Kansas Before 1854: A Revised Annals
Compiled by Louise Barry

Part Two, 1763-1803

1763

By the treaty of Paris, February 10, France ceded to Great Britain her territory east of the Mississippi (except the Isle d’Orleans); and confirmed the 1762 cession of Louisiana west of the Mississippi (and the Isle d’Orleans) to Spain.

1764

St. Louis was founded in February. Auguste Chouteau (then 14) headed the work party which began the settlement (on a site chosen in 1763 by Pierre LaClede Liguest, on behalf of Maxent, LaClede and Company of New Orleans, operating under a French grant of 1762).

1766

Antonio de Ulloa arrived in New Orleans on March 5 as the first Spanish governor of Louisiana.

1769

Louis Saint-Ange de Bellerive, commandant at St. Louis, reporting (May 2) to the Spanish on the Indian tribes who came to receive presents in the District of Illinois, named the Missouris, Little Osages, Big Osages, Kansa, Otoes, and Panimahas from the district of the Missouri river.

Ref: Louis Houck’s The Spanish Regime in Missouri (Chicago, 1909), v. 1, pp. 44, 45; A. P. Nasatir, Before Lewis and Clark (St. Louis, 1952), v. 1, p. 70.

Capt. Francisco Riu’s report (October 29) revealed what knowledge the Spanish, from their St. Louis headquarters, had been able to gather about their recently acquired Missouri country. He wrote:

... From the mouth of the Misuri to that of the River of the Big Osages, there is a distance of 80 leagues. The latter river goes to the tribe called by the same name, which is some 70 leagues from the mouth.

From the mouth of the above-named river to the tribe of the Panimahas, is a distance, as is asserted by the voyageurs, of 170 leagues. That is the most distant tribe to which the traders penetrate. From the above-mentioned tribe to that of the Ayetan [Comanche], one goes overland, and it is estimated

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to be a voyage of 6 or 8 days. From the tribe of the Ayetan to Nuevo Mejico, the same ones calculate 6 or 8 days.

Captain Riu particularly noted the large contribution of the Kansa Indians to the fur trade. Their country, he stated, “abounds in castors [beaver].”

Ref: Houck’s Spanish Regime . . . v. 1, pp. 62-64; Nasatir, op. cit., v. 1, p. 70.

Pedro Piernas, arriving at St. Louis on May 20, took formal charge as the first Spanish (lieutenant) governor of upper Louisiana. (From 1770 to 1804 the Spanish controlled the Missouri river trade.)

Ref: Louis Houck’s A History of Missouri (Chicago, 1908), v. 1, p. 298.

The Comanches (successors on the Plains to the power and prestige formerly held by the Padoucas), were described by Athanasé de Mezieres (lieutenant governor at Natchitoches) in a report dated October 29:

The Comanché are scattered from the great Missuris River to the neighborhood of the frontier presidios of New Spain. They are a people so numerous and so haughty that when asked their number, they make no difficulty of comparing it to that of the stars. They are so skillful in horsemanship that they have no equal; so daring that they never ask for or grant truces; and in the possession of such a territory that, finding in it an abundance of pasturage for their horses and an incredible number of cattle [buffalo] which furnish them raiment, food, and shelter, they only just fall short of possessing all of the conveniences of the earth, and have no need to covet the trade pursued by the rest of the Indians whom they call, on this account, slaves of the Europeans, and whom they despise.

[They] . . . are obliged to follow [the buffalo herds] . . . into the more temperate country of the south [when winter arrives], whence the extreme heat of the summer again drives them along with the herds towards the cold regions. From these perpetual comings and goings it arises that the Comanches, relying upon one another, made proud by their great number, and led by their propensity to steal, let few seasons pass without committing the most bloody outrages against the inhabitants of New and Old Mexico.

De Mezieres concluded that “since their reduction will be one of the most costly and difficult that may be planned in this America” it would be good policy to encourage “to some extent, those who are interested in the destruction of so proud and cruel an enemy.”

