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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE OKLAHOMA FUR TRADE, 1796-1845

A THESIS

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

THE OKLAHOMA FUR TRADE, 1796-1845

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

BY

WAYNE PACKARD MORRIS

Norman, Oklahoma

1967

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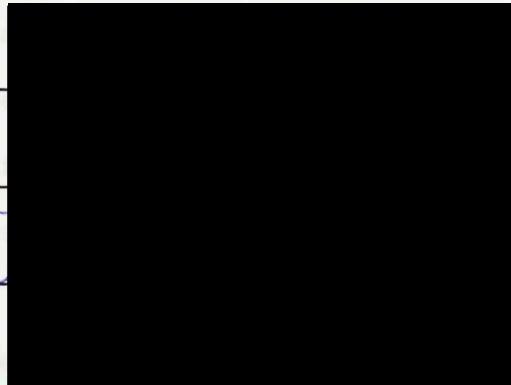
A THESIS

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The American fur trade commenced in the English, Dutch, and French settlements on the Atlantic seaboard. During the seventeenth century the French extended this industry into the Mississippi valley, and it flourished in this region as late as the early nineteenth century.

The fur trade played a significant role on the frontier. It afforded early settlers contact with the Indians. Traders accustomed the Indians to European trade goods, which were bartered for pelts. This encouraged the natives to forsake their natural and traditional means of existence. In many instances the fur trade was the first commercial undertaking on the frontier. Deer, beaver, lynx, otter, mink, raccoon, bear, and buffalo skins were shipped from Montreal, New Orleans, St. Louis, and other markets where they were in great demand. Traders and traders derived from this far-reaching industry influenced them to seek new regions. With the advance of settlement, so the depletion of game. In so doing they explored new routes and spread their geographic knowledge.

BY



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A leading area of the Near Southwest fur trade was Oklahoma. Its peltry industry from 1796 to 1845 was intermixed with Indian wars, Indian removal, exploration and commercial development. In order to give this subject proper perspective it is necessary to present a résumé of the Sooner state fur traffic in the eighteenth century. Foundations of the fur trade were established by the French, and there was no outstanding change after the United States took over this area in 1803.

A wide variety of sources was utilized in this study. Many printed works concerning Oklahoma's pioneer history required close scrutiny. The Missouri Historical Society's manuscript Chouteau Collection and journals, ledgers, and packing books of the American Fur Company's

¹Amos Stoddard, Sketches, Historical, and Descriptive of Louisiana (Philadelphia, 1812), 298-299; James R. Robertson, Louisiana Under the Rule of Spain, France, and the United States, 1785-1807 (Cleveland, 1911), I, 230n.

Western Department yielded substantial information as did the Grant Foreman Collection and Fort Smith Trader's Journal, 1820-1821, both in the Gilcrease Museum Library at Tulsa.

In the research and writing of this thesis, Dr. A. M. Gibson offered many helpful suggestions, and staffs of the Missouri Historical Society and Gilcrease Museum Library gave courteous assistance.

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THE OKLAHOMA FUR TRADE, 1796-1845

CHAPTER I

THE TAOVAYA TRADE

In the early eighteenth century, France faced serious economic problems, and the Bourbons' hopes for recovery were placed on the rich Louisiana fur trade. Also, French officials believed that opening trade routes across Louisiana would add to the volume of business in the empire and further alleviate financial distresses at home. They realized success hinged to a great extent on the Indian tribes of present Oklahoma, then a remote frontier of French Louisiana. Alliances were necessary with these aborigines in order to guarantee their traders safe passage.

Bernard de La Harpe, a French agent from New Orleans, launched this French commercial scheme in 1719. He led an expedition into eastern Oklahoma and met the Wichitas, whose largest band was the Taovayas, living at the mouth of Canadian River. La Harpe was impressed by the trade potential of this region. "There is not in the whole colony of Louisiana an establishment more useful to make than on the branch of this river because of the possibility of the trade

one might introduce with Spain and New Mexico," he reported.¹ La Harpe commenced trade relations with the Wichitas at approximately the same time an expedition under Charles Du Tisne, of the French Illinois settlements, entered the villages of the Panis, a Wichita division living in north central Oklahoma near Arkansas River. Du Tisne made a commercial alliance with the Panis and learned they were enemies of a band of Comanches living in western Oklahoma. He hoped to improve relations between these tribes in order that French traders could establish a safe route to the Rio Grande.²

Soon after La Harpe and Du Tisne made initial contact with the Oklahoma tribes, French traders from New Orleans and the Illinois settlements arrived at Wichita villages. They established trading posts among these people, inter-married, and took up their customs and manner of dress. The Wichitas were agriculturalists³ but became fur hunters in order to receive trade goods of coureurs de bois or voyageurs, as French traders were known.

Coureurs de bois exchanged knives, guns and

¹Anna B. Lewis (trans.), "La Harpe's First Expedition in Oklahoma, 1718-19," Chronicles of Oklahoma, II (December, 1924), 343-347. Hereafter cited as Lewis, "La Harpe's First Expedition."

²Anna B. Lewis (ed.), "Du Tisne's Expedition into Oklahoma, 1719," Chronicles of Oklahoma, III (December, 1925), 321-322.

³Lewis, "La Harpe's First Expedition," 343-347.

ammunition, vermillion, cloth, miscellaneous hardware, and brandy, the last in limited quantities, for otter, mink, beaver, and muskrat furs, suet, deer skins, buffalo robes, and bear oil gathered by Wichitas.⁴ These goods were transported by pack trains or pirogues to Arkansas Post, fifty miles above the mouth of the Arkansas. Flatboats delivered them to New Orleans,⁵ after an arduous trip of about two or three months which exposed the pelts to severe weather conditions and rot and rats. From the Crescent City, furs were shipped to European markets. The French beaver hat industry was especially demanding of American pelts.⁶

Of all French merchandise, Wichitas esteemed most guns and ammunition. They needed munitions to fend off the Osages living in present Missouri. Bands of this tribe used northeastern Oklahoma as a base for hunting and raiding.⁷ In 1742 Osages temporarily disrupted the

⁴Elizabeth Ann Harper John, "The Trade and Diplomacy of the Taovayas Indians on the Northern Frontier of New Spain, 1719-1835," (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1951), 16-17. Hereafter cited as Elizabeth Ann Harper, "The Trade and Diplomacy of the Taovayas"; N. M. Miller Surrey, The Commerce of Louisiana during the French Regime, 1699-1763 (New York, 1916), 98-100, 300.

⁵Ibid., 59, 66, 89.

⁶A. Cristelow, "Proposals for a French Company for Spanish Louisiana, 1763," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXVII (March, 1941), 604-605.

⁷John J. Mathews, The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters (Norman, 1961), 189. Hereafter cited as Mathews, The Osages.

profitable French trade as their attacks caused the Taovayas to flee south to join other Wichita bands living along Red River.

The Osage menace diminished momentarily, and those Wichitas remaining on the upper Arkansas continued to serve coureurs de bois. In 1747 French agents arranged an alliance between the Wichitas and nomadic Comanches. Comanches exchanged buffalo robes, deer skins, and other pelts for French guns provided by Wichita merchants, who in turn traded these furs to the French. The Comanches used the firearms to attack cities in New Mexico. This was instrumental in the Spanish refusal to cultivate trade relations with the French.⁸

In 1757 French commerce suffered another setback as Osage raids forced the Wichitas to abandon the upper Arkansas. The refugees joined their kinsmen on Red River and generally came to be called the Taovayas.⁹ They established two large villages; one was located in present Jefferson County, Oklahoma and the other in what became Montaque County, Texas.

With the rise of Twin Villages, French commerce shifted from Arkansas Post to Natchitoches in present northwestern Louisiana. Coureurs de bois from Natchitoches

⁸Elizabeth Ann Harper, "The Trade and Diplomacy of the Taovayas," 7, 15.

⁹Ibid., 18, 107.

ascended Red River and traded with the Taovayas, who continued as middlemen in the lucrative Comanche trade. Comanches exchanged buffalo robes, captured Apaches, and Spanish mules and horses for French guns supplied by Taovayas. Livestock and captive Apaches were sold by French traders to Louisiana plantation owners, and robes were sent via Natchitoches to New Orleans.¹⁰

In 1758 French-allied Taovayas and Comanches attacked a Spanish mission in south central Texas. Spanish officials sent out a retaliatory force the following year; it was cut to pieces at the battle of Twin Villages.¹¹ They had not forgotten this outrage when Louisiana was transferred to Spain in 1763.

Six years after this exchange, Athanase De Mézières, a Frenchman, became the Lieutenant Governor of Natchitoches, which remained the depot for the Taovaya trade while New Orleans continued as the main shipping point. De Mézières enforced Spanish laws forbidding Indian slave trade and traffic in guns and ammunition. He also tried to stop unlicensed traders from entering villages of the tribes under his jurisdiction and prohibit trade in horses and

¹⁰Herbert E. Bolton (ed.), Athanase De Mézières and the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1768-1780: Documents Published for the First Time, from the Original Spanish and French Manuscripts, Chiefly in the Archives of Mexico and Spain (Cleveland, 1914), I, 47-48. Hereafter cited as Bolton, Athanase De Mezieres.

¹¹Ibid., 48-49.

mules. These restraints caused the Taovayas and Comanches to rely on French contraband merchants operating on Arkansas River. Due to Spanish surveillance, they did not receive French merchandise regularly.

The Taovayas approached destitution when De Mézières cut off their Natchitoches trade; reluctantly they accepted Spanish authority by a treaty signed with Spain in 1771.¹² De Mézières then permitted traders to enter Twin Villages and sent them annual presents and a resident trader, who determined the value of Taovaya pelts and goods of licensed traders.¹³

This new policy was not completely successful for the Taovayas continued trading with renegade French merchants and occasional English traders, who, like the French, trafficked in horses, mules, and guns.¹⁴ Twin Village residents were in desperate need of firearms. Osage maurauding continued, Apaches were formidable, and Comanches were unreliable. De Mézières was aware of the Taovaya plight but enforced the Spanish laws, realizing the Taovayas were

¹²Unzaga y Amezaga to De Mézières, October 4, 1771. Baron de Ripperda to the Viceroy, April 28, 1772. In Ibid., 71-72, 93, 254, 269.

¹³Gil Ybavro to Galvez, November 1, 1780, in Lawrence Kinnaird (ed.), Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794: Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1945 (Washington, 1949), II, 390-391. Hereafter cited as Kinnaird, Spain in the Mississippi Valley.

¹⁴Baron de Ripperda to the Viceroy, April 28, 1772, in Bolton, Athanase De Mézières, I, 77-78, 269-271.

more dependable than most tribes, especially more than the Comanches.¹⁵

De Mézières attempted to gain a favorite's role among the Taovayas by placing high prices on their deer skins and buffalo robes. This helped his relationship with them considerably, but he died in 1779. Thereafter Spain's small success with Twin Villages virtually ended. Spanish traders broke all commercial ties with the Taovayas because they refused to lower the price scale set by De Mézières.¹⁶

In 1783 the Governor of Texas assumed responsibility for the Taovayas. In order to keep them friendly to New Spain, he authorized annual presents. Their annual gifts included twelve guns, seventy pounds of powder and one hundred forty-four pounds of ball. Also in the issue were twelve mattocks, twelve hatchets, twenty-four axes, thirty-two ells of cloth, twenty-eight shirts, twelve pounds of vermillion, fourteen dozen heavy knives, twenty-eight pounds of beads, sixteen dozen combs, and forty-four bundles of tobacco. Each chief in the confederation got an axe, mattock, gun, four pounds of gunpowder, eight pounds of bullets, one pair of trousers, a fine trimmed shirt, and one bundle of tobacco. The Taovayas received these goods from the northeast Texas town of Nachodoches, a leading city in

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Gil Ybarvo to Galvez, November 1, 1780, in Kinnaird, Spain in the Mississippi Valley, II, 390-391.

the Spanish fur trade.¹⁷

This Spanish policy was unsatisfactory to the Taovayas. They could not subsist without substantial commercial ties, and the small quantity of arms and ammunition dispensed by the Spanish was insufficient to deter Osage depredations. No serious attempt was made to renew trade relations with the Taovayas until 1788. This effort collapsed early in the following decade when Spanish officials turned from the Taovayas to stop American encroachment on the Mississippi.¹⁸ Finally, in 1800, Spain secretly traded Louisiana to the First Consul of France Napoleon Bonaparte. Three years later he sold Louisiana for \$15,000,000 to the United States.

After the Louisiana Purchase, a dispute arose over control of Red River between Spain and the United States. Due to the locations of Twin Villages on both sides of the river, this argument was related to the Taovayas. The Long Knives did not wait for the problem to be resolved. By 1804 they had extended operations up Red River and were trading European goods for Taovaya buffalo robes.¹⁹ In 1808 Dr. John Sibley, Indian agent at Natchitoches, licensed

¹⁷Cabello to the Governor of Louisiana, September 20, 1783, in Ibid., 78-84.

¹⁸Ibid., III, xxii.

¹⁹Isacc J. Cox, "The Louisiana-Texas Frontier," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XVII (October, 1913), 156.

a trading party of "good character" under Anthony Glass to visit the Taovayas. Sibley described the preparation of this expedition:²⁰

I Shew'd him [Anthony Glass] the Act of Congress by which I was governed in Such Cases; & told him he would perceive the Condition that a bond with Security to the amt of One thousand dollars would be required. Some Short time after he came Again with a Security, executed a Bond, & I gave him a License in the usual form he took with him a Mr Alexander from No. Carolina a relation of the late Governor Alexander, and of Mr. Alexander of Congress- a Man of great Sobriety, discretion, and a very honest Character. Mr. Alexander the year before had been at the Panis [Taovayas] Nation with Mr Lewis & five or six other persons. Mr Alexander being an Ingenuous, friendly Man taught the Indians Several Useful things & became thereby a great favourite among them. Mr. Glass had 5 or 6 other persons as hierlings or assistants, all of them characters that I knew and approved of, he left with me a list of the Goods he took Out, all which I found to be proper Articles. They were Armed only as hunters or people who had to Subsist Some Months upon what game they could kill. I promised the Panis Chief a Small United States Flag which Capt. Glass Carried with him And likewise a Present of a Scarlet Uniform Coat & gave him a Written memorandum of Instructions relative to his treatment of the Indians and they set off with the intention of keeping up all the way on the North East Side of Red River, till they arrived at the Panis Villages, Some of whom are Situated On that side of the River.

The Glass expedition enjoyed a favorable trade with Taovayas but met a continuing obstacle to commerce in this region--Osages. Sibley described this encounter:²¹

²⁰Dr. John Sibley to General Henry Dearborn, Natchitoches, November 20, 1808, in Julia K. Garrett (ed.), "Notes and Documents: Dr. John Sibley and the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1803-1814," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLVII (July, 1943), 50-51; A good account of Indian agents' duties and fur trade laws is Francis Paul Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834 (Cambridge, 1962).

²¹Dr. John Sibley to the Secretary of War, Natchitoches May 10, 1809, in Julia K. Garrett (ed.), "Notes and

Capt Glass Says that when he left the Panis Nation a party of Panis & Hietians [Comanches] to the number of about one Thousand Warriors had gone to War Against the Ozages on the River Arkensa, with a determination to exterminate that Band of Robbers; who are Constantly stealing their Horses; a party of them stole from Capt. Glass 36 Valuable Horses from Near the Panis Villages, and during the last year he believes they Stole from the Panis Near One Thousand head. These Ozages are regarded by all white and Red people in this quarter as a Common peste to mankind.

