Kootenays, preferring to act as middle men themselves and more or less hold them in subjection, and it was not until seven years later than an opportunity occurred for closer relations. One of the Peigan tribe had been murdered by a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition south of the forty-ninth parallel and the majority of the Peigan warriors had gone off into the part to seek blood revenge. This gave Thompson the opportunity to cross the mountains into this part, for which preparations had long been under way, and in May, 1807, he started off from Rocky Mountain House with a small party, ascended the Saskatchewan, crossed the mountains by Howse pass, down the Blaeberry to the Columbia and then up the Columbia to its source, and in July, 1807, established his Kootanae House near the mouth of Toby Creek, named by him Nelson's rivulet. From Kootanae House he extended his operation southwards, establishing a post at Kootanae Falls, now near Jennings, Montana, and used Kootanae House as the main base for his operations west of the mountains for the succeeding four years.

Hearing of Thompson's post the Hudsons Bay Company sent Joseph Howse to the Kootenay country in 1809 on an exploratory trip. He did not remain long, but later returned and spent the winter of 1810-1811 in charge of a post which the Hudson's Bay Company erected near Flathead Lake. One winter in that part seemed to satisfy the company for they closed the post and made no further attempt to carry on trade in the interior until after the amalgamation of the two companies in 1821, when they established at Tobacco Plains.

In the old days the prices of goods remained constant and did not vary. Beaver money was the basis of barter, and in 1860 a large "Made Beaver" represented two dollars in currency. Taking this as a standard a marten skin was worth one and a half beaver, a mink one half beaver, a red fox three quarters of a beaver, any kind of bear skin was worth one and a quarter beaver, and a dressed buffalo robe was two and a half beaver. When an Indian's furs had been valued by the Trader he was given "Trade Balls" in exchange, lead bullets representing one beaver each. The blankets supplied were made almost entirely for the Hudson's Bay Company and were the same "Point" blankets we see today. Each point, in the Trade language, was equal to one beaver, so that the value was readily intelligible to the Indian.

One of those who accompanied Thompson into the Kootenay Country was a man named Findlay who was married to a Cree Squaw. Findlay left the party while in this part and finally settled where the City of Spokane now stands. In 1863 his son and one companion

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came back into the Kootenay country and discovered gold on Findlay creek, named after him. On his way back to his home that fall he traded in the gold to Mr. Linklater, the Trader in charge of the Hudson's Bay Post at Tobacco Plains. The Trader sent word to Walla Walla by Indian runner and the following spring Bob Dore and four companions made the trip in by way of the Moyie River, camped near Cranbrook and then went on to where Fort Steele now stands. They intended to stay there a few days to rest the horses and themselves, but the prospecting urge was too strong and the next morning Bob started up Wild Horse Creek. The first day out he found the richest diggings ever struck on the creek, and it is said on very good authority that he took out an average of \$3750 per day to the man. In all his one claim netted him about \$788,000.

The following spring saw a real rush of forty-niners and tenderfeet to the new diggings, most of whom came in with very light packs intending to go outside for the winter. It has been estimated that before the fall of 1865 there were approximately five thousand men on Wild Horse Creek (or Stud Horse Creek as it was then known) alone, and about three thousand more scattered around the district. Winter came early that year and found the majority of the miners totally unprepared for it. Hundreds who had intended going outside for the winter were forced to remain, and had it not been for the assistance of the local Indians many would have starved. Game was scarce, and although they hunted all winter, singly and in parties, and bought all the meat and fish the Indians could spare, they were near starvation when the first supplies reached them the following spring. Flour sold for as high as \$2.50 per pound during the winter, and then only in very limited quantities.

Records available show that three white men have been murdered by Indians in the Kootenay country since the coming of the white man to these parts. First was a man named Herron who, while near Libby, Montana, with a small party, was set upon by a band of renegade Indians. One of the party named Allen was killed outright and Herron was wounded. Finally the attackers scattered and some of the Kootenays fled to Wild Horse Creek and other members of the tribe turned them over to Constable Normancell, an ex-Royal Engineer, to deal with. When the facts became known demonstrations were made against the prisoners which Normancell could not cope with single handedly, and in an effort to avoid bloodshed two of the prisoners were turned over to the men who, in turn, were to hand them over to the authorities in Montana. The first part of the compact was carried out in good faith, but the mob had hardly gone out of sight, along the trail on the south side of wild horse creek, when they called a halt and hung both Indians to near-by trees.

The next tragedy connected with the local Indians and laid to their charge was the murder in 1884 of two prospectors named Hilton and Kemp, who were on their way from the U.S. via Wild Horse to Canyon Creek, South of Golden. Exactly what happened to them may never be known, but they never reached the spot. Next spring the body of one, so badly decomposed as to be past identification, was found beside a small creek, called Murder Creek now, and buried beside the trail. Three Kootenays were accused and one was placed in jail at Wild Horse Creek but was forcibly released by other Indians under the direction of old Chief Isadore.

A trial took place but all three Indians were acquitted of the murders.