Ref: H. E. Bolton’s Athanasé de Mézières . . . (Cleveland, 1914), v. 1, pp. 218, 219.
1772

Writing from the Great Osage village [in present Vernon county, Mo.], Rouquiere (one of several traders there), in a June 14 letter, described Osage depredations on the lower Arkansas and Red rivers (three Frenchmen killed and two young men taken captive). He also stated that a band of Osages had left the village in early April to make war on the Black Pawnees, and returned with two French scalps. The victims, slain near the Paniouassa village, had been mistaken for the enemy (so the Indians claimed). But Rouquiere added: “As for us, not a single trader up to now has any cause for complaint in the village. We have traded at our will and without any difficulty.”


1775

Pedro Piernas (lieutenant governor of Upper Louisiana) reported (from St. Louis, May 19) on the “. . . nations with which we are accustomed to trade in pelts in the dependency of the Missouri River.” He listed the Mahas, Panis Maha, Panis, Hotos, Cance [Kansa], Little Osages, Missouri, Republic, and Great Osages. (Notable is the reference to the Pawnee Republic Indians, of whom no earlier specific mention has been found.) Giving values of goods traded in pounds of furs, he estimated the Kansa trade at 7,500 pounds; that of the Pawnee Republic at 3,000; the Panis at 1,200; the Panis Maha at 1,800; the Little Osages at 7,200; the Great Osages at 15,000. In 1775 trade with the latter two nations was “forbidden” (evidently to punish them for depredations committed); and after both the Kansa and Pawnee Republic entries Piernas wrote “not able to enter,” but gave no explanation.

Ref: Ibid., p. 228.

1777

In June, or early July, five of a reconnoitering party of seven Osages were killed by a large band of Panis Piques [Wichitas] somewhere near the Arkansas river [in present Oklahoma?]. To avenge the murders, the Osages in force returned to that area, and on the Arkansas river bank met “the man named Layones with two trappers” whom they killed and robbed. This occurred between July 15 and 18. Later in the year it was reported that the Osages were continuing “their thefts and murders along that river.”

Ref: Houck’s Spanish Regime . . ., v. 1, pp. 149, 150.
Francisco Cruzat (lieutenant governor of Upper Louisiana) in a report (St. Louis, November 1) on the year’s fur trade on the Missouri, indicated that the official traders among the Kansa had been Antonio Hubert and Luis Lacroix, who obtained 150 packs of tanned deerskin, one of otter, seven of beaver, and three of buckskin. The trade of the Republica [Pawnee Republic] Indians had gone to Eugenie Pourée, but “the fur of the Republica tribe has not been able to be brought down, as the river of the Canzes has no water.”

Cruzat stated that Auguste Chouteau, Sylvestre Labbadie, and three others had traded among the Big Osages. (Also listed were the traders among the Little Osages, Missouri, Mahas, Panis, and Otoes; and the fur statistics for each.) He commented that “the Panis Mahas tribe, where a trader is usually sent, has again become incorporated with the tribe of the Panis Piques [Wichitas], who are settled in the territory of Nachitoches, who [the Panis Mahas] are threatened by the Siouxs tribe, who are situated on the banks of Misissipy. . . .”

Ref: Ibid., pp. 139, 140, 183; Neatir, op. cit., v. 1, p. 70.

In a comprehensive report on the upper Missouri river Indians with whom the Spanish traded, Francisco Cruzat (from St. Louis, on November 15) wrote of the “Cances” Indians:

This tribe is composed of 350 warriors. The name of the principal chief . . . is El Comy [perhaps Le Commis? in French—the earliest-located name of a Kansa chief]. They are 150 leagues from this village, and are located on the banks of the Misuri river itself, at a distance of some 50 leagues from the tribe of the Misuris. Their occupation has always been, and is, that of the hunt; for although they generally plant a small quantity of maize, it does not, as a general rule, suffice for their necessary support. As a general thing, this tribe is hostile to the tribes of the said Misuri river, named the Panis and La Republica [Pawnees]. For this reason they generally cause a great deal of harm to the traders who are sent to those tribes, for they do not allow those traders to ascend the river in order that those tribes may be supplied with guns and ammunition. This is the only harm experienced from this tribe. However, we have heard that they were thinking this year of making peace. This tribe has always been hostile to all those of the Misissippi. From the work of the hunt in which they are engaged, there results the profits of the trade which are made in the furs; for every year that trade produces 180 or 200 packs.