After Glass' experience, American traders shied from the Taovaya trade. Without commercial ties, the Taovayas were helpless before relentless Osage maurauders. For protection in 1811, they joined the Tawakonis, living two hundred miles south of Twin Villages and Comanches.²²

French traders of the eighteenth century had the only successful commercial relationship with the Taovayas. Oklahomans are still reminded of coureurs de bois by various place names like Grand and Verdigris Rivers²³ which merge with the Arkansas to form "Three Forks" in northeastern Oklahoma, an area that played an important role in the fur trade of the nineteenth century.

Documents: Dr. John Sibley and the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1803-1814," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLVII (January, 1944), 323.

²²Dr. John Sibley to the Secretary of War, Natchitoches, December 31, 1811, in Julia K. Garrett (ed.), "Notes and Documents: Dr. John Sibley and the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1803-1814," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLIX (January, 1946), 403.

²³Muriel H. Wright, "Some Geographic Names of French Origin in Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, VII (June, 1927), 188-190.

furs earlier than this date.

Auguste Chouteau⁵ had engaged the Osages in trade since the early Spanish period, and in 1794 Baron de Carondelet, Governor of Louisiana, granted him a six year monopoly of the Osage trade. CHAPTER II

THE EARLY CHOUTEAU LINK WITH THREE FORKS

While efforts were made by the Long Knives to penetrate the Red River country and reestablish the Taovaya trade, the sustained development of the fur industry came by way of St. Louis and northeastern Oklahoma. Deer, buffalo, mink, otter, lynx, bear, and beaver abounded in the Three Forks region.¹ The Chouteaus of St. Louis were responsible for opening this rich pelt zone. One writer claimed that Pierre Chouteau, Sr.² led a small group of coureurs de bois and Osages to Grand River and established a trading post on the site of present Salina, Oklahoma in 1796.³ But evidence points to the Chouteaus earning profits from Three Forks

¹Grant Foreman, "The Three Forks," Chronicles of Oklahoma, II (March, 1924), 37.

²Pierre Chouteau's given name was Jean Pierre Chouteau. His associates usually called him Pierre or Peter. He was also known as "Cadet." J. F. McDermott, "Cadet Chouteau: An Identification," Missouri Historical Review, XXXI (April, 1937), 268.

³Vinson Lackey, The Chouteaus and the Founding of Salina: Oklahoma's First White Settlement (Tulsa, 1939), 1-3; According to one writer, Pierre Chouteau influenced La Chaniers to move to the Verdigris in 1796. Alfred T. Andreas, History of the State of Kansas (Chicago, 1883), 61.

furs earlier than this date.⁴

Auguste Chouteau⁵ had engaged the Osages in trade since the early Spanish period, and in 1794 Baron de Carondelet, Governor of Louisiana, granted him a six year monopoly of the Osage trade. Carondelet authorized Chouteau to establish a post on the upper Osage River. It was built in present Vernon County, Missouri and named Fort Carondelet. Pierre Chouteau managed this frontier station, a center for the Osage trade.⁶ Osages brought in furs from the Three Forks region. Due to the greater abundance of game and milder climate, they preferred the hunting at Three Forks to that near their villages in Missouri.⁷

⁴A. P. Nasatir, J. F. McDermott and Grant Foreman challenged the claim that Pierre Chouteau established a post at present Salina in 1796. They did not question the Chouteaus' commercial tie with this area through the Osages before 1796. Chouteau File (Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City). Hereafter cited as OHS; One member of the "1796 school" is C. E. Chouteau whose great, great grandfather was Pierre Chouteau, Sr. Currently a member of the Oklahoma Historical Day Committee, which annually commemorates 1796 as the founding of Oklahoma, Mr. Chouteau plans to write a book on Jean Pierre Chouteau's family. He will utilize "letters, papers, and documents" that are "being withheld" from the public in the Chouteau Memorial Association of Tulsa. C. E. Chouteau to the writer, Oklahoma City, September 22, 1966.

⁵(Rene) Auguste Chouteau was the half-brother and business associate of Pierre Chouteau, Sr. W. J. Ghent, "Rene Auguste Chouteau," Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1930), IV, 93.

⁶Harriet J. Westbrook, "The Chouteaus and Their Commercial Enterprises," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XI (June, 1933), 790. Hereafter cited as Westbrook, "The Chouteaus."

⁷Mathews, The Osages, 298.

The Chouteaus were successful in dealing with Osages and won praise from Spanish officials since their contacts decreased Osage hostilities on the frontier.⁸ The excellent quality of trade goods they offered these bellicose Indians also tended to lessen their grievances. Few if any Chouteau trade articles came from the United States or Spain. Some goods came from France, but England furnished most of their merchandise and continued to do so in the nineteenth century.

Trade items were distributed by various concerns in Montreal and New Orleans having contracts with St. Louis' most prominent merchants. Todd, McGill, and Company sent merchandise to the Chouteaus from Montreal in the 1790's as did Cavalier and Petit of New Orleans. From Montreal came Mackinaw blankets, which the Osages preferred to buffalo robes,⁹ textiles, guns, knives, ammunition, hatchets, copper, tinware, playing cards, cheap jewelry, flints, scissors, vermilion, pins, powder, calico, and trade ribbons.¹⁰ The port of New Orleans shipped sugar, Italian soap, china,

⁸Trudeau's Report of 1798 Concerning the Settlements of the Spanish Illinois Country, in Louis Houck (ed.), The Spanish Regime in Missouri: A Collection of Papers and Documents Relating to the Upper Louisiana Principally within the Present Limits of Missouri during the Dominion of Spain, from the Archives of the Indies at Seville (Chicago, 1909), II, 251. Hereafter cited as Houck, The Spanish Regime.

⁹J. F. McDermott (ed.), Tixier's Travels on the Osage Prairie. Translated by Albert J. Salvan (Norman, 1940), 138. Hereafter cited as McDermott, Tixier's Travels.

¹⁰Bill of William Todd to Auguste Chouteau, Montreal, 1796, Chouteau Collection (Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis). Hereafter cited as MHS.

glassware, medicine, blankets, cloth, tafia, iron, honey, gunpowder, and tobacco pipes.¹¹ The Chouteaus in turn dispatched peltries to these companies, who shipped them to France and England where they were in great demand.

Profits from their Osage commerce caused the Chouteaus to request another six year monopoly of the Osage trade in 1800. They were dismayed when the Spanish granted only a four year extension.¹² In the same year, the Chouteaus faced a severe crisis on the Osage Plains. A band of Osages known as "La Chaniers" had separated from the tribe and settled along White and Arkansas Rivers.¹³ Spanish authorities authorized Auguste Chouteau to appease La Chaniers with 100 muskets, 100 pounds of powder, 300 flints, and other presents. Chouteau attempted to smooth Osage-Spanish relations by encouraging the wayward Osages to return to Missouri.¹⁴ This reunion did not endure because of Spanish favoritism in the fur trade politics of St. Louis.

In 1802 Manuel Lisa, a prominent St. Louis fur

¹¹Account of Cavalier and Petit with Auguste Chouteau, New Orleans, May 13, 1796, Chouteau Collection, MHS.

¹²Mathews, The Osages, 294.

¹³Trudeau's Report of 1798 Concerning the Settlements of the Spanish Illinois Country, in Houck, The Spanish Regime, II, 251.

¹⁴Carlos De Hault de Lassus to Marquis de Casa Calvo, May 8, 1801. Report of 1800 on the Presents Presented to the Osages by Order of Carlos de Hault de Lassus. In Ibid., 301-302, 310-311.

merchant, persuaded Spanish officials to grant him and his business associates, Charles Sanguinet, Francis M. Benoit, and Gregoire Sarpy, a monopoly of the Osage trade.¹⁵ The Chouteaus protested because their monopoly had not expired, but the Spanish refused to change the assignment.¹⁶ At this time, the Chouteaus could have joined John Jacob Astor, the New York fur baron, who incorporated the American Fur Company in 1808. They rejected Astor's proposal. They and other French merchants feared the entry of an outsider into the fur trade of St. Louis.¹⁷

Instead Pierre Chouteau induced about 3,000 La Chaniers to move to Three Forks. They established villages near the mouth of Verdigris River and received permission from the Spanish to hunt, trade in, and occupy this area.¹⁸

¹⁵Manuel Lisa and others to Salcedo, New Orleans, June 4, 1802. Delassus to Salcedo, St. Louis, August 28, 1802. In A. P. Nasatir (ed.), Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of Missouri, 1785-1804 (St. Louis, 1952), II, 677-680, 705.

¹⁶Mathews, The Osages, 297.

¹⁷Kenneth W. Porter, John Jacob Astor: Business Man (Cambridge, 1931), I, 60-61; On April 29, 1800 Charles Gratiot, brother-in-law of Auguste Chouteau, wrote to Astor and told him he would discuss the merger with Auguste. Letter Book of Charles Gratiot: Business Letters from St. Louis, 1800-1806, Charles Gratiot Collection, MHS.

¹⁸Grant Foreman, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest (Cleveland, 1926), 24. Hereafter cited as Foreman, Pioneer Days; Grant Foreman, Indians and Pioneers: The Story of the American Southwest Before 1830 (Norman, 1936), 20. Hereafter cited as Foreman, Indians and Pioneers.

²²Robert L. Williams, "Notes and Documents," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXIV (Winter, 1950-51), 224.

This schism effected the profits Lisa and his partners expected to derive from the Osage trade; Three Forks was not within their monopoly.¹⁹ Chouteau's maneuver was effective from the revenge standpoint, but he and Auguste Chouteau apparently did not take immediate advantage of the Chanier trade.²⁰

With the transfer of Louisiana to the United States, the Chouteaus' status improved. Thomas Jefferson appointed Pierre Chouteau Osage agent with headquarters in St. Louis and Auguste became a justice of the first territorial court. At the same time, they recovered control of the Missouri fur trade.²¹ This development could have influenced them to disregard the Arkansas Osages, despite the abundance of game in the Three Forks area. In 1808, when Congress provided a tribunal to investigate the claims of persons living in Louisiana who held lands under the French and Spanish governments, Pierre Chouteau claimed ten different tracts, but none were in northeastern Oklahoma.²²

¹⁹Richard E. Oglesby, Manuel Lisa and the Opening of the Missouri Fur Trade (Norman, 1963), 26.

²⁰The Chouteau Collection does not reveal that Auguste and Pierre Chouteau established a sustained commercial tie at this time with the displaced Osages nor do any other known documents.

²¹Westbrook, "The Chouteaus," 790; Harriet J. Westbrook, "The Chouteaus: Their Contributions to the History of the West," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XI (September, 1933), 950.

²²Robert L. Williams, "Notes and Documents," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXIV (Winter, 1946-47), 486.

A year later he and one of his sons, A. P. Chouteau, Jr., joined the Missouri Fur Company or St. Louis Missouri Fur Company. The members included Benjamin Wilkinson, Manuel Lisa, Reuben Lewis, William Clark, and Sylvestre Labadie, all of St. Louis, Pierre Menard, Sr. and William Morrison of Kaskaskia, Illinois, Dennis Fitz Hugh of Louisville, Kentucky and Andrew Henry of Louisiana, Missouri. This concern, which dominated the upper Missouri River trade for about five years before undergoing numerous reorganizations without the Chouteaus,²³ also diverted Pierre Chouteau's attention from Three Forks.

About the only proof available that gives credence to Pierre and Auguste Chouteau having a commercial tie with La Chaniers was the coming of A. P. Chouteau, Jr. to Three Forks in the early 1820's, a part of a much larger story in which Pierre Chouteau, Jr., his brother, figured prominently.

a populous Indian country to harvest furs...
 a... With their wares including paper,
 vermilion, kettles, axes, knives, beads, bright colored
 cloth, twists of tobacco, stoneware, and varnishes, all of
 which were purchased in New Orleans and St. Louis, they
 induced the Chaniers to trap and hunt. Furs and skins
 gathered by Osages were sent to New Orleans where a good
 price was obtained. The skins were sold for 30 cents, and the

²³Hiram M. Chittenden, The American Fur Trade of the Far West (New York, 1935), I, 138. Hereafter cited as Chittenden, The American Fur Trade.

CHAPTER III

TRADERS AND FACTORIES VIE FOR THE OSAGE TRADE

Traders other than the Chouteaus entered the Three Forks region from the upper and lower Mississippi before 1812 when the Missouri Territory was established. Three Forks was attractive to peltry dealers for several reasons. There was an abundance of fur-bearing animals, ready access to river transportation to gulf markets, the area had a mild climate, and the soil was fertile. Numerous saline springs furnished salt, an important commodity on the frontier and due to the Chouteaus' relocation of La Chaniers, there was a populous Indian community to harvest furs.

With their assorted merchandise including rope, vermillion, kettles, axes, knives, beads, bright colored cloth, twists of tobacco, strouds, and earrings, all of which were purchased in New Orleans and St. Louis, traders induced the Chaniers to trap and hunt.¹ Furs and bear oil gathered by Osages were sent to New Orleans where a mink pelt sold for 40 cents, deer skins brought 40 cents a pound,

¹Foreman, Pioneer Days, 80; Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 164n.

a beaver skin was worth \$3, while a buffalo robe sold for \$6. A beaver pack weighing 100 pounds brought \$180, otter \$450, lynx \$500, and bear oil about \$1 a gallon.²

Names of early traders and trappers in northeastern Oklahoma were recorded in journals of government explorers Lieutenant James B. Wilkinson, Captain John R. Bell, Major Stephen H. Long, and by botanist Thomas Nuttal. Wilkinson, a member of Zebulon Montgomery Pike's expedition to the Southwest in 1806, descended Arkansas River from "Great Bend" to its mouth passing Three Forks late in 1806 where he observed hunters and traders. Bell journeyed through the same region in 1821. Long followed Canadian River east, mistaking it for the Red, and reached Three Forks shortly after Bell. In 1819 Nuttal arrived in the Osage country and searched for plant specimens.

A few trappers and traders were vaguely identified by these explorers. Nuttal briefly mentioned Tom Slover, a trader who lived on Grand River not far from its mouth, and a Mr. Lee, a beaver trapper, who guided him through the Cimarron River wilderness.³ Little is known of these

²Paul C. Phillips, The Fur Trade (Norman, 1961), II, 246. Hereafter cited as Phillips, The Fur Trade; Albert M. Ahern, Fur Facts (St. Louis, 1922), 19; "Dr. John Sibley's Historical Sketches of the Several Indian Tribes in Louisiana," in American State Papers, Indian Affairs (Washington, 1832), I, 724.

³Thomas Nuttal, Journal of Travels into the Arkansas Territory during the Year 1819, Vol. XIII of Early Western Travels, ed. Reuben Gold Twaites (Cleveland, 1905), 242, 263, 265. Hereafter cited as Nuttal, Journal of Travels.

intruders in the Osage land but traders Joseph Baugy, Alexander McFarland, Nathaniel Pryor, Hugh Glenn, Henry Barbour, and Samuel Richards were mentioned more often.