Cruzat stated that “La Republica” Pawnees numbered 350 to 400 warriors. Their principal chief was Escatapa. They were located about 110 leagues up the Kansas (from its mouth), and were distant 40 or 50 leagues by land from the Kanza village. Their occupa-
tion was hunting. They were hostile to the Kansa and the Big Osages.

The Big Osages numbered 800 warriors. Their principal chief was Cleromon [Clermont]. They lived on a Missouribubutory [i.e., the Osage] 180 leagues from St. Louis by water, and about 110 overland [in present Vernon county, Mo.]. They were hostile to the tribes of “La Republica, the Hotos [Otoes], the Alkanzos [Arkansas], the Panis, the Piques [Wichitas], and the tribes living on the Missisipy in the English district.” They were hunters and accumulated from 500 to 550 packs of deerskins annually.

Cruzat’s report also covered the Little Osages, the Missouris, the Otoes, the Pawnees, the Mahas, the Iowas, and the Sioux. The latter two tribes, he stated, traded with persons from “the English district.” The Otoes, Pawnees, and Mahas were all enemies of the Kansa; and the Iowas were “hostile to the tribes of the Misury River.”

Ref: Houck’s Spanish Regime . . . , v. 1, pp. 141-145; Bolton in his Athanase de Mistres . . . , v. 2, p. 26, noted that Houck “supplied punctuation and made two tribes out of the Panis Piques, or Wichita.”

1780

In November Lieutenant Governor Cruzat (writing from St. Louis to his superior officer), referred to “the necessity which I have of using the Little Osages, with our other allied nations, to repress and punish the Kansas nation. As your Lordship knows, the last mentioned has already committed some murders on the Missouri River, assassinating and burning seven hunters who were hunting on that river. . . .”

Ref: Kinnard, op. cit., v. 2, pp. 994, 995.

1785

In New Orleans Esteban Rodriguez Miro (governor-general of Louisiana) made a report (dated December 12) which included the following statements:

The Cancés is 108 leagues from the mouth of the Missouri, on its right bank. In high water one can ascend it to the village of the Republic or Panis [Pawnee Republic]. . . .

The Cancés have their villages about 140 leagues from the mouth of the Missouri on a very high cliff about two avanzadas from the shore of that river. They must have 200 warriors and are unquestionably the best hunters on the Missouri. They maintain peace with the Little Osages and with the Missouris, and make war on the Panis in order to obtain horses. Their hunting land is up the River de Cancés as far as the River de Nimaha. . . .
The Panis are found about 27 leagues from the Chato [Platte] River, and consist of 400 men capable of bearing arms. Their hunting grounds are on the tongue of land between their river and the Chato and extend from their village to the River of San Francisco de Arcañizás [the Arkansas].

The Indians of the Panis Republic, called Paniguaccy or Eyes of the Partridge, live on the River Cancés about 130 leagues from its mouth, and consist of 220 men capable of bearing arms. . . .

The Padős [Padouces—Plains Apaches] were in former times the most numerous nation on the continent, but the wars which other nations have made against them have destroyed them to such an extent that at present they form only four small groups, who go wandering from place to place continually which saves them from the fury of the other nations. They number about 350 men, very skillful with the arrow and in running. . . .

The Laytanes or wandering Apaches [i.e., Comanches, not Apaches] . . . inhabit the borders of New Mexico. . . . They dominate all the neighboring tribes, and although divided into several war parties . . . they all live in perfect friendship.

Of the Arkansas river Miro wrote:

. . . we find the river of San Francisco de Arcañizás on the western bank [of the Mississippi]. . . . Twelve leagues up this river is the fort of Carlos III [Arkansas Post], between which and the Mississippi at various distances is found the nation of the Arkansas divided into three villages. . . . about 100 leagues above, live the Little Osages, who are the only nation I know in this place bordering on the Kingdom of New Spain. [In mid-1785, a band of the Little Osages had left the Missouri and settled on the upper St. Francis river.]