Joseph Baugy of Kaskaskia, usually referred to as Bogy or Bougie, entered the Southwest fur trade in 1805 by establishing a trading house near Arkansas Post.⁴ He extended operations to Three Forks in 1806, met Lieutenant Wilkinson near the Verdigris, furnished him with supplies, and proceeded upstream to exchange merchandise valued by him at between \$6,000 and \$9,000 for Osage peltries. He claimed that Pushmataha's band of vagabond Choctaws robbed him before reaching La Chanier villages.⁵

Shortly after this incident Bogy constructed several buildings near Verdigris Falls⁶ to house his merchandise and "skinsmen and packers," Joseph Robin and Joseph Duchasin.⁷ Bogy's establishment must have been of the "poteau" style, known to be popular among early traders at Three Forks and

⁴Census of Kaskaskia, 1787, in Clarence W. Alvord (ed.), Kaskaskia Records: 1778-1790 in Vol. V of Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library (Springfield, 1909), 415.

⁵Senate Executive Document No. 23, 24th Cong., 1st Sess., 9-11; Wilkinson did not mention Bogy. Elliott Coues (ed.), The Expedition of Zebulon Montgomery Pike (New York, 1895). Hereafter cited as Coues, The Expedition of Pike.

⁶"Fur Trade Notes," Grant Foreman Collection, Box I, Folder IV (Gilcrease Museum Library, Tulsa). Hereafter cited as GML.

⁷The Daily Oklahoman, 17 January 1937, p. 7.

unique in structure. Logs were set vertically into trenches and mud placed between them, enabling one to build a trading house of any desired width and length instead of having its size limited by the length of logs in the area.⁸ Later in frontier history this type of construction was called a picket wall. Bogy possibly constructed his post because of the Choctaw raid. It was safer for furriers to trade from an establishment and have Indian hunters bring in furs rather than venture into the unknown wilderness to search out Indian camps.

Many early fur traders risked expeditions; Alexander McFarland is an example. Lieutenant Wilkinson saw him on a trading venture among the Chaniers in 1806.⁹ Two years later he settled at Cadron near present Little Rock. John McIllmurray, later a justice of the peace in Arkansas Territory, was a resident of this frontier community. He formed a trading concern which included McFarland, John Lemmons, William Ingles, Robert Kuyrkendall, and Benjamin Murphy and in 1812 sent them on a trading expedition to the Taovayas.¹⁰ McFarland became separated and met a maurauding band of

⁸Fannie B. Misch, "La Saline," Oklahoma Today XI (Fall, 1961), 7.

⁹Coues, The Expedition of Pike, 558.

¹⁰Margaret S. Ross, "Cadron: An Early Town that Failed," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, XVI (Spring, 1957), 3-5; Ted R. Worley, "Story of an Early Settlement in Central Arkansas," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, X (Summer, 1951), 128; Copy of the Executive Journal of Missouri Territory from April 1, 1814 to September 30, 1814, in T. M. Marshall (ed.), The Life and Papers of Fredrick Bates (St. Louis, 1926), II, 281; Foreman, Pioneer Days, 74.

La Chaniers, who were angered by traders carrying goods to their enemies. The Osages "put out his eyes and then goaded him along with sharpened canes until one of them, through compassion, put an end to his existence by the Tomahawk."¹¹ McFarland's demise shows that Oklahoma traders, like those in the Great Northwest and other areas, were daring and risked all for fur bounties. They have been appropriately described as a "reckless breed of men."¹²

Besides independent traders like Bogy and McIllmurray, United States trading factories engaged the Osages in trade. The factory system, which originated in 1796, was designed to monopolize the fur industry and protect Indians from corrupt fur merchants. But most factories failed for private merchants competed with factory managers, who were not permitted to go among the Indians and trade.¹³ A factory established at Arkansas Post in 1805 illustrates this point.

¹¹Nuttal, Journal of Travels, 252; Governor Clark to William Lovely, St. Louis, June 15, 1814, in The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1815-1821, Vol. XV of The Territorial Papers of the United States, ed. Clarence E. Carter (Washington, 1951), 52-53. Hereafter cited as Carter, The Territorial Papers, XV; Pierre Chouteau, Sr. was aware of La Chanier hostility to traders like McFarland. "The tribe of "La Chanier" on the Arkansas seem to feel very harshly towards the traders and I fear unpleasant accidents," he reported in 1807. Pierre Chouteau to Fredrick Bates, St. Louis, October 6, 1807, in Pierre Chouteau Letter Book, 1804-1819, Chouteau Collection, MHS.

¹²Robert G. Cleland, This Reckless Breed of Men: The Trappers and Fur Traders of the Southwest (New York, 1950).

¹³Ora B. Peake, A History of the United States Indian Factory System, 1795-1822 (Denver, 1954), 15, 218.

John Treat, factor or manager, unsuccessfully attempted to draw away the Chanier trade from Bogy, the Cadron traders, and the firm of Bright and Morgan, a New Orleans concern with a Philadelphia commercial tie.

From a trading establishment near the government factory, Bright and Morgan sent their traders along the Arkansas. Despite the presence of hostile La Chaniers, who robbed several merchants near Arkansas Post of "ammunition, peltry, and clothing," they managed to bring in twice the number of pelts received by Treat.¹⁴ Bright and Morgan were unable to monopolize the Osage trade and retired from the Arkansas region in 1810 when Treat's factory closed.¹⁵

Another factory had commenced operations in 1808 at Fort Clark or Fort Osage on the Missouri River's south-side in what is now Jackson County, Missouri. It failed to garner the Chanier trade; the Arkansas band wanted to remain independent of Missouri Osages, who traded with Fort Clark's

¹⁴"Mr. Bright has ascended the Arkansas with a view of making arrangements to secure trade with the Osages." John B. Treat to Secretary of War, Arkansas, July 13, 1806, in "Fur Trade Notes," Grant Foreman Collection, Box XIII, Folder IV, GML; Phillips, The Fur Trade, II, 498; John B. Treat to Secretary of War, Arkansas, July 26, 1808, in The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1806-1814, Vol. XIV of The Territorial Papers of The United States, ed. Clarence E. Carter (Washington, 1949), 206; Aloysius Plaisance, "The Arkansas Factory, 1805-1810," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, XI (Autumn, 1952), 186-187.

¹⁵Ibid.; Phillips, The Fur Trade, II, 498.

factor.¹⁶ In order for the government to have a successful commercial tie with La Chaniers a factory had to be established at Three Forks. Tribal leaders requested this in 1806.¹⁷ The government finally constructed a factory at Spadre Bayou on the Arkansas, well below Three Forks, in 1817. Because this post was located in an area controlled by Cherokees, bitter enemies of La Chaniers, it did not attract the Osage trade¹⁸ and closed in 1822 when the factory system ended.

Spadre Bayou factory would have failed even without the Cherokee presence because of competition from independent traders, who came to Three Forks and established stations convenient for Osages. Hugh Glenn, Henry Barbour, George W. Brand, Joseph Revoir, Mark Bean, Thomas James, Nathaniel Pryor, Auguste Pierre Chouteau, Jr., Robert French, and Samuel Rutherford were a few merchants trafficking on the Grand and Verdigris for La Chanier pelts.

¹⁶Richard Graham to Governor Miller, St. Louis, January 14, 1822, in Arkansas Territory, 1819-1825, Vol. XIX of The Territorial Papers of the United States, ed., Clarence E. Carter (Washington, 1953), 409-410; Hereafter cited as Carter, The Territorial Papers, XIX.

¹⁷Coues, The Expedition of Pike, 556.

¹⁸Phillips, The Fur Trade, II, 498.

CHAPTER IV

THREE FORKS AS AN EMPORIUM OF THE SOUTHWEST FUR TRADE

In 1819 John H. Fonda of New York left Ohio with a large immigrant party bound for Texas. En route the party paused to hunt on Kiamichi River, a tributary of the Red. Continuing to Texas, Fonda separated from the group and explored the headwaters of Sabine River. There he met an old Scotchman named "Monsieur Jones," a former trader of the Hudson Bay Company, who operated a small north Texas trading house. Fonda worked for Jones for over a year and concluded more profits could be made as an independent trader. Thereupon he set out for the wild country north of Red River to traffic with Osages. Fonda swapped for several packs of furs from this tribe, but trading did not meet his expectations, and he shortly abandoned the fur trade.¹

Fonda's inability to develop a flourishing Osage trade was due to competition from traders in northeastern Oklahoma. Mark Bean of Tennessee owned a trading post south of Three Forks, near the mouth of Illinois River.

¹Cardinal Goodwin, "John H. Fonda's Explorations into the Southwest," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXIII (July, 1919), 39-40.

Typical of many pioneer fur merchants having other interests, "Mr. Bean," according to Captain Bell, "commenced his operations in the spring and has already a neat farm house on the Illinois, with a considerable stock of cattle, hogs, poultry, and several acres in Indian corn."² Another Bean enterprise was extracting salt from a large saline spring near his place. He and his brother Richard sold salt for \$1 a bushel at Fort Smith.³ This frontier post had been erected in 1817 at the junction of Poteau and Arkansas Rivers by Major William Bradford and a company of the United States Rifle Regiment. Bean purchased European trade goods including muslin, calico, and gunpowder from the sutler's store at Fort Smith operated by Hugh Glenn.⁴ His merchandise allowed Bean and other traders in northeastern Oklahoma to discontinue buying trade articles in St. Louis and New Orleans.

Joseph Revoir, a Missourian of French-Osage descent, a les bourgeois, was supplied by Glenn.⁵ In 1817 he received

²Edwin James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburg to the Rocky Mountains, Vol. XVI of Early Western Travels, ed. Reuben Gold Twaites (Cleveland, 1905), 286.

³Grant Foreman, "Salt Works in Early Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, X (December, 1932), 484-485. Hereafter cited as Foreman, "Salt Works."

⁴Fort Smith Trader's Journal, 1820-1821 (GML), June 6 and August 14 of 1820. Hereafter cited as Fort Smith Trader's Journal.

⁵On December 31, 1820 Glenn sold Joseph Revard (Revoir) five pounds of nails, a chisel, a "grubbing" hoe, one half pound of steel, six yards of material, and several strips of calico. Fort Smith Trader's Journal.

a license to trade with La Chaniers from Fredrick Bates, Secretary of the Missouri Territory, who at the same time issued a permit to Revoir's partner, A. P. Chouteau, Jr.⁶ However, Revoir set out without Chouteau for the Three Forks country and built a trading post at a saline spring near present Salina.⁷

Competitors of Revoir and Bean for the Osage trade were Joseph Bogy and Captain Henry Barbour of New Orleans and George W. Brand of Tennessee, partners who arrived at Three Forks in 1819. Barbour and Brand constructed a large establishment near the mouth of Verdigris River consisting of ten or twelve houses, a ferry, and thirty acres of cleared land.⁸ Little is known of their trading activities, but they relied on the Fort Smith sutler for trade goods. One purchase amounted to \$247 worth of merchandise. Apparently Captain J. H. Ballard, an officer at Fort Smith, was an associate of Brand and Barbour for he and Brand jointly purchased trade goods from Glenn in 1820.⁹

Besides serving as sutler at Fort Smith and supplying local traders with goods, Glenn held a trading license

⁶Licenses for the Indian Trade Issued to Joseph Revoir, A. P. Chouteau, Jr. and Others by the Governor of Missouri Territory, in Carter, The Territorial Papers, XV, 278.

⁷Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 53-54.

⁸Foreman, Pioneer Days, 75.

⁹Fort Smith Trader's Journal, September 11 and 12 of 1820 and May 21, 1821.

issued by Bates in 1817, and he engaged in the Osage commerce at Three Forks. His trading post was near the mouth of the Verdigris.¹⁰

Samuel Rutherford of Virginia and Robert French of Kentucky built a trading concern at the mouth of the Verdigris in 1817. Their partnership dissolved two years later and Rutherford joined the trading house of Nathaniel Pryor and Samuel Richards located near Glenn's post. They were issued trading licenses in 1819 by Robert Crittenden, Acting Governor of Arkansas Territory. Pryor, a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition and a captain in the War of 1812, was the principal partner of this concern.¹¹ Shortly he and Glenn consolidated. Rutherford withdrew from the concern to become a sheriff in Arkansas Territory and Richards died.¹² Thereupon Glenn and Pryor hired David McKee to manage the

¹⁰Licenses for the Indian Trade Issued to Hugh Glenn and Others by the Governor of Missouri Territory, in Carter, The Territorial Papers, XV, 278.

¹¹Jerry Rand, "Samuel Morton Rutherford," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXX (Summer, 1952), 149; James B. Thoburn, A Standard History of Oklahoma (Chicago, 1916), I, 54n; According to one source, Glenn, Rutherford, and French may have been Chouteau agents. W. J. Fessler (ed.), "Jacob Fowler's Journal: Oklahoma Section," Chronicles of Oklahoma, VIII (June, 1930), 184n; Nuttal, Journal of Travels, 138; Grant Foreman, "Nathaniel Pryor," Chronicles of Oklahoma, VII (June, 1927), 152-153.

¹²Ibid.; Jerry Rand, "Samuel Morton Rutherford," 149; Richards' decease apparently occurred a short time after July 3, 1820 when he purchased \$5 worth of supplies from Glenn. Fort Smith Trader's Journal.

Verdigris trading house,¹³ and the new partners looked after the Fort Smith operations.

McKee's employers had a distinct advantage over other Three Forks traders. Besides having access to merchandise at Fort Smith, Pryor arranged with Abraham Gallatin, brother of Albert Gallatin, to send trade goods from St. Louis.¹⁴ Another assistant of Glenn and Pryor was Eli Ward. They hired him to supply goods from the Fort Smith store to the Verdigris post. In one year the Glenn-Pryor operation dispatched \$4,500 worth of merchandise, described in one entry of the Fort Smith Trader's Journal as "sundry goods," to the Verdigris post to exchange for Osage pelts.¹⁵ Among their trade items were black ochre, lead, ribbon,

¹³Affidavit of David McKee on September 11, 1824 Concerning the Theft at Nathaniel Pryor's Trading House by a Band of Cherokees in 1820. E. W. Duval's Statement, April 30, 1832, on the Same Issue. In Stella M. Drumm (ed.), "Documents in the Office of Indian Affairs Concerning Nathaniel Pryor," American Historical Review, XXIV (January, 1919), 255-256. Hereafter cited as Drumm, "Documents Concerning Nathaniel Pryor."

¹⁴Thomas James, Three Years among the Indians and Mexicans, ed. Walter B. Douglas (St. Louis, 1916), 250; Hereafter cited as James, Three Years among the Indians.

¹⁵On July 3, 1820 Glenn and Pryor bought \$430 worth of trade goods. On July 30, 1820 Glenn took \$2,722 worth of merchandise "on adventure to the Osages," and on September 20, 1820 he left Fort Smith with \$1,176 in sundry goods for the Osage trade. On April 3, 1821 Glenn purchased \$67 worth of trade goods "for the trading house on the Verdigris," and Eli Ward delivered them. Fort Smith Trader's Journal.

combs, butcher knives, tobacco, and brass kettles.¹⁶ It is possible Glenn and Pryor furnished Osages with small quantities of whisky. They purchased over one hundred pints at 25 cents apiece during a six month period in 1820. This does not include the whisky Glenn bought and gave to "the boys," as he referred to soldiers and hired help at Fort Smith.¹⁷ There is no indication Barbour, Brand, or Revoir trafficked in whisky,¹⁸ which was banned from the fur trade in 1822.

During 1821 a twenty-two man expedition headed by Jacob Fowler, a Kentucky trader and surveyor, arrived at Three Forks. They were bound for Santa Fe, which attracted traders following the recent overthrow of Spanish rule in provinces of New Spain. There it was reported one could exchange cotton goods, silks, hardware, and other manufactured articles for horses, mules, furs, silver, gold, and Mexican blankets.¹⁹ Glenn, Pryor, and Ward decided to join Fowler's group.