1786

Writing from New Orleans, August 1, Governor Miro told of steps taken to punish the Osage Indians for an outbreak of depredations. “My prohibition against carrying goods farther than the fort of Arkansas [Arkansas Post],” he stated, “may cause the Osages to molest the white hunters who are established on the upper part of the said river [in present Oklahoma, and possibly some in Kansas] to the number of some 200.”

Ref: Kinnaird, op. cit., v. 3, pp. 182-184.

Jacobo Du Breuil (brevet lieutenant colonel of infantry), commandant at Arkansas Post [or, fort of Carlos III], in a report (December 16) on the rivers of his district, wrote of the Arkansas:

. . . its source [is] near the kingdom of New Mexico, according to the report of the hunters who have navigated it for more than 400 leagues, and it empties into the Mississippi at a point 250 leagues from the capital [New
Orleans]. It abounds in fish such as the catfish, the pargo, seatrout, carp, armado, herring, eel, and turtle of two varieties. The Arkansas has several branches in which there are salt beds that give in summer a slightly salty taste to the water. The territory watered by this river has a natural growth of poplars, willows, oaks, cypress, walnut, pecans, elms, etc.

Ref: Kincaid, op. cit., v. 3, p. 193.

1790-1791

Auguste Chouteau was granted part of the trade of the Kansa in 1790. In pursuit of that commerce Cadet [Pierre] Chouteau spent the winter of 1790-1791 among the Kansa, and reported in St. Louis in the spring that they had not traded all their furs with him because Mississippi river Indians (representing English traders) had taken part of the pelts despite all he could do. Chouteau also stated that about the first of March some 90 Big Osages with all their chiefs and head men had come where he was camping on the Kansas river to ask why traders had been prohibited from visiting their villages. Angered when told it was punishment for depredations on the Arkansas (where they had been killing and plundering), some of the Osages began to blame the trader, and had to be restrained by chiefs of both nations from taking his merchandise.

[In 1785 the Kansa were reported as still living on the Missouri river; but in 1790-1791 Chouteau spent the winter with them on the Kansas; and in 1792 Pierre Vial was in the Kansas village on the Kansas. The evidence is persuasive, but not conclusive, that these Indians left their Missouri river village between 1785 and 1790. Referring to this move, but not dating it, U. S. Commr. H. L. Ellsworth, in 1833, wrote: "... the evidence is satisfactory that the Otoes attacked the Kansas at their old village on the Missouri near Independence creek—drove them from their village and took possession. The Kansas never afterward occupied that ground but pitched their tents 60 or 80 miles distant on the Kansas River. ..."

[The village which Chouteau and Vial visited was, presumably, the site about two miles east of present Manhattan in what is now Pottawatomie county; or, as it could have been described in 1794: on the Kansas river, two miles east of the mouth of the Big Blue. (During the 1903 flood, the Big Blue cut a new channel near its mouth and since then has flowed into the Kansas some four miles east of Manhattan rather than at the town site.)]


1792

Pierre Vial, a Frenchman in the employ of the New Mexican governor, set out from Santa Fe on May 21, with two young Spaniards, and some pack horses, under orders to open a line of com-
munication between the Spanish settlements of New Mexico and those of upper Louisiana.

They went by way of Pecos; then set a course first eastward and later to the northeast. On May 29 they reached the Colorado [Canadian] river and followed down it into present Oklahoma. On June 22 they turned northeast to look for the Napeste [Arkansas]. Vial's diary entry of June 27 stated: "We journeyed through spacious lands and reached the above-mentioned Napeste River. We camped for the night on its shore. . . ." [They were in present Kansas still to the southwest of the great bend of the Arkansas]. Vial thought they had traveled about 140 leagues up to that point.

On June 29 they followed down the river "which flowed east northeast." In the late afternoon [perhaps near Great Bend] they found a hunting camp of Kansa Indians on the opposite bank. The Kansa gave them ill treatment—stripped them of clothing, and took possession of their horses and belongings. The Vial party remained in the Indians' Arkansas river camp till mid-August when the Kansa started back to their village. Vial estimated they traveled "about 50 leagues going through level plains" in the ten days it took to reach their destination. The village, he wrote, "is located on the River of the Kances" [presumably the site two miles east of present Manhattan—See preceding entry].