Near the Osage villages they met a trading party of

¹⁶Ibid., July 20, 25, and 29 of 1820 and March 24, 1821.

¹⁷Ibid., July of 1820 to January of 1821.

¹⁸Ibid., May 13, 1820 to March 7, 1821.

¹⁹Elliott Coues (ed.), The Journal of Jacob Fowler (New York, 1898), 9. Hereafter cited as Coues, Jacob Fowler; Katherine Coman, Economic Beginnings of the Far West (New York, 1912), II, 85.

eleven from St. Louis en route to Santa Fe.²⁰ Thomas James, its leader, possessed a passport signed by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams giving him permission to trade with the Indians between the United States and New Mexico.²¹ He also carried a license granted by Robert Crittenden to trade with La Chaniers. James' party bartered biscuit, hardware, whisky, flour, lead, and powder with Osages for rope, saddles, twenty-three horses, and furs. James cached the heavy stores of liquor, flour, lead, and hardware, and the expeditions took separate routes to Santa Fe because Glenn refused to merge as James proposed.²²

The St. Louis party encountered a Comanche band in western Oklahoma. The Comanches recognized the Osage horses and since the Chaniers were enemies, they accused the Missourians of being spies. James persuaded them otherwise and when he promised to return and trade, the Indians allowed his group to proceed to Santa Fe.²³

A year later James set out from St. Louis for Comanche

²⁰James, Three Years among the Indians, 95-103; Fowler did not mention meeting James at an Osage village. Coues, Jacob Fowler.

²¹Thomas James to President Andrew Jackson, February, 1834 in James W. Covington (ed.), "Thomas James: Traveler to Santa Fe," Missouri Historical Society Bulletin, X (October, 1953), 87. Hereafter cited as Covington, "Thomas James."

²²Thomas James, Three Years among the Indians, 103, 105, 110.

²³Ibid., 113-138.

country with ten men and a keel boat loaded with \$5,500 worth of goods. After entering Three Forks, the Missourians beached the keel boat and proceeded in pirogues. On the upper waters of the North Canadian James built a trading post, and expedition members bartered with Comanches and Kiowas, exchanging tomahawks, guns, ammunition, wampum beads, British strouds, calico, knives, mirrors, and tobacco for beaver skins, buffalo robes, and over three hundred horses and mules. They reaped a handsome profit. Seventeen horses were valued at \$100 each. A buffalo robe, worth "at least five dollars in any of the states," was obtained for "one plug of tobacco, a knife, and a few strings of beads, in all worth but little more than a dime."²⁴

On the return trip most of the horses were lost in a stampede or died from a disease called "the Farcy." James entrusted his share of peltries and the remaining horses and mules to several expedition members going to Arkansas Post. He returned to St. Louis. His associates sold the horses and furs and absconded.²⁵ This embittered James, but he was not disillusioned with the Comanches' trade potential. As late as 1834, he asked President Andrew Jackson for authority to make a treaty with the Comanches who, according to James, wanted "agents, traders, and armourers." The request was denied

²⁴Ibid., 196-199, 201-204, 217.

²⁵Ibid., 216, 234-235. *Ideut Andrew Jackson, February, 1834 in Covington, "Thomas James," 88-89.*

even though his character references were Jacksonian Democrats.²⁶

CHAPTER V

AUGUSTE PIERRE CHOUTEAU, JR. ESTERS

THE THREE FORKS TRADE

In 1815 Colonel A. P. Chouteau, Jr., a former member of the Missouri Fur Company, led an expedition from St. Louis to the headwaters of Arkansas River to trap beaver and trade with the Arapahos and other Indians. A Spanish force captured the Missourians, imprisoned them in Santa Fe, confiscated Chouteau's supplies, pelts and trade goods valued at \$30,000, then allowed them to return to St. Louis. This experience had a telling effect on Chouteau.

On my return home I was determined to abandon a trade that was attended with so much risk until the time when the United States Government would afford its protection to those citizens who embarked their capital and risked their lives in a trade that ultimately must produce advantages to the citizens of the United States.

In the autumn of 1822 Chouteau journeyed to Three Forks with a band of Missouri Osages, who joined Le Chevillon.

¹ James, Three Years among the Indians, 258.

² Foreman, Pioneer Days, 79.

²⁶ William V. Graves, The First Protestant Missions, Thomas James to President Andrew Jackson, February, 1834 in Covington, "Thomas James," 88-89.

He took over the Grand River post his partner Bavoit had constructed in 1817; Cherokee raiders murdered Bavoit in 1821.⁴ Chouteau improved this establishment, eventually one of the most important in La Chanier country. Known as "La Saline," it was a two-story, log house with a

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¹James, Three Years among the Indians, 258.

²Foreman, Pioneer Days, 79.

³William W. Graves, The First Protestant Osage Missions, 1820-1837 (Oswego, Kansas), 156. Hereafter cited as Graves, Protestant Osage Missions.

He took over the Grand River post his partner Revoir had constructed in 1817; Cherokee raiders murdered Revoir in 1821.⁴ Chouteau improved this establishment, eventually one of the most important in La Chanier country. Known as "La Saline," it was a two story, white, log house with a piazza. Visitors noted that the yard teemed with Negroes, Osages, dogs, hens, turkeys, and geese.⁵

At the beginning of his Three Forks operations, Chouteau purchased in St. Louis European merchandise from John Jacob Astor's Western Department of the American Fur Company, which was established in 1822. Chouteau's domestic items included flannel, brown shirting, linsey cloth, worsted yarn, black bombasett, worsted hose, silk handkerchiefs, water pitchers, a "leghorn" hat, shoes, a teapot, corn, cheese, cups and saucers, "Imperial" tea, and cut glass tumblers. Northwest blankets, calico, and ribbon were among his trade goods.⁶

After 1823 he relied on the trade articles of Bernard Pratte, Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company,⁷ another

⁴Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 53-54.

⁵William P. Trent and George S. Hellman (eds.), The Journals of Washington Irving (Boston, 1919), III, 131-132; Grant Foreman, Advancing the Frontier: 1830-1860 (Norman, 1933), 26-27. Hereafter cited as Foreman, Advancing the Frontier.

⁶Journal of the American Fur Company, Western Department, Vol. "D," MHS. September 19, 20, and 25 of 1823; October 3, 10, and 29 of 1823; January 17 and 26 of 1824 and March 3, 13, and 20 of 1824.

⁷This concern was known as Berthold, Chouteau,

St. Louis concern. From this firm, a major Astor competitor, Chouteau purchased beads, traps, axes, lead, tobacco, a limited number of "Dutch" trade rifles, gunpowder, blue cloth, and vermillion.⁸ His trade goods were transported by keel boat up the Missouri to Osage River. Wagons or pack trains carried the goods to White River and delivered to William Montgomery, a Chouteau employee. He supervised delivery of trade goods to La Saline and later Chouteau stations across the Southwest.⁹

Chouteau or his employees, engagees, traded in La Chanier villages, and Indians brought pelts to

Pratte and Company before undergoing reorganization in 1823. "The Reminiscences of General Bernard Pratte, Jr.," Missouri Historical Society Bulletin, VI (October, 1949), 59n.

⁸In August of 1824 Chouteau needed blue cloth for the Osage trade. He had recently received a large shipment of Pratte and Company merchandise including carbines and muskets. Chouteau had 45 packages of skins and 1500 pounds of buffalo fat ready for market. A. P. Chouteau to Bernard Pratte and Company, La Saline, August 30, 1824, Chouteau Collection, MHS; In 1825 Reuben Sanders, a salt merchant on Illinois River and apparently a Chouteau employee, received in St. Louis or Franklin, Missouri a load of Pratte and Company merchandise for A. P. Chouteau. It consisted of twenty-seven traps, six "Dutch" trade rifles, fifteen axes, twenty pounds of lead, and two kegs of gunpowder. R. McKnight to Reuben Sanders, Franklin, Missouri, April 23, 1825, Chouteau Collection, MHS; Foreman, "Salt Works," 483.

⁹A. P. Chouteau to Bernard Pratte and Company, Verdigris, December 17, 1826, Chouteau Collection, MHS; Senate Executive Document No. 90, 22d Cong., 1st Sess., 71; Besides being a Chouteau employee, Montgomery was a missionary. M. L. Wardell, "Protestant Missions among the Osages," Chronicles of Oklahoma, II (September, 1924), 291.

La Saline.¹⁰ Chouteau's furs were shipped via the Arkansas to John G. Stevenson in New Orleans. He shipped them to New York and European markets. Pratte and Company of St. Louis managed this fur distribution system and carried marine insurance at Chouteau's expense.¹¹

With his credit system, Chouteau bound the Chaniers to him. He advanced them supplies, traps, rifles, and other trade goods at a high interest rate, which they paid in "pelt currency." Osages unable to discharge their obligations had to begin a new hunting season with "incentive to industry"; they were forced to work hard and continue trading with Chouteau.¹² Other important factors in Chouteau's rise to prominence among the Arkansas band were his fluency with the Osage language and three Osage women he took as wives. He did this despite the opposition of missionaries near La Saline, who frowned on traders

¹⁰Governor Miller to the Secretary of War, Arkansas Post, March 1, 1822, in Carter, The Territorial Papers XIX, 409-410; James, Three Years among the Indians, 176.

¹¹"How much was the freight from New Orleans to New York by the pound. I ask this in order to settle with the missionaries. Will you please give me an estimate of my account; I do not desire any details, only the total of what I owe you, if that can be done without too much trouble. The furs will be addressed to J. G. Stevenson." A. P. Chouteau to Bernard Pratte and Company, Verdigris, December 17, 1826, Chouteau Collection, MHS.

¹²James, The Raven: A Biography of Sam Houston (Indianapolis, 1929), 107. Hereafter cited as James, The Raven.

"keeping Indian women."¹³

While assuming a dominant position among the Arkansas Osages, Chouteau purchased the Brand and Barbour post on the Verdigris in 1823.¹⁴ This traders' community had several names including Falls City, Sleepyville, Verdigris Falls, Verdigris Landing, and Chouteau's Post. Chouteau placed a cousin, Pierre Milicour Papin, in charge at La Saline, and he took control of the new post. His assistants were Augustus Aristide Chouteau, another cousin, Louis Pharamond Chouteau, a half-brother, and Pierre Liguist Chouteau, a brother.¹⁵

¹³Forest D. Monahan, Jr., "Trade Goods on the Prairie, the Kiowa Tribe and White Trade Goods, 1794-1875," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1965), 144n. Hereafter cited as Monahan, "Trade Goods on the Prairie"; Graves, Protestant Osage Missions, 189, 219; Foreman, Pioneer Days, 258.

¹⁴Graves, Protestant Osage Missions, 60.

¹⁵A. P. Chouteau to Bernard Pratte and Company, Verdigris, December 17, 1826, Chouteau Collection, MHS; James, The Raven, 108; Grant Foreman, Muskogee and Eastern Oklahoma (Muskogee, Oklahoma, n. d.), 32. Hereafter cited as Foreman, Muskogee; A. P. Chouteau to Pierre Milicour Papin, Verdigris, April 6, 1824, in Harry F. Fischer, "The Fur Trade of the Arkansas Valley," (unpublished M. A. thesis, Washington University, St. Louis, 1933), 183-184. Hereafter cited as Fischer, "The Fur Trade of Arkansas Valley"; In 1783 Pierre Chouteau, Sr. married Pelagie Kiersereau and by her had three sons, Auguste Pierre Chouteau, Jr. (1786), Pierre Chouteau, Jr. (1789), and Paul Liguist Chouteau (1792). In 1794 he married Brigitte Saucier and by her had another son, Louis Pharamond Chouteau (1806). Augustus Aristide Chouteau was the son of (Rene) Auguste Chouteau. Louis F. Burns, "The Fur Trading Ventures of Auguste Pierre Chouteau and Pierre "Cadet" Chouteau," (unpublished M. A. thesis, Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, 1950), 8.

Colonel Chouteau's relatives and employees constructed a small shipyard at the mouth of the Verdigris. French creole carpenters constructed keel boats and other river craft to be used on the local rivers and for transporting fur cargoes to New Orleans.¹⁶

Chouteau's success at Three Forks was clouded by an expanding war between the Chaniers and the Cherokees for control of northeastern Oklahoma. Their struggle threatened to engulf Chouteau and other Three Forks traders.

Mississippi West: Pierre Chouteau, Sr. played an important role in the federal scheme. In 1808 he persuaded the Missouri-Osages to accept a treaty agreed to one year later by La Chaniers, ceding to the United States all land in the present state of Arkansas north of Arkansas River and over half of what is today Missouri in return for an annual annuity and a government factory at Fort Clark.¹ The Arkansas band, striving to remain independent of their kinsmen, grudgingly received an annuity of \$500 at Fort Clark until 1817. Five years later, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun authorized Governor James Miller of Arkansas Territory to distribute the annual payments locally.² Later this became the responsibility of agents assigned to the Arkansas band. The Arkansas band's problem of attempting to remain

¹"Osage Treaty, 1808-1809," in *American State Papers, Indian Affairs* (Washington, 1832), I, 763-764.

¹⁶Grant Foreman, Down the Texas Road (Norman, 1936), 25-26. ¹⁹1822, in Carter, The Territorial Papers, XIX, 426.

independent of the northern Osages was small in relation to troubles with Cherokees. In 1809 the federal government moved 300 Cherokees into the area relinquished by the Chaniers, comprising northeastern Arkansas, and they became known as Western or Arkansas Cherokees. This number had

CHAPTER VI

THE CHOUTEAU MONOPOLY

The movement of eastern Indians into Oklahoma was a result of a government plan to relocate them in the trans-Mississippi West. Pierre Chouteau, Sr. played an important role in the federal scheme. In 1808 he persuaded the Missouri Osages to accept a treaty agreed to one year later by La Chaniers, ceding to the United States all land in the present state of Arkansas north of Arkansas River and over half of what is today Missouri in return for an annual annuity and a government factory at Fort Clark.¹ The Arkansas band, striving to remain independent of their kinsmen, grudgingly received an annuity of \$500 at Fort Clark until 1817. Five years later, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun authorized Governor James Miller of Arkansas Territory to distribute the annual payments locally.² Later this became the responsibility of agents assigned to the Arkansas band.

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¹"Osage Treaty, 1808-1809," in American State Papers, Indian Affairs (Washington, 1832), I, 763-764.

²John C. Calhoun to Governor Miller, Washington, April 19, 1822, in Carter, The Territorial Papers, XIX, 426.

independent of the northern Osages was small in relation to troubles with Cherokees. In 1809 the federal government moved 300 Cherokees into the area relinquished by the Chaniers, comprising northeastern Arkansas, and they became known as Western or Arkansas Cherokees. This number had swelled to 2,000 in 1816 when their agent, William Lovely, induced Osages to relinquish the land, called Lovely's Purchase, between the Verdigris and a line slightly east of the present western boundary of Arkansas.³ Cherokees and small bands of Choctaws, Chickasaws, Kickapoos, Delawares, and Shawnees hunted in this area. The Osages used the ammunition of Lewis and Mosely, a White River firm, to repel these interlopers; they also stole furs from the immigrant tribes.⁴ Cherokees retaliated in 1817 by attacking an Osage village. This raid, known as the Battle of Claremore's Mound, killed over eighty La Chaniers and yielded the Cherokees a large amount of plunder.⁵ In their rage over this onslaught, the Chaniers fell upon Cherokees, Delawares, and white traders.⁶

To tame this troubled frontier, the War Department

³Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 36, 41.

⁴Ibid., 86; William Lovely to Governor Clark, Cherokee Agency, August 9, 1814, in Carter, The Territorial Papers, XV, 54.

⁵Niles' Weekly Register, XIII, 27 September 1817 and 3 January 1818, pp. 80, 312.

⁶Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 97, 99.

ordered construction of a post on the Arkansas. This led to the erection of Fort Smith in 1817. Major William Bradford and Major Stephen H. Long supervised its construction. In spite of troops, the Osage conflict continued.

In 1820 a large Cherokee war party cornered a small Osage band at the Pryor-Glenn establishment. Pryor and his assistant, David McKee, conspired to divert the Cherokees' attention while the Chaniers escaped. This ruse angered "Dutch," the Cherokee leader. He confiscated 150 pounds of Pryor's beaver skins. Later Dutch admitted taking the pelts but excused his action since Pryor had not maintained a neutral position. The War Department upheld Dutch, and Pryor was not compensated.⁷

In 1821 a Cherokee raiding party seeking revenge for an earlier Osage attack swept into the Chanier settlements and murdered Joseph Revoir, Chouteau's French-Osage partner. Revoir had no personal interest in the war and thought the Cherokees friendly. "He was an innocent victim and fell prey to the jealousy of the enemy," according to one account.⁸

As the crisis on the Arkansas border intensified, hunters and trappers in the Osage land formed brigades to

⁷Affidavit of David McKee, September 11, 1824, Concerning the Theft at Nathaniel Pryor's Trading House. E. W. Duval's Statement, April 30, 1832, on the Same Issue. Sam Houston to President Andrew Jackson, Wigwam Neosho, December 15, 1830. In Drumm, "Documents Concerning Nathaniel Pryor," 255-256, 258-259.

⁸Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 76.

increase protection. Such expeditions carried trade goods to barter for the Indians' confidence as well as peltries. In 1820 Etienne Vaugine purchased from the Fort Smith sutler thirty "3" point blankets, a brass kettle, and a small quantity of vermilion⁹ and led a hunting party of four Quapaws up Arkansas River. After the kill, they set out for Fort Smith, probably intending to exchange pelts for sutler's merchandise. In the meantime a large band of Osages had gathered near Fort Smith planning to steal munitions. They abandoned this plan but discovered Vaugine's party approaching along the Poteau and murdered three Quapaws. The other hunters escaped. Military personnel investigated and found the victims mutilated; heads, scalps, and ears severed.¹⁰

The Osage fury forced traders south of the Arkansas to Washita, Boggy, Kiamichi, and Blue Rivers where deer, buffalo, bear, and beaver abounded. Early hunters living near these streams were Martin Varner, William Styles, Jacob Barkman, Andrew Robinson, Abraham Anthony, and Adam Lawrence. These men were engaged in agricultural pursuits and hunted to compensate for lean crop years.¹¹

⁹Fort Smith Trader's Journal, September 8, 1820.

¹⁰Mathews, The Osages, 470-471.

¹¹Rex W. Strickland, "Miller County, Arkansas Territory: the Frontier that Men Forgot," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XVIII (March, 1940), 14-17; Nuttal, Journal of Travels, 210, 213, 216.

Foreman, Pioneer Days, 138.

Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 163-164.

Colonel Fredrick Notrebe, a French merchant from New Orleans and a furrier at Arkansas Post since 1816,¹² heard of the abundant game found by Varner and his neighbors. In 1823 he outfitted a party of trappers with horses and equipment and sent them to Blue River under Antoine Barraque. Other brigade members included John McIllmurray of Cadron, Isacc Pennington, an acquaintance of A. P. Chouteau,¹³ Major Curtis Welborn of Fort Smith, and five white trappers, a Negro, and twelve Quapaws. Besides carrying guns, powder, and beaver traps, they brought seven brass kettles to trade with roaming Indians. In the wilderness of Blue River they hoisted an American flag over their camp and tied bells around the horses' necks to avoid being mistaken for hostiles. In only a few days the rich fur bounty of this region yielded the hunters \$1,500 worth of deer skins and twenty-four beaver pelts. Then disaster struck. A band of La Chaniers invaded the encampment, brutally murdered five members including Welborn, and stole trade goods, pelages, munitions, horses, and supplies. Pennington, Barraque, and McIllmurray made their way to Fort Smith and spread news of the Osage assault.¹⁴

The Arkansas band surrendered some of the booty, but not the murderers, to military investigators sent by

¹²Charles H. Brough, "The Industrial History of Arkansas," Publications of the Arkansas Historical Association, I (1906), 193.

¹³Foreman, Pioneer Days, 158.

¹⁴Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 163-164.

Colonel Matthew Arbuckle, who had recently replaced William Bradford as commander of Fort Smith. In 1824 he dispatched Nathaniel Phillbrook, an Osage agent, to request A. P. Chouteau's assistance in bringing the renegade warriors to justice. Two years earlier Phillbrook had reported that Chouteau's influence prevented him from negotiating a peace pact with the Arkansas band.¹⁵ Arbuckle's messenger did not learn if Chouteau would comply; he was mysteriously slain while en route to Verdigris Landing. Finally Nathaniel Pryor, later an Osage agent, persuaded them to relinquish the Blue River killers.¹⁶

During Arbuckle's attempt to apprehend the Chanier fugitives, he received orders to abandon Fort Smith and build a fort in the heart of Osage country to protect peaceful Indians as well as trappers and traders¹⁷ and reduce the Cherokee-Osage depredations. In 1824, after abandoning his post at Belle Point, Arbuckle established Cantonment Gibson near the mouth of Grand River. In the same year Fort Towson was built near the Kiamichi.

Cantonment Gibson soon became the center of civilization for hundreds of miles around and an outfitting

¹⁵Graves, Protestant Osage Missions, 53.

¹⁶Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 167, 170.

¹⁷"Proposition to Hold Treaties With the Tribes Beyond the Mississippi for Preserving the Fur Trade," in American State Papers, Indian Affairs (Washington, 1832), II, 456-457.

point for traders and trappers.¹⁸ John Nicks left his store at Fort Smith in charge of Captain John Rogers and became sutler at Fort Gibson in association with another Captain John Rogers, a Cherokee.¹⁹

After troops arrived on Grand River, daring trappers and traders resumed exploitation of Oklahoma's fur bounty.

In 1826 Colonel Pierre Menard, Jr., a former agent of the Delawares, led an expedition from old Fort Smith to Comanche country with twenty horses carrying trade merchandise.²⁰

Little is known of this venture. Three years later a Mr. Whitesides and four other traders set out from Arkansas to traffic with Comanches. The Indians nearly annihilated this party. One account reported:²¹

The Indians commenced trading with them in a seeming friendly manner but soon commenced the work of massacre. Mr. Whitesides made his escape, by leaping down a high bluff, and concealed himself in a thicket until night, when he returned and saw the bodies of his murdered companions. He picked up a few scraps of meat (having no gun), on which he subsisted sparingly ten days, after which he was five-days without any provisions before he reached our settlements.

In about 1829 Captain John Rogers of Fort Smith

¹⁸Foreman, Muskogee, 19.

¹⁹Elsa Vaught, "Captain John Rogers: Founder of Fort Smith," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, XVII (Autumn, 1958), 247.

²⁰Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 201, 211; Foreman, Pioneer Days, 81; Charles L. Capen, "Amedie Hypolite Menard," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society XII (January, 1920), 624-625.

²¹Cherokee Phoenix, 18 March 1829.

headed an expedition to the mouth of Washita River. There he bartered merchandise for peltries from a band of roving Cherokees. He apparently made frequent trading ventures to this area; a blazed trail from Fort Smith to the Washita came to be known as Roger's Road.²²

Rogers, Whitesides, and Menard were exceptions in the Oklahoma fur trade while the Osage conflict continued. The majority of fur merchants remained near Fort Gibson. Chouteau's experience with the Spanish taught him the folly of making expeditions onto the Plains. He remained at Three Forks and even during the Indian struggle carried on a profitable trade. In 1824 he shipped over 38,000 pounds of furs to New Orleans.²³ Among the cargoes were furs brought in by northern Osages, who by this time were living in what became southeastern Kansas. With the aid of Colonel Chouteau, Paul Ligest Chouteau cemented this commercial tie, which lasted a year or two.²⁴ A letter of January 3, 1824 from A. P. Chouteau on the Verdigris to Pierre Milicour Papin at La Saline reveals their relationship

²²James H. Gardner, "The Last Captain: J. L. Dawson of Old Fort Gibson," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXI (September, 1943), 244. Hereafter cited as Gardner, "The Lost Captain."

²³Foreman, Pioneer Days, 83.

²⁴A. P. Chouteau received a license to trade with the northern Osages and Kickapoos for one year on October 5, 1823 and invested \$15,450. House Document No. 54, 18th Cong., 2d Sess., 4.

with Paul Liguest and problems with credit among the
Chaniers:²⁵

I received a letter from Ligueste who gives me little detail excepting that he traded 92 packs with the Little Osages; I am wondering how many skins are in the packages, I am in constant fear of his being duped by others owing to the great trust he puts in everyone. He asks that I send him back Baptiste at once. You will have Baptiste take his yellow horse and start him off as soon as possible, an old Scotchman by the name of McCarty came with Baptiste, it was he who had charge of the wagons which brought the merchandise. They paid 2 dollars per hundred to have them brought to him. Major McCarty told me that he had but very few skins. Send for Baptiste Noel and have the Indians come and pay their credit make the trade at once, if you neglect this, you make your [self] responsible for anything which may occur, this is all I need to say.

The Osages have stolen 7 horses from the Cherokees, this is why I sent Chouteau to get them back if possible. I send you Ligueste's letter. I send you also the account books of la Chaniers, the old ones made at "La Saline" those made this Fall who did not come to pay as well as the new ones, you should be very careful with La Cheniers men who may go to you, they are making every effort this year to steal the credits, credit received 4445 skins from trade 3048 skins- 200 Beaver- 20 Otter- 108 Cat, 40 Bear skins- 72 large young bears- Try to send to Ligueste by Baptiste 100 twists of tobacco which you will have him load on the horses, you can wrap this up in some of the spoiled skins &c. If Campbell comes by here, we must try to make him trade, through the Indians, all of our spoiled skins as well as the bad cat skins. When you send for the Indians for the credits and trade, tell them that I want to send a Barge on the next voyage, this is in order to have time to urge them, I fear that I shall not be able to go to your help with the credits as I had promised, as those from here have not paid everything and it is difficult to make them.

I still have 2 barrels of tobacco, some of which I can send you at another time.

²⁵In Fischer, "The Fur Trade of the Arkansas Valley," 183-184. In this letter and the following two, Chouteau refers to bands of the northern Osages as Little Osages or "Cheveux Blancs." He also mentions the "Grosse Cote" village, which was a La Chanier community.

²⁶Verdigris, in *Ibid.*, 184-186.

Prepare yourself to go to Chiwawa next Summer, and Lambert also, we shall pass by the warm spring, the Summer will be spent on this voyage which will last two months.

When the Indians shall come to trade, try to have some cords for the tobacco and pipes, should you be unable to get them for that, give something else we have here only enough for ourselves. Instead of sending 100 twists of tobacco send Ligest 200 or 250 skeins of wool. I am sending him from here 150 twists of tobacco, 100# Vermillion, he does not ask me for these things, but I am sure that he will have need of them before long.

On January 12, 1824 Chouteau wrote Papin warning him of problems he might face in trading with La Chaniers:²⁶

It is true that revenge is natural to all men, but at the same time it should not so madden them as to make them forgetful of their first duty, after having exercised you in your resentment, you should have remembered that after all my object is furs, therefore having been to the Band of the "Cheveux Blancs" White Hairs, you should tell me more or less, what furs they have and if the six Lodges who left had paid their credits, either to Baptiste or to you, as you have the old ones and the new account books.

If the Cheniers people go to you and they pay their credits and they have furs, you may trade with them, but let it be after many questions to know if they have not besides their own furs, some belonging to others, for it would be folly not to trade with them, particularly when we are apprehensive of competition [italics mine]; Of what you tell me of Baptiste Noel, I have no difficulty in believing and it is impossible to stop his tongue, but as long as we have him we should obtain from him the best service possible.

I cannot conceive why Brugier undersold us, I hope that you will do your utmost not to lower your price with the Band of White Hairs unless it be on the American robes of the 4th quality, one or two skins and you should see that they do not keep the skins as they did last year, arrange it so.

Chouteau writes me from the "Grosse Cote" that Reneau has 900 deer skins, 100 beaver, 15 Otter, 120 Cat, whereas Christof [sic] has gotten but 150 deer skins. He also tells me that he doubts getting back the kids from the Cherokees he went to see Ligeste, on his return we shall have an exact statement of the furs which Ligeste has obtained, I have 127 packs

²⁶Verdigris, in Ibid., 184-186.

already made up and about 45 to 50 to make and have only enough cord to make 10 at most, it is impossible to obtain any. I made up my mind to send to the Missionaries to obtain some Buffalo robes, this should not prevent your trying to trade some for pipes and tobacco, when you will give 1 pipe and 1 twist of tobacco per cord, as you know these are articles which in the end must be given for nothing, therefore if it be possible to redeem anything let us do so. The House tenders its compliments on the manner in which you conducted negotiations with the thief De Chin &c. as to myself, I admit blushing for my own too rash judgment and recognize your capability. You may have Joe Blaven discharged, he owes me. I am sending Cardinal to help you to do the stamping and take stock that all may be in readiness when the men shall go there. The thief De Chin is the brother in law of John Lafon who owes us for 1 pick-axe and 4 skins. As they live together, one or the other should pay that credit.

As soon as your last trade will have been made, I want you to send Lambert back to me, this is the main reason why I am sending you Cardinal; let him return on one of my horses which you have at the Saline,- No joking see that Lambert returns- Let the advance to the men be very small, the bearer has already taken a great deal.

I do not recall whether I told you about du goche, he gave me 50 skins on his credit and since that time he has received a "Cotillion" cloth of three bars, which equals 16 skins. The Indians consider it very fine but are too poor to buy them.

A letter from Chouteau to Papin, dated April 6,

1824 reveals the river transport methods used by traders:²⁷

I should have been glad to have had news of you before my departure, to know how goes the trade. The furs of Ligeste not having come down is a great disappointment. If you are packing bear skins, put them up in packs of 20 skins each and try to send them all by Ligeste's people, you will have them leave as soon as possible, for should they not reach New Orleans before the first of May it would do us a great deal of harm, Louis after making the coal trip will join you to bring down the canoe, I have bought Louis' mare, and see to it that should his former brother in law go to the Saline, that he does not steal her.

²⁷Verdigris, in Ibid., 186-187.

I beg you not to run the horse which Ligeste brought me, the troops being near us will necessitate our putting up a supply of provisions of every kind, so tell the old man and the old woman to do their utmost. If Ligeste wishes to bring the two "font" of oil, give them to him. I am sending you 4 Battle axes, to obtain oil you may give them one axe per "font," and even something additional. I wish you to come all the way here with the canoes in order to have them at once, my return here is very uncertain, I do not think that I shall go to New Orleans, the troops coming here, I wish to return at once, you will leave the canoes at the mouth of the niocho river and send down the Barge and load her there and have her leave immediately. In your letter which you will write, let me know how to distinguish the female bear skins from the male. Give to Baptiste Noel for me two red cloth blankets. The canoe should measure from 16 to 20 feet in length.