On September 11 a licensed French trader who came to the village in a pirogue loaded with goods, supplied Vial and his companions with clothes, a gun, and other items. On September 16 the explorers went down the Kansas in a boat with three traders who were returning to St. Louis, and reached that place on October 6.

Ref: Houck's Spanish Regime . . ., v. 1, pp. 350-355; Chronicles of Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, v. 6 (June, 1928), p. 212; A. B. Hulbert's Southwest on the Turquoise Trail (c1933), pp. 43-54.

1793

In the spring a band of Iowa Indians went to a camp of the Kansa to buy horses. While the Kansa warriors were out hunting (in order to feed their guests) the Iowas "killed, and took prisoner forty-eight women and children, and carried off all the horses." The result was renewed warfare between two nations which had long been enemies.

Ref: Nasatir, op. cit., v. 1, p. 185.
Enlarged portion of François M. Perrin du Lac's Carte du Missouri, 1802, showing the Kansas river and its tributaries as known at the beginning of the 19th century. Map courtesy of the New York Public Library.
Kansa Indians Sketched by George Catlin, Probably in 1831.

From left to right: Sho-me-kas-see (The Wolf), head chief; Wa-han-ga-she (No Fool); Chesh-o-o-honga-ho (The Man of Good Sense); Mesch-o-shin-ga (The Little White Bear). In front are the chief's wife and child. Sketch courtesy of the New York Public Library.
No traders were permitted to go up the Missouri during the year "on account of the war which was ordered declared on the Osages" (to punish them for depredations in Spanish Louisiana).

Ref: ibid., v. 2, p. 530.

In the summer Pierre Vial, his two companions of 1792, and four other young men left St. Louis bound for Santa Fe. Abandoning the plan to try a direct overland route (because of hostile Osages) they went up the Missouri in the pirogue of some traders as far as the mouth of the "Chico Nimahá" (near present Nemaha, Neb., apparently), reaching that place on August 24. There they remained through September 11—until expected Pawnee guides arrived.

On September 12 they set out with the Indians (who were of the Republic band). From Vial's journal their route across present Kansas can be fairly well determined. "We took the road through a large plain, route to the southwest," he wrote on the first day. Proceeding in the same direction and then turning more to the west on September 15, they came on the evening of the 17th to "a little stream [the Big Blue?] which enters the River of the Cances." Next day their route again lay "through good prairie land," and they camped on "an arm [the Republican, evidently] of the River of the Cances." On the 19th they noted as they traveled, a "hill of great height which the Indians call Blue Hill." Their camp that night was on "a little stream [Chapman creek?] which enters into that of the Cances." Still crossing good land and on the same course as for several days past, they arrived in mid-afternoon of September 20 at the Pawnee Republic village. (They had been met around noon and escorted by the chief "Sarisere" and several of his warriors.) According to Vial's calculations, during the nine days' journey from the "Chico Nimaha" they had traveled 49 leagues (about 125 miles). The village, on a river [the Smoky Hill, probably in the vicinity of present Abilene], contained some 300 warriors.

These Pawnees maintained friendly relations with the Spanish, but were at war with the Osages, the "Tahuagases" [Taouaiazes—Pani Piques—Wichitas] and the Comanches. Their allies were three other Pawnee villages on the River Chato [the Platte], also the "Majalos" and the Kansa.
Vial and his companions remained in the Pawnee Republic village till October 3. They bought ten horses. On October 4, after presenting gifts to their hosts, they started for Santa Fe with seven Pawnee guides. Ten days later the party reached the Rio Napeste [Arkansas], apparently west of present Dodge City. (By Vial's calculations they traveled 68% leagues [about 1757 miles] from the Indian village before reaching the Arkansas.) Continuing on a southwesterly course to the Canadian, their homeward route took them by way of Pecos to Santa Fe on November 15.