"We are apprehensive of competition" is one of many interesting comments made in these letters. While in the employ of Pierre Menard, Jr., a Mr. Guillness trafficked with the Chaniers but was not a major threat to Chouteau.²⁸ Nathaniel Pryor's profits were small as a fur merchant,²⁹ Hugh Glenn apparently returned to his Cincinnati home after the Fowler expedition reached St. Louis,³⁰ and Joseph Bogy

²⁸Foreman, Pioneer Days, 80-81.

²⁹James, The Raven, 108.

³⁰In July of 1822 Glenn accompanied the Fowler expedition to St. Louis. Coues, Jacob Fowler, 159-160; On July 16, 1822 Glenn purchased \$437 worth of merchandise, including "four kegs," from the Western Department for Eli Ward, Richard Walters, Barbo, Bono, Taylor, and Baptiste "his boy," all members of the Fowler expedition. Two days later he bought twelve hunting pipes. Journal of the American Fur Company, Western Department, June 22, 1822-December 12, 1831. Vol. "F," MHS; On July 25, 1822 Glenn's account with the Western Department showed a balance "due him" of \$2624. Document Signed by Ramsay Crooks, Chouteau Collection, MHS; This evidence seems to indicate that Glenn intended to return to Three Forks loaded with trade goods. Thomas James states that Glenn went to Cincinnati after reaching St. Louis. Three Years among the Indians,

abandoned the Osage country before Chouteau's arrival.³¹

At the outset, the Fort Gibson sutler made little headway in the Osage trade.³² Lilburn W. Boggs, owner of a merchandise store in Franklin, Missouri, built a trading house near La Saline in November of 1824. After a year Boggs returned to Missouri where he later became governor.³³ By 1826 Chouteau enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the Chanier trade.

His status improved in the same year when Bernard Pratte, Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company became agents of the American Fur Company's Western Department.³⁴ In this capacity, they furnished Chouteau with European trade goods

174; Before his decease in the early 1830's, Glenn became a Missouri landowner. Ibid., 109n; The following two sources do not substantiate Glenn's presence at Three Forks after 1821 but indicate the possibility. Samuel C. Roane to Virgil Maxcy, Little Rock, January 15, 1831, in The Territory of Arkansas, 1829-1836, Vol. XXI of The Territorial Papers of the United States, ed. Clarence E. Carter (Washington, 1954), 310; Foreman, Pioneer Days, 243-244.

³¹ Shortly after Nuttall's 1819 visit, Bogy apparently abandoned the Three Forks region.

³² By 1834 the Fort Gibson sutler was making greater headway in the Osage trade. George Catlin, Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians (London, 1844), II, 40. Hereafter cited as Catlin, Letters and Notes.

³³ William B. Boggs, "A Short Biographical Sketch of Lilburn W. Boggs," Missouri Historical Review, IV (January, 1910), 106; Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 125.

³⁴ Pierre Chouteau, Jr. to Bernard Pratte and Company, New York, December 21, 1826, Chouteau Collection, MHS; Most papers of the American Fur Company prior to 1834 were destroyed during a New York fire of 1835, leaving the history of Colonel Chouteau's relationship with this concern incomplete. American Historical Association, Annual Report for the Year 1944: Calendar of the American Fur Company's Papers (Washington, 1945), II, 521. Hereafter cited as AHA, American Fur Company's Papers, II.

received from John Jacob Astor in New York, who also sent trade rifles made by the Henry Company of Pennsylvania.³⁵ Pratte and Company continued sending merchandise via Missouri and Osage Rivers to William Montgomery on White River³⁶ or by steamboats, which began making regular runs to Fort Gibson in 1826. These vessels carried Chouteau's pelts from the Verdigris and St. Louis to John G. Stevenson in New Orleans, who shipped them to New York and European markets.³⁷

The mechanics of sending merchandise and receiving furs were significant changes in Chouteau's relationship with his brother's concern. The price scale on Chouteau's trade goods also changed. As agents of John Jacob Astor,

³⁵Carl P. Russell, Guns on the Early Frontier: A History of Firearms from Colonial Times through the Years of the Western Fur Trade (Berkeley, 1957), 134.

³⁶A. P. Chouteau to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., Verdigris, August 22, 1829, Chouteau Collection, MHS; In 1830 and 1831 Amable Cayon, Louis Peltier, Joseph Sabeigo, a "Giraud," and Pierre Milicour Papin delivered A. P. Chouteau's goods. Accounts of Colonel Chouteau for October 22, 1830 and August 3, 1831, in Retail Store Ledger of the American Fur Company, Western Department, August 1, 1829-November 3, 1832, Vol. "R," MHS.

³⁷On June 3, 1831 and May 26, 1832 the Phoenix left St. Louis bound for New York with Colonel Chouteau's pelts. On June 13, 1831 the Walter Scott, which made runs to Fort Gibson, set out from St. Louis for New York with Chouteau's furs. Packing Book of the American Fur Company Western Department, October 14, 1830-April, 1833, Vol. "S," MHS; Invoice of Skins Shipped by A. P. Chouteau to John G. Stevenson in 1831, Chouteau Collection, MHS; Ramsay Crooks to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., New York, August 2, 1832, Chouteau Collection, MHS; William B. Astor to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., New York, March 30, 1832, Chouteau Collection, MHS; Grant Foreman, "River Navigation in the Early Southwest," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XV (June, 1928), 35-37.

Pratte and Company followed his regulations of charging high prices to compensate for transportation costs from Europe.³⁸

Chouteau annually "introduced" \$20,000 worth of merchandise into the Three Forks trade.³⁹ Most of it came from the American Fur Company. The Fort Gibson sutler also furnished him with trade articles.⁴⁰ New Three Forks merchants found

Chouteau's extravagance hard to contend with.

CHANGE IN COMMERCE AT THREE FORKS

A change in Three Forks commerce began in 1823. La Chaniers ceded to the Federal government their remaining territory in Oklahoma, which included all land north of the Arkansas and Canadian. They agreed to move to a reservation in present southern Kansas. Two years later the Creeks began moving into northeastern Oklahoma as a result of a removal treaty with the United States. This situation was compounded in 1828 when the government gave the Cherokees virtually the same area with an indefinite westward outlet. The Osages refused to leave Three Forks, pressing agents David Brearley, John F. Hamtramck, and E. W. Duff, of the Creeks, Osages, and Cherokees respectively, to keep peace in the Fort Gibson area. It was claimed that the

³⁸Isacc J. Lippincott, "A Century and a Half of the Fur Trade at St. Louis," Washington University Studies, Vol. III, No. 2 (St. Louis, 1916), 234. Hereafter cited as Lippincott, "A Century and a Half of the Fur Trade."

³⁹Copy of a Six Page Statement by A. P. Chouteau Before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs in 1831. Chouteau File, OHS.

⁴⁰Foreman, Muskogee, 19.

concubine and munitions for La Chanier warriors to use against white settlers. All of the agents were charged with keeping annuities and in default of currency, issuing certificates of indebtedness. Frontier merchants and traders purchased these

CHAPTER VII

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The Osages refused to leave Three Forks, pressing agents David Brearley, John F. Hamtramck, and E. W. Duval, of the Creeks, Osages, and Cherokees respectively, to keep peace in the Fort Gibson area. It was claimed that the agents themselves encouraged occasional unrest. Duval reportedly sold the Indians whisky, and Hamtramck was accused of spending annuities on trinkets for his Osage

¹Charles J. Kappler (ed.), Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties (Washington, 1904), II, 95-97. Hereafter cited as Kappler, Indian Affairs, II; Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 255, 260.

concubine and munitions for La Chanier warriors to use against white settlers. All of the agents were charged with keeping annuities and in default of currency, issuing certificates of indebtedness. Frontier merchants and traders purchased these due bills from the Indians with whisky and other cheap trade goods.² Traders looked upon the annual payments as an easy source of income and a supplement to declining profits from the fur trade. A buffalo robe, which had sold for \$6 in about 1810, brought only \$3 by 1830.³

Colonel Hugh Love, a new merchant on the Verdigris, realized that market prices on furs were dropping and relied more on the Creeks annuities, furnishing them guns, ammunition, and clothing.⁴ Chouteau, who sold part of his Verdigris establishment to the Creek agency in 1827, trafficked in annuities with Creeks and Osages and depended more on this trade than furs.⁵ Also in 1827, Chouteau sold Hamtramck

²Foreman, Pioneer Days, 183-184; James, The Raven, 109-110, 126.

³Chittenden, The American Fur Trade, I, 7-8.

⁴Foreman, Pioneer Days, 84n, 193; Grant Foreman, The Five Civilized Tribes (Norman, 1934), 149. Hereafter cited as Foreman, The Five Civilized Tribes.

⁵Ibid.; Foreman, Pioneer Days, 69; Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 261n; "For this year [1826], although there will be fewer furs, I hope they will be better, as I have already [sold] to the Osages upon their annuities for \$3500. And this advance was made by order of Major Atrameck, their agent; for the balance of what will accrue to them from their annuities. Hereafter I calculate more on the annuities

\$3,980 worth of merchandise. It consisted of 1,895 pounds of gunpowder, 50 rifles, 2,500 flints, 3,700 pounds of lead, over 300 pounds of tobacco, 40 yards of scarlet cloth and strouding, 80 pieces of calico, 4 "3" point blankets, 4 "2½" point blankets, 6 "2" blankets, 4 pairs of arm bands, 100 pairs of ear bobs, 2 pounds of vermillion, and hundreds of knives.⁶

Hamtramck and the other agents became objects of Sam Houston's hostility when he arrived at Three Forks in 1829 and established a trading house, "Wigwam Neosho," near Fort Gibson. Houston, known to the Cherokees as "the Raven," learned of Hamtramck and Brearley's misdealings. He also witnessed Duval going among the Cherokees ostensibly to pay them their \$50,000 indemnity and \$2,000 annuity, but instead he issued due bills and "Merchants who had connections with agents purchased these certificates for a mere song. A Mackinaw blanket, a flask of powder, and even a bottle of whisky was often all these defrauded exiles ever got for the plighted faith of our Government."⁷

Houston denounced the sale of whisky to the tribes at a time "when he was far from being a practically temperate

of the different tribes who will be settled near this place than on the furs." A. P. Chouteau to Bernard Pratte and Company, Verdigris, December 17, 1826, Chouteau Collection, MHS.

⁶Account of J. F. Hamtramck with A. P. Chouteau, June 18, 1827, Chouteau Collection, MHS.

⁷James, The Raven, 110, 126.

man himself."⁸ The Raven journeyed to Washington in 1830 and reported the agents' corrupt practices. They were dismissed. P. L. Chouteau became the new Osage agent, General John Campbell of Tennessee replaced Brearley, and Captain George Vashon from Maryland was appointed agent of the Cherokees.⁹ Following his return to Three Forks, Houston accused Colonel Love of defrauding the Creeks and recommended A. P. Chouteau as an Indian Commissioner.¹⁰

Besides being a critic of activities around Fort Gibson, Houston bartered for Indian pelts from Wigwam Neosho while living with a Cherokee woman, Talahina Rogers. He formed a partnership with John Drew, a New Orleans trader,¹¹ and associated with Walter Webber, a Cherokee peltry dealer, Ben Hawkins, a whisky runner, and John Drennan and his partner David Thompson, two fur merchants.¹² These traders like Colonel Love arrived at Three Forks about the same time as the Raven; all of them except Love were among his well-wishers when he left for Texas in December of 1832.

⁸Ibid., 126.

⁹Foreman, Pioneer Days, 184-185.

¹⁰Ibid., 182n, 193.

¹¹Carolyn T. Foreman, "A Creek Pioneer," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXI (September, 1926), 271; On April 17, 1830 John Drew received a license to trade on Grand River after posting a bond of \$1,820. He employed \$410.25 as capital. House Executive Document No. 41, 21st Cong., 2d Sess.

¹²Foreman, Pioneer Days, 84n, 184, 195, 205; Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 227n.

At the time of Houston's departure, the Osages still refused to leave Three Forks. In 1833 the Indian problem improved when the Creeks agreed to settle the land between Canadian and Arkansas Rivers, and two years later Eastern Cherokees consented to move to their kinsmen's home. Numerous treaties were negotiated with remaining Southeastern tribes before they departed their native lands for Oklahoma. By 1837 they had been assigned large sections of the state; the Seminoles received part of the Creek Nation and the Choctaws were allocated southern Oklahoma with the Chickasaws west of them as a district of the Choctaw Nation.¹³

It was well that the Seminoles, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Cherokees were primarily agriculturalists. By 1834 most of the game in eastern Oklahoma had been slaughtered.¹⁴ Those members of these tribes who preferred the chase to farming and Osages hunted on the Plains where game abounded.¹⁵ The Wichitas,¹⁶ Kiowas, and Comanches resented

¹³Muriel H. Wright, A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma (Norman, 1951), 134-135; Kappler, Indian Affairs, II, 191-195, 214-215, 264-266, 290, 344-345, 394-395, 439, 486.

¹⁴Foreman, The Five Civilized Tribes, 104-105, 153, 156, 244; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1842, 445-457; Foreman, Indians and Pioneers, 246n.

¹⁵In 1836 Choctaws hunted more for pleasure than the "pursuit of game." Chickasaws made occasional hunts and exchanged their peltries for the merchandise of frontier storekeepers in eastern Oklahoma and those at Fort Smith and Van Buren, Arkansas. Foreman, The Five Civilized Tribes, 34, 105.

¹⁶Besides being hunters, the Wichitas were

intruders in their hunting grounds. In order to prevent war between the eastern Indians and Plains tribes, the government in 1835 made a treaty with the Comanches and Wichitas by which they promised to live at peace with the immigrant tribes and guaranteed American citizens safe passage across the prairie. The Kiowas agreed to a similar one two years later.¹⁷ These treaties paved the way for trade with the Plains Indians.

Chouteau shipped 14,684 pounds of pelts including bear, raccoon, beaver, "red" deer, "shaved" deer, and "gray" deer skins to John G. Stevenson in New Orleans.¹ Seven years earlier he had shipped 38,000 pounds of furs to the Crescent City.² This decrease reflected the scarcity of game at Three Forks.³ Increasing competition from such merchants as Colonel Love, Jesse B. Turley, a new arrival on the Verdigris, and the Fort Gibson sutler⁴ influenced Chouteau to consider shifting his base of operations. In 1834, one year after a destructive flood of the Fort Gibson

¹ Invoice of Skins Shipped in 1831 by A. P. Chouteau to John G. Stevenson of New Orleans; Chouteau Collection, NMS.

² Foreman, Pioneer Days, 83.

³ In 1831 Chouteau stated that game was scarce in all areas of the fur trade. Senate Executive Document No. 30, 23.

agriculturalists. Fred S. Perrine (ed.), "The Journal of Hugh Evans, Covering the First and Second Campaigns of the United States Dragoon Regiment in 1834 and 1835," Chronicles of Oklahoma, III (September, 1925), 192. Hereafter cited as Perrine, "The Journal of Hugh Evans."

¹⁷ Kappler, Indian Affairs, II, 435-436, 489. Chouteau, Jr. and reported "I sold merchandise to Major Hugh Love but he is having difficulty at New York." Chouteau Collection, NMS. Love's problem of obtaining a trading license may have been due to Houston's accusations.