[Early references to the Pawnee Republic Indians (see 1777 and 1785) did not specify on which fork of the Kansas they lived. A study of Vial's journal leaves little doubt that in 1793 they were, at least temporarily, on the Smoky Hill-somewhat east of the Solomon's mouth. Jean B. Truteau (see 1794) indicated the Indians' presence in that area when he wrote (in 1796) that the Republican nation was on the southwestern branch of the Kansas river, near its source. But Antoine Soulard (see 1795) located them on his map on the Kansas tributary which we call the Republican and which he plainly labeled "R. de la Republica Fani." Victor Collot (see 1796) in the text of his book stated they were on the southwest branch of the Kansas; but on his map placed them on the Republican fork (though he did not give it a name).]

Ref: Chronicles of Oklahoma, v. 9 (June, 1931), pp. 195-208 (for Vial's journal); Nasatir, op. cit., v. 2, pp. 383-385 (for Truteau); Bolton's Athenase de Mésières, v. 1, pp. 246, 250, 294-296 (for the Taouaza); Wedel's ... Kansas Archeology, pp. 59, 60 (for additional data on Pawnee Republic villages).

1794

Early in May, at a meeting in St. Louis, arrangements were made for the year's Missouri fur trade. Four persons (Benito Vasquez, Bernal Sarpy, Laurent Durocher, and the lieutenant governor, Zenon Trudeau) were to have equal shares of the Kansa trade. Auguste Chouteau was allotted the Pawnee Republic Indians. The Grand Osages' trade was divided into 12 shares (Cerré, Robidoux, Pierre Chouteau, Papin, and Clamorgan were five of the allottees), and the Little Osages' traders (of whom there were four) included Roy and Pratte.

Ref: Nasatir, op. cit., v. 1, pp. 210, 211; Kinnard, op. cit., v. 4, p. 279.

At St. Louis, on May 12, an organization "La Compagnie de Commerce pour la Descouverte des Nations du haut du Missouri" (better known as the "Missouri Company") was formed for the purpose of exploring and trading on the upper Missouri. Among its members were Auguste and Pierre Chouteau, Jean Papin, Benito Vasquez, Gregoire Sarpy, Jacinto St. Cyr, Joseph Robidoux, Gabriel
Cerre, Antoine Roy, and Jacques Clamorgan (who was director of the company).


The “Missouri Company” sent Jean Baptiste Truteau (a 45-year-old, Montreal-born, St. Louis school teacher) as head of its first upper-Missouri expedition. Truteau, in a well-loaded pirogue, manned by eight oarsmen, set out from St. Louis on June 7, and reached the mouth of the Kansas on July 12, stopping briefly there (it appears) to see a trader named Quenneville. “La rivière des cansas,” he noted in his journal, was navigable for about 100 leagues in the springtime; it abounded in beavers, otters, and other fur-bearing animals. The village of the Kansa, whose men were good hunters and warriors, was 80 leagues [by water?] upstream; and ten leagues beyond began the country of the Pawnee Republic.

On July 14 Truteau and party camped on the Isles des Parques [about opposite present Leavenworth]. Next day, at 12 leagues above the mouth of the Kansas, they came to the first old village of the Kansas [Salt creek valley, Leavenworth co.]. On July 21 (after being delayed by a prolonged rainstorm) they reached the second old Kansa village [the “Village of 24” at present Doniphan] at 12 leagues above the first. By the following evening they had ascended as far as the great bend of the Missouri, near present St. Joseph, Mo. Between the Kansas and the Platte, wrote Truteau, there were three rivers (the Great Nemaha, Little Nemaha, and the Nishnabotna) which were navigable for a short distance and only in the springtime.

(Truteau’s intended destination was the Mandan villages where he was to establish a fort and trading agency, but he got only as far as the Arikara country. His description (dated 1796) and information on the upper Missouri was used by French travelers Collot (1798) and Perrin du Lac (1802).)


1794-1795

Osage-Spanish relations improved greatly following the establishment in 1794-1795 of a small fort in the Osages’ country. Short-lived Fort Carondelet [in Blue Mound? tp., Vernon co., Mo.] was built
by the Chouteaus (Auguste and Pierre) in return for a six-year monopoly (1794-1800) of the Big and Little Osages’ trade. Commandant Pierre Chouteau took his family there in 1795; and a few other persons, in addition to militia troops were residents for a time. Osage depredations dwindled due to the influence of the Chouteaus, who enjoyed the complete confidence of the Indians.

(But in 1802 the Chouteaus lost the Osage trading rights to Manuel Lisa and others, and all trace of Fort Carondelet quickly disappeared. Pike and Wilkinson found only a “superior growth of vegetation” at the site in 1806.)

Ref: Houck’s Spanish Regime . . . v. 2, pp. 100-110; Nasatir, op. cit., v. 1, pp. 214, 320, 321, 326; v. 2, pp. 530, 584; Missouri Historical Review, Columbia, Mo., v. 35, pp. 92-95; Louis Houck’s A History of Missouri (Chicago, 1908), v. 2, p. 252; Z. M. Pike’s August 17, 1806, entry in the various editions of his An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi . . .

Antoine Soulard’s maps were, so far as known, the first to show the Big Blue (tributary of the Kansas) by name; and to indicate the location of Fort Carondelet [in present Vernon co., Mo.].

There was, originally, a 1794 map, sketched expressly for Truteau’s use on his “Missouri Company” expedition. But the 1795 versions (French and Spanish) are the only ones now known to exist.

On the French map, entitled “Idee Topographique des Hauts du Mississippi et du Missouri,” the Big Blue was labeled “R. Eau bleue” (“R. Agua azul” on the Spanish map) meaning “Blue water.” The Kansas appeared as “R. de les Cans,” and the Republican fork as “R. de la Republica Pani.” The Kansa village (represented by four “dots”—perhaps to indicate 400 warriors?) was shown as on the north bank of the Kansas, east of the junction of the Big Blue. The Republican Pawnees’ village (represented by three “dots”) was on the north bank of the branch of the Kansas named for them, at some distance upstream.

(Soulard, surveyor of Upper Louisiana and St. Louis resident, according to his own statement, had once ascended the Missouri about 500 leagues.)

Ref: Nasatir, op. cit., v. 1, between pp. 46, 47 (for French map), v. 2, p. 760; Carl I. Wheat, Mapping the Transmississippi West (San Francisco, 1957), v. 1, pp. 157, 158, and facing p. 158 (for Spanish map, which, curiously, was misdated “1785”).

1795

Benito and Quenache de Ronin, traders returning from the Kansa village, were robbed and “soundly thrashed with blows of sticks” by a party of some 160 Iowas, who carried off two of their hired men. Zeno Trudeau’s report of the incident (St. Louis, March 4) stated: “They left Benito, as well as the other on the seventh of the month of January at the entrance of the Kansas river, without
arms, food, or clothing. . . ." The two captives were ransomed by English traders and returned to St. Louis.

Ref: Nasatir, op. cit., v. 1, pp. 316, 318.

In April the "Missouri Company" sent a man named Lecuyer with a large, well-loaded pirogue, and oarsmen, on a journey to the upper Missouri. This second expedition of the St. Louis company was pillaged by the Ponca Indians. Few details of its fate are known. Lecuyer was later blamed for the disaster.

Ref: Houck's Spanish Regime . . ., v. 2, pp. 176, 178, 187, 190.

When a distribution of medals to chiefs of the Missouri river tribes was proposed, Zenon Trudeau (lieutenant-governor of Spanish Illinois) suggested (May 30) that large medals should go to Kansa chiefs Kayguechinga (or Le Petit Chef) and Jhahaongage (or Les grands Chevaux); and small ones to Kuechagachin (or Le Batard) and Whachanguia (or Le Geur qui brule).

Ref: Nasatir, op. cit., v. 1, pp. 326, 327.

Zenon Trudeau reported (from St. Louis, July 4) that Pedro [Pierre] Vial and four companions, earlier in the year had traveled from Santa Fe to the Pawnee Republic village "on the bank of the Kansas River" and spent 15 days there. He was on an official mission for the Spanish to effect peace between the Pawnee Republic Indians and the Laytanes [Comanches]. Traders from the St. Louis area who were in the village at the time said that he accomplished his purpose (and delivered a medal, a complete suit of clothes, and other gifts to the Pawnee chief). Vial had taken the traders to meet the Comanches, and wished to take them on to New Mexico, but they refused. He was reported to have made the journey from Santa Fe to the Pawnees in eight days.