CHAPTER VIII

FUR TRADE ON THE PLAINS

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¹Invoice of Skins Shipped in 1831 by A. P. Chouteau to John G. Stevenson of New Orleans, Chouteau Collection, MHS.

²Foreman, Pioneer Days, 83.

³In 1831 Chouteau stated that game was scarce in all areas of the fur trade. Senate Executive Document No. 90, 22d Cong., 1st Sess., 60-61.

⁴Foreman, Pioneer Days, 84n; Catlin, Letters and Notes, II, 40; On May 30, 1834, while in Philadelphia, A. P. Chouteau wrote to Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and reported "I sold my merchandise to Major Hugh Love but he is having difficulty obtaining a license. My skins were sold at New York." Chouteau Collection, MHS. Love's problem of obtaining a trading license may have been due to Houston's accusations.

area cost him an estimated \$10,000, Chouteau established a trading house near Fort Holmes in present Hughes County.⁵ This post was built as a supply base for a dragoon expedition leaving Fort Gibson in June of 1834 to influence the Plains tribes to agree to a peace conference.⁶ While waiting to depart with the dragoons, artist George Catlin reported:⁷

There is already in this place a company of eighty men fitted out who are to start to-morrow to overtake these Indians [a Comanche, fifteen Kiowas, and others] a few miles from this place, and accompany them home, with a large stock of goods, with traps for catching beavers, &c, calculating to build a trading-house amongst them, where they will amass at once, an immense fortune, being the first traders and trappers that have ever been in that part of the country.

In the same year Chouteau expanded, John Jacob Astor retired from the American Fur Company because furs were declining in value as silk and other materials replaced them.⁸ Ramsay Crooks, a long time Astor associate, became president of the American Fur Company and sold the Western Department to Pratte, Chouteau, and Company in 1834. They

⁵The Daily Oklahoman, 9 October 1960, p. 4; According to one source, Chouteau's post in Hughes County was constructed in 1835. Maurice Fulton (ed.), Diary and Letters of Josiah Gregg: Southwestern Enterprises, 1840-1847 (Norman, 1944), I, 67n.

⁶Carolyn T. Foreman, "Lieutenant-General Theophilus Hunter Holmes, C. S. A., Founder of Fort Holmes," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXXV (Winter, 1957-58), 426. Hereafter cited as Foreman, "Theophilus Hunter Holmes"; Perrine, "The Journal of Hugh Evans," 182n.

⁷Catlin, Letters and Notes, II, 82-83.

⁸Lippincott, "A Century and a Half of the Fur Trade," 233.

were still known as the Western Department. The American Fur Company's headquarters in New York continued marketing their peltries and furnishing them trade goods.⁹ One change related to Chouteau was that J. Merle and Company in New Orleans replaced John G. Stevenson as the recipient of Pratte's peltries.¹⁰

In 1835 Chouteau established a trading post several miles northeast of present Lexington and a short distance from Camp Mason where the Comanche-Wichita treaty was negotiated. A regular clerk,¹¹ possibly Joe Chadwick of St. Louis,¹² managed this establishment, known as "Chofan's,"¹³ with the assistance of P. L. Chouteau and his son Edward.¹⁴

According to one source, Osages trafficked at Chouteau's newest establishment.¹⁵ But La Chanier visits were

⁹AHA, American Fur Company's Papers, II, 522.

¹⁰Phillips, The Fur Trade, 518-519.

¹¹"Osage Notes," Grant Foreman Collection, Box 22, Vol. 37, p. 278, GML.

¹²Monahan, "Trade Goods on the Prairie," 108n; Catlin, Letters and Notes, II, 50.

¹³Howard F. Van Zandt, "The History of Camp Holmes and Chouteau's Trading Post," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XIII (September, 1935), 316-318.

¹⁴Foreman, Pioneer Days, 225-226, 231, 233, 238.

¹⁵"The American Fur Company (that mighty origin of almost all moral evil) is now exerting influence among the Osage. This company is about establishing themselves extensively on the borders of the Pawny and Comanch Country. To which place they will assuredly draw off the Osage." Caption, Union 9, November 1, 1835, to D. Greene, in "Osage Notes," Grant Foreman Collection, Box 22, Vol. 37, p. 274, GML.

infrequent. Comanches, Kiowas, and Wichitas traded regularly at Chofan's,¹⁶ a popular place because of its location west of a dense forest known as the Cross Timbers which these tribes disliked traveling through due to the scarcity of buffalo.¹⁷ Comanche traffic probably was influenced by Edward Chouteau's fluency with their language.¹⁸

In 1837 Chouteau increased his prestige among the Kiowas, who referred to him as "Soto," by constructing a trading post southwest of Chofan's near present Fort Sill in Comanche County. This establishment, which commenced the modern history of the Kiowas, was left in charge of a clerk called "Tome-te."¹⁹

While trading with the Kiowas, Wichitas, and Comanches, Chouteau shipped many packs of deer skins, buffalo robes, and other pelts down the Arkansas to Merle and Company.²⁰ Between 1835 and 1838 he wrote to Ramsay Crooks,

¹⁶Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 232n.

¹⁷Joseph B. Thoburn and Muriel H. Wright, Oklahoma: A History of the State and Its People (New York, 1929), I, 87. Hereafter cited as Thoburn and Wright, Oklahoma.

¹⁸McDermott, Tixier's Travels, 136-137.

¹⁹James Mooney, Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians: Seventeenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington, 1898), 172, 283, 383. Hereafter cited as Mooney, Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians; W. S. Nye, Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill (Norman, 1937), 18-19.

²⁰(1) Auguste P. Chouteau to Ramsay Crooks, Verdigris, May 10, 1835. (2) Merle and Company to Ramsay Crooks, New Orleans, May 22, 1835. (3) Ramsay Crooks to Siter, Price, & Co. of Philadelphia, New York, June 6, 1835. (4) Benjamin

who dispatched trade goods directly to the Verdigris, requesting Northwest rifles, wampum moons, pipes, and beads, and vermilion to trade with "prairie Indians." Crooks once sent Chouteau "lances" because Northwest rifles were not available.²¹

During this four year period, Chouteau's trade goods from Pratte and Company were delivered in small quantities to Three Forks by John Solomond, Thomas Vesbonerurt, Franklin Robiona, David Grenier, Ilve Giguierre, Silvestre Leroux, Louis Dervis, "Tornichi,"²² Antoine Jarvis, L. N. Bogy, and Tvinche Dehetre.²³ Papin and P. L. Chouteau brought larger loads. In the late spring of 1837, Papin and M. Giraud left St. Louis bound for Three Forks with 7 chief's cloth coats,

Clapp to Auguste P. Chouteau, New York, August 11, 1835. (5) Ramsay Crooks to Merle and Company, New York, March 1, 1836. (6) Auguste P. Chouteau to Ramsay Crooks, Western Creek Agency, April 17, 1836. (7) Auguste P. Chouteau to Ramsay Crooks, Verdigris, April 20, 1836. (8) Ramsay Crooks to Pratte, Chouteau, and Co., New York, June 25, 1836. In AHA, American Fur Company's Papers, II, (1) 62, (2) 68, (3) 73, (4) 92, (5) 153, (6) 170, (7) 171, (8) 201.

²¹(1) Auguste P. Chouteau to Ramsay Crooks, Verdigris, April 26, 1836. (2) Auguste P. Chouteau to Ramsay Crooks, Verdigris, June 10, 1836. (3) Ramsay Crooks to Auguste P. Chouteau, New York, June 13, 1836. (4) Auguste P. Chouteau to Ramsay Crooks, Verdigris, January 24, 1837. In Ibid., (1) 174, (2) 195, (3) 196, (4) 264.

²²Retail Store Ledger of the American Fur Company, Western Department, April 5, 1834-September 7, 1837. Vol. "X," MHS. October 25, 1836 and April 25, 1837.

²³Retail Store Ledger of the American Fur Company, Western Department, February 22, 1837-June 4, 1841. Vol. "AA," MHS. July 2, 1837, March 4, 1838, and April 10, 1839. Tvinche Dehetre's trip of July 2, 1837 from St. Louis to Three Forks and back took forty-three days.

60 cock feathers, 600 "Wilson's" butcher knives, 800 common broaches, 100 wampum hair pipes, 200 head bands, 200 pairs of ear bobs, 600 pounds of "Dupont's" gunpowder, 110 axes, 6 powder flasks, 6 sets of wampum moons, 600 strings of cut glass beads, a large quantity of vermilion and two wagons and eight oxes²⁴ to transport this merchandise across the Plains to Chofan's and Tome'-te. During the summer of 1837, P. L. Chouteau delivered an almost identical load of American Fur Company goods from St. Louis to the Verdigris post.²⁵

Some of Chouteau's trade articles went to the tribes at Three Forks. The majority of the items were traded to Comanches and Kiowas. Kiowas also received his merchandise as gifts. In May of 1837 Colonel Chouteau helped negotiate the Kiowa treaty and furnished presents at his expense.²⁶

It is conceivable that Chouteau traded his large quantity of merchandise to other Plains tribes. A recent account of Chouteau's activities states that in about 1837 he built a post, which operated a short time, near present Clinton in Custer County to traffic with Southern Cheyennes

²⁴Invoices Outward of the American Fur Company, Western Department, February 3, 1834-October 30, 1839. Vol. "Y," MHS. Papin and M. Giraud were "due" to reach the "Osage trading post the property of Pratte and Company" with A. P. Chouteau's merchandise by July 1, 1837. For further discussion of the Pratte concern's ownership of a Chouteau post at Three Forks see note thirty-five of this chapter.

²⁵Ibid., July 15, 1837.

²⁶Foreman, Pioneer Days, 229, 230n, 231.

and Arapahos.²⁷ These tribes lived on the upper Arkansas and hunted buffalo on Oklahoma's western margins.²⁸ The profitable trade Chouteau enjoyed with the Arapahos during his ill-fated expedition of 1815-1817 could have encouraged him to construct it.

Such an establishment would have been unpopular with William Bent, a fur merchant who trafficked with Cheyennes and Arapahos. His trading post, Bent's Fort or Fort William, was built during the early 1830's in present Otero County, Colorado and served as headquarters for a trading empire in the Central Plains. Bent, a partner of his brother Charles and Ceran St. Vrain and the employer of Kit Carson, had numerous helpers. Some were storekeepers, who traded with Indians in the area of his post. Herders took care of the stock, wagoners carried peltries to St. Louis and received supplies and trade articles while merchants traveled to Cheyenne-Arapaho villages to barter.²⁹

Besides being a possible Chouteau competitor for the Cheyenne-Arapaho trade, Bent trafficked with Kiowas and Comanches. In 1835 he traded with Comanches on Canadian or

²⁷Daily Oklahoman, 9 October 1960, p. 4.

²⁸Donald J. Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes (Norman, 1963), 82; Mildred P. Mayhall, The Kiowas (Norman, 1962), 78. Hereafter cited as Mayhall, The Kiowas.

²⁹George B. Grinnell, "Bent's Old Fort and Its Builders," Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, XV (1919-1922), 29, 31, 33, 90; George B. Grinnell, Beyond the Old Frontier (New York, 1913), 171-172.

Red River.³⁰ Five years later the Cheyennes, by virtue of a treaty, allowed Comanches and Kiowas to trade at Fort William.³¹

In the meantime Bent's rivalry with A. P. Chouteau had ended on Christmas, 1838 when Chouteau died at Fort Gibson, leaving a debt of about \$40,000.³² Kiowas and Comanches did not learn of his passing until the following year when Dr. Josiah Gregg, a pioneer historian of the Santa Fe Trail, visited Chofan's while accompanying a caravan to New Mexico. "Great was their grief," Gregg stated, "when we informed them that their favorite trader had died the previous winter."³³

³⁰Bent stated that he traded with Comanches on Red River but since the Canadian was called the "Red" and Kiowas roamed between them, it is possible that he trafficked with Comanches and Kiowas on the Canadian where he later built trading posts. Monahan, "Trade Goods on the Prairie," 138n-139n; Indians called the Washita "Little Red River." Gardner, "The Lost Captain," 6.

³¹Mayhall, The Kiowas, 76, 81.

³²Chouteau's estate included five ox wagons, one horse, one mule, twelve log chains, nineteen "yoke" oxen, one hundred fifteen pounds of beeswax, four brass kettles, fourteen old shot guns and rifles, numerous trade blankets, and two coils of manilla rope. Other items listed were farming utensils, furniture, blacksmith and carpenter tools, window glass, eleven "punches," heading (weading) tools, fourteen large files, ten pairs of tongs, two sledge hammers, one screw wrench, one "mouse" hole anvil, one common anvil, three screw plates, one cleaver, and one "pull" dog. Statement of Merchandise and Property, a Part of the Estate of A. P. Chouteau, Deceased, Left in Charge of Major P. L. Chouteau, at Camp Holmes on March 12, 1839, Chouteau Collection, MHS; Foreman, Pioneer Days, 257.

³³Josiah Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies (New York, 1844), II, 19.

During the year of Chouteau's decease, Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company replaced Pratte and Company as the Western Department.³⁴ This concern did not assume control of Chouteau's empire.³⁵ However, Bent was unable to monopolize the Kiowa-Comanche trade. In the early 1840's, he established closer trade relations with these tribes by building two posts in the Texas Panhandle.³⁶ Holland Coffee, a fur merchant on Red River, prevented a Bent monopoly.

In 1834 Coffee, who operated out of Fort Smith with Silas Calville, Isacc Pennington, and Robert French under the name of Coffee, Calville, and Company, constructed a trading house in present Tillman County, Oklahoma.³⁷ In their employ at that time were Jack Ivey, a half-breed Indian guide and Samuel Cockerell, a witness in the hotly contested Greer County case of 1896 between the United States and Texas. During his testimony Cockerell recalled

³⁴John E. Sunder, The Fur Trade of the Upper Missouri, 1840-1865 (Norman, 1965), 5.

³⁵When Papin and M. Giraud left St. Louis in the late spring of 1837 with the large quantity of merchandise for A. P. Chouteau ("due" by July 1, 1837), they were bound for the "Osage trading post the property of Pratte and Company." (See note twenty-four of this chapter.) It appears Chouteau mortgaged one of his posts at Three Forks, probably La Saline, to Pratte, Chouteau, and Company. There is no indication that this concern or Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company assumed control of this establishment or the other Chouteau posts.

³⁶Mooney, Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians, 283.

³⁷Noel M. Loomis, The Texas-Santa Fe Pioneers (Norman, 1958), 48n. Hereafter cited as Loomis, The Texan-Santa Fe Pioneers; Foreman, Pioneer Days, 157-158.

that Kiowas came by "hundreds" to trade. He also stated that "Harris cached everything" near Coffee's post.³⁸

Cockerell probably referred to John Harris of Missouri. In September of 1832 he left Taos, New Mexico with a trapping and hunting brigade of seventy men bound for Red and Washita Rivers.³⁹ They carried tobacco and knives for the Indian trade.⁴⁰ Other noteworthy members of this expedition were Albert Pike, a Bostonian who later became an editor of the Little Rock Advocate, a lawyer, and a brigadier general in the Confederate Army and "Bill" Williams, "the most indefatigable hunter in the world."⁴¹ Out of the large number which set out from Taos, only Williams, Pike, Harris, and a few others reached Oklahoma. Pike led a group of four to the Washita, vainly searched for beaver, and reached Fort Smith in December of 1832 whereas Williams and Harris and their small band ventured to the Canadian seeking game but divided in the spring of 1833. Williams returned to New Mexico with six others, and Harris evidently headed south into Coffee's area of operations.⁴²

³⁸United States v. State of Texas, 1896. (Microfilm, MS Division, University of Oklahoma Library), 1321, 1348-1354.

³⁹Walter L. Brown, "Albert Pike, 1809-1891," (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1955. Microfilm, MS Division, University of Oklahoma Library), 50. Hereafter cited as Brown, "Albert Pike."

⁴⁰Fred W. Allsopp, Albert Pike: A Biography (Little Rock, 1928), 22, 31.

⁴¹Ibid., xvii-xviii, 22-23.

⁴²Brown, "Albert Pike," 60n, 62, 64, 67.

By 1837 Coffee had two other trading houses on Red River. These establishments, located in present Love and Cotton Counties, were his principal posts until about 1840 when he built another post, "Coffee's Station," at Preston Bend in Fannin County, Texas.⁴³ Besides exchanging trade goods for buffalo robes and other peltries gathered by prairie tribes and Kickapoos, he trafficked in humans with Comanches, who exchanged white captives for his trade articles. These prisoners were ransomed at Fort Gibson.⁴⁴ Texas officials kept Coffee's questionable activities under close surveillance. But since he was an experienced Indian diplomat, having played an influential role in the Kiowa treaty of 1837, the Republic of Texas commissioned him a year later to make a treaty with Keechi, Tawakoni, Waco, and Tawehash tribes.⁴⁵

⁴³Rex W. Strickland, "History of Fannin County Texas, 1836-1843," Part I Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXII (April, 1930), 267-268; Rex W. Strickland, "History of Fannin County Texas, 1836-1843," Part 2 Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXIV (July, 1930), 63; Coffee's Post in Tillman County became his "Upper Station." Loomis, The Texan-Santa Fe Pioneers, 48n.

⁴⁴A. M. Gibson, The Kickapoos: Lords of the Middle Border (Norman, 1963), 175; Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1847, 885; Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 218.

⁴⁵Anna Muckleroy, "The Indian Policy of the Republic of Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVI (July, 1922), 22; C. C. Rister, "A Federal Experiment in Southern Plains Indian Relations, 1835-1845," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XIV (December, 1936), 447; Treaty of September 2, 1838 Between Texas and the Keechi, Tawakoni, Waco, and Tawehash tribes, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas-Indian Papers, 1825-1843 (Austin, 1959), I, 53-54.

Coffee's smooth Indian relations did not prevent Able Warren of Massachusetts, who operated out of Fort Smith, from making inroads into the Red River trade. He constructed a trading house in the northwest corner of Fannin County, Texas in 1836, abandoned it three years later, and built another post in Cotton County, Oklahoma.⁴⁶ A visitor described Warren's:⁴⁷

A stay of a few weeks at Warren's Fort gave the writer some insight into the trade and life of the post. The year round was occupied mostly in trade with small parties of Indians in the various tribes-- Comanches, Kiowas, Wichitas, Tonkawas, Caddoes, and Delawares. The stock was driven out of the fort corral at daylight to be herded on the prairie, in sight of the watchman on the tower, and was driven in and corralled at nightfall. There were eight white men and four Delaware Indians in the little garrison, in addition to which there were generally a few hunters and friendly Indians in the immediate vicinity. No danger was apprehended as the fort was strong enough to withstand an attack from any but a very large band of Indians of a known desperate character and, even then, if such an attack were successful, it would be a fearful sacrifice in killed and wounded among the attacking party. The Indians of the wild tribes of the Plains knew this and they always ignored game that was not worth the candle. A few men in each tower, with their stacks of muskets ready loaded, could make terrible havoc in a horde of savages, most of whom were armed only with bows and arrows and lances.

It was in the fall of the year and great droves of buffalo were making their way to the plains of Southwestern Texas, away from the blizzards of the Northern Plains country. They were three days passing

⁴⁶W. H. Clift, "Warren's Trading Post," Chronicles of Oklahoma, II (June, 1924), 129, 136. Hereafter cited as Clift, "Warren's."

⁴⁷Thoburn and Wright, Oklahoma, I, 787; William J. Weaver of Ohio visited Warren's in 1842. Fifty-four years later he described its trading activities. Clift, "Warren's," 137.

in sight of the fort. Scores of Indians were in the rear, the men charging into the herds, with bows and arrows and lances, and the women and boys catching and killing the crippled and the weakling calves.

A few days afterward, we were aroused one morning by whoops and yells and the tramping of horses around the enclosure. Several hundred Comanches had arrived and many were setting up their buffalo skin lodges close by the fort. Women were stretching and pegging buffalo skins on the ground and scraping them. Others were unloading buffalo meat from the ponies and cutting it in slices for frying.

Presently the Indians came in crowds to the fort to trade, with bundles on their backs. After much wrangling without interpreter, they were admitted, three or four at a time, each being required to leave his belt knife, hatchet and other weapons outside. The chief of the band was there. He said nothing but looked at the trader. The trader looked at him a moment, then took down a bridle which was richly ornamented with red woolen fringe and tin stars and gave it to him with a plug of tobacco. This was supposed to be his license and good will for trading. The chief grunted, nodded, lit his pipe and that part of the formality was over. The trading went on and lasted for several days. The Indians first asked for liquor (which the trader did not keep), and were much displeased when he told them that he had sold out all he had. Their stock in trade consisted of furs of all kinds, dressed buffalo robes, dressed and raw deer skins, dried buffalo tongues and beeswax. Some of them had Mexican silver dollars. They bartered for red and blue blankets, strips of blue cloth, bright colored gingham handkerchiefs, hoop-brass wire (for arrow and lance points), glass beads, heavy brass wire (which they wound into bracelets for the left wrist to protect from the recoil of the bowstring) vermillion, red and yellow ochre (for face paint) bright hued calicoes and wampum beads which they wound around their necks in great quantities. These beads were from two to four inches long, pure white, and resembled clay-pipe stems in size. They were highly esteemed and served the part of currency in their dealings with one another. They wanted guns but the government forbade the selling of firearms to the wild Indians at that time. Much of the trading was done by means of signs. One finger was one dollar; five fingers, five dollars; crossed fore-finger, half a dollar, etc. Stretching out the arm and touching the shoulder was a yard, or a unit of measure for cloths and fabrics.

In 1834 James Edwards built a trading post, generally known as Edward's Settlement, near present Holdenville in Hughes County.⁴⁸ He employed Jesse Chisholm, fluent in several Indian languages, Thomas Aird, and a Mr. Shelton to assist him in trading with the Plains tribes, Kickapoos, Shawnees, and Delawares.⁴⁹ Edwards often times sent "Prairie Jess" among the Plains Indians to barter for peltries. Chisholm's reputation as a trail blazer, guide and scout for military expeditions, and interpreter for numerous councils between the federal government and Plains Indians⁵⁰ helped Edward's post attain popularity among travelers, who found that this establishment was as much a frontier store as a trading post.⁵¹

"Should travelers," according to one observer, "desire to purchase supplies this is the last point where they can be obtained as the road here leaves the settlement. Horses, cattle, corn, and many articles of merchandise

⁴⁸Foreman, "Theophilus Hunter Holmes," 428n.

⁴⁹Grant Foreman (ed.), "A Journal Kept by Douglas Cooper," Chronicles of Oklahoma, V (December, 1927), 383n; Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 218; Grant Foreman, "Early Trails through Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, III (June, 1925), 106; Muriel H. Wright and George H. Shirk (eds.), "The Journal of Lieutenant A. W. Whipple," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXVIII (Autumn, 1950), 274n; T. U. Taylor, Jesse Chisholm (Banderas, Texas, 1939), 52.

⁵⁰Ibid., 26, 52, 64, 70, 72, 131.

⁵¹Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 221.

can be had at Edward's Settlement."⁵²

During the 1830's several other fur traders in eastern Oklahoma operated frontier stores and on a small scale trafficked in deer skins, buffalo robes, and other pelts with the immigrant tribes.⁵³ These establishments were symbolic of Oklahoma's transforming frontier and replaced trading posts as commercial centers; this transition was gradual but virtually completed in 1845.⁵⁴ During the following year Coffee's career as a fur merchant ended abruptly when Charles Galloway fatally stabbed him,⁵⁵ and Warren abandoned his post.⁵⁶

Jesse Chisholm and others continued trading for the pelts of the Plains Indians but made small profits. By the 1840's a buffalo robe sold for about \$3, a beaver

⁵²Senate Executive Document No. 64, 31st Cong., 1st Sess., 173.

⁵³The Daily Oklahoman, 31 January 1937, p. 5; Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 53n.

⁵⁴These stores were located in various towns of the Indian Nations: Perryville, Skullysville and Boggy Depot in the Choctaw Nation; Tishomingo, Oak Grove and Fort Washita, Chickasaw Nation; North Fork Town, Honey Springs and Shieldville, Creek and Seminole Nations.

⁵⁵The (Clarksville, Texas) Northern Standard, 10 October 1846 and 28 November 1846, in James D. Morrison (ed.), "Notes and Documents: Notes from the Northern Standard, 1842-1849," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XIX (March, 1941), 92; Three years before his demise, Coffee was still associated with Calville, and Tom Smith may have been in their employ. Harriet Smither (ed.), "Diary of Adolphus Sterne," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXV (January, 1932), 152.

⁵⁶Clift, "Warren's," 133.

pelage brought 50 cents, a deer hide was worth 25 cents, while a lynx pelt sold for only 20 cents.⁵⁷

⁵⁷Account of Sale of Buffalo Robes etc. Received from George Buchanan and Company of St. Louis and Sold for the Account and Risk of Pearson and Benedict of Council Bluffs in 1849, Fur Trade Papers, MHS.

French commerce shifted from Arkansas Post to Taovayas, and coureurs de bois ventured up Red River to trade with Taovayas, who continued as middlemen in the French trade traffic.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Oklahoma fur trade flourished from 1719 to 1825. This colorful industry was commenced by the French. Adventurous coureurs de bois entered the Wichita villages near the mouth of the Canadian and along the Arkansas in north central Oklahoma, established trading posts, and adopted the Indians customs. They addicted an agricultural people to cheap European trade goods, which were bartered for buffalo robes and deer skins gathered by the Indians. These furs were shipped via the Arkansas to New Orleans and on to European markets.

The volume of business increased when French agents arranged a peace pact between Comanches and the Wichitas. Thereafter, Comanches became the principal fur hunters. They exchanged peltries for French goods brought to them by the Wichitas who served as middlemen in the French trade system. The Wichitas traded the furs to coureurs de bois.

Osage attacks launched from Three Forks forced the Wichitas south to Red River where they established Twin Villages and generally came to be known as Taovayas.

French commerce shifted from Arkansas Post to Natchitoches and coureurs de bois ventured up Red River to trade with Taovayas, who continued as middlemen in the French-Comanche traffic.

When Spain received Louisiana from France, Natchitoches remained the depot for the Taovaya trade and New Orleans continued as the main shipping point. A law forbidding traffic in munitions was instrumental in New Spain's failure to attract the Wichita-Comanche trade for both tribes needed guns and ammunition to fend off Osages and Apaches. Spanish officials also failed to utilize personable coureurs de bois and generally placed less emphasis on the fur trade than the French.

After the Louisiana Purchase, American merchants ascended Red River with European trade goods to barter for Taovaya buffalo robes and deer skins. But Osage war parties checked the Long Knives' efforts to maintain trade with Twin Villages. Without a sustained commercial tie, the Taovayas were at the mercy of the Osages and for protection confederated Comanches and the Tawakonis.

The Osage menace to the Taovaya trade played an important role in the rise of Three Forks as an emporium of the Southwest fur trade by way of St. Louis. The Chouteaus relocated a band of Osages--La Chaniers--near the mouth of the Verdigris. Their apparent failure to establish a commercial tie with the Chaniers until the coming of

A. P. Chouteau allowed traders from the upper and lower Mississippi, who shied from the hazardous Taovaya trade, to gain a foothold in La Chanier country. Most of them established secure trading posts rather than venturing into the wilderness in search of Indian camps. They bartered European merchandise, purchased in St. Louis and New Orleans, for Osage deer skins, buffalo robes, and other pelts and shipped them via Arkansas River to the Crescent City.

At the outset, Three Forks merchants were confronted with factory competition for the Osage trade. For various reasons, factories failed to garner the Chanier trade. Factors were not allowed to barter in Osage villages, and factories were either too far from Three Forks to draw away the Osage trade from independent merchants or were located in the hunting grounds of La Chanier enemies.

Failure of factories in the Osage trade was but one boon to Three Forks merchants. The establishment of Fort Smith was another. Its sutler store, which was stocked with European merchandise, allowed traders and trappers in the Osage land to discontinue buying trade goods in New Orleans and St. Louis.

These gains by Three Forks furriers were offset by the Osage-Cherokee conflict. For protection, white trappers, infrequent participants in the Oklahoma fur trade because of the many Indians who hunted and trapped to

receive trade goods, formed brigades which carried merchandise to barter for the Indians' trust and peltries. Several of these expeditions fell victim to marauding Indians during the Osage-Cherokee struggle.

In the government's quest to end the Chanier-Cherokee hostilities, Three Forks merchants either aided the federal efforts or did nothing. Due to the severity of the crisis, Fort Gibson was erected to protect peaceful Indians as well as trappers and traders, and its sutler's store outfitted furriers.

Daring trappers and traders continued to venture into the wilderness in search of fur bounties, but most merchants remained in the vicinity of Fort Gibson. With his credit system and extensive commercial ties with St. Louis, A. P. Chouteau managed to oust his competitors for the Osage trade. But the movement of immigrant Indians into the Three Forks region, as a result of removal treaties, brought more merchants into Chouteau's area of operations. Like Chouteau, they began relying on annuities to supplement declining profits from furs. Also, game was dwindling at Three Forks.

Several traders became frontier storekeepers and carried on a small trade in hides with the agricultural immigrant tribes. Other merchants established trading posts along the Canadian and Red Rivers. From these establishments, they bartered European trade goods for the deer

skins, buffalo robes, and other pelages gathered by the Plains tribes for European markets. Since furs were being replaced by silks and other materials, traders' profits on the new frontier were small. However, they continued to serve as Indian diplomats and trail blazers.

Trends found in Oklahoma's fur traffic from 1719 to 1845 include the establishment of river bank trading posts, commercial ties with St. Louis, New Orleans, and European markets, the use of cheap European merchandise in the trade for Indian pelts consisting primarily of buffalo robes and deer hides, and the creation for security purposes of trapper-trader brigades. Others include the switch from furs to annuities as peltry prices dropped and game became scarce in eastern Oklahoma, the westward movement of the fur trade, and the rise of sutlers' stores and general frontier stores as commercial centers, the last of which gradually replaced trading posts.

Throughout this story Oklahoma fur merchants exhibited ambiguous traits common throughout the West. They swindled the Indians but advanced the frontier. A. P. Chouteau exemplified this dual image. His long connection with the American Fur Company, many trading posts, and diplomacy with the Three Forks and Plains Indians established him as an outstanding Southwest frontiersman. His career made Oklahoma's fur trade a worthy topic.

The fur trade of Soonerland like that of other areas did not end shortly after 1845. This industry continues on a small scale today. It reminds Oklahomans of the lusty coureurs de bois and Long Knives, who helped tame a wild frontier for late comers.

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