The "Missouri Company's" third expedition was headed by Spanish citizen (but Scottish-born) James MacKay. With 33 men and four merchandise-laden pirogues he set out from St. Louis in late August on a journey which was intended to open up commerce in the unknown parts of the upper Missouri, and to attempt explorations as far as the Pacific. The boats, making slow progress, probably passed along the Kansas bank of the Missouri in the latter part of September. By October 14 (on which date MacKay began to keep a journal) the expedition had reached only as far as the Otoe village (about a mile below the Platte's mouth). Continuing
to the Maha village some distance above, MacKay built a trading fort where he spent the winter. But he sent his lieutenant, the Welshman John Evans, to explore farther upstream.

MacKay compiled a table of distances “ascending from the Missouri’s mouth” (dated 1797) which included the following information:

The “beautiful” Kansas river (at 100% leagues) was “navigable for canoes for more than 60 leagues at all times; but not for more than 20 leagues for large boats” in times of low waters. The Kansa lived 80 leagues up their river. On the Missouri, the “First old village of the Kansas nation” (at 112½ leagues) was “situated upon the bare hills”; and the “Second old village of the Kansas” (at 119% leagues) was “upon the south bank,” and “about a league lower and on the same side” was an iron mine.

Wolf river (at 136½ leagues) was a small river. The “River of the Great Nemahas” (at 141¾ leagues) was “navigable some leagues for pirogues.” On that river the boats passed that carried on commerce with the Pawnee Republic nation, whose village was on a branch of the Kansas river. The “River of the Little Nemahas” (at 150½ leagues) was a small river. The Platte (at 171¾ leagues) was “as large as the Missouri but so shallow and the course so rapid” that navigation was very difficult for any boat, except during spring-time high waters.

Ref: Houck’s Spanish Regime . . . , v. 2, pp. 181-192; and for MacKay’s table: Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, v. 10 (March, 1924), pp. 432-441, or Nasatir, op cit., v. 2, pp. 485-489.

1796

Victor Collot (former French general) toured Louisiana in 1796 on an information-collecting expedition for his government. The data he gathered on the Missouri river (beyond the Osage tributary) however, was derived, not from personal observation, but from traders (Truteau principally) whom he met at St. Louis. Collot died in Paris in 1805. His manuscript, together with maps and sketches (including a “Map of the Missouri” probably drawn in 1796), was not published until 1826. An English edition of Voyage in Amerique Septentrionale appeared in the same year. Collot wrote of the Kansas:

The river des Cans . . . is navigable an hundred leagues for barks and barges of every kind; it runs through very fertile lands, flat, well wooded, and intersected by rich meadows; but the country, such as we have already described, does not extend farther than one or two leagues from the banks. In
ascending this river fifty leagues, we find a fortified point, on which is situated the great village of the Cans. The branch which runs to the West is called the River of White Water; on that of the south-west the Indian nation called Republican is established [a statement contradictory to his map location, as noted below].

Elsewhere in his work the “Cans” Indians were said to be “On the river Cans, where it divides, 60 leagues from its mouth.” On his “Map of the Missouri” (1796?) Collot showed the “Can” just below the junction of the “Blue Water” with the “R. Cans.” Farther upstream, on the upper of two forks (neither named) of the Kansas was the Republican village. The lower fork was shown to have a “S. W. Branch.” But the “River of White Water” (referred to above) did not appear on the map.

Ref: Victor Collot’s A Journey in North America (1924 reprint), v. 1, pp. 279, 310, and Plate 29 (in volume of maps and sketches); Wheat, op. cit., v. 1, p. 160, and map facing p. 160; Abel’s Tableau’s Narrative, pp. 14, 15.

1796-1797

Fur trader Francisco Derouin [Francis Dorion?], arriving from the Platte, reported at St. Louis (on May 14, 1797) that the Kansa and Otoe Indians had spent the winter sending war parties against each other, and several had been killed. (The Otoe village was at the mouth of the Platte.)

Ref: Nasatir, op. cit., v. 2, pp. 516, 517.

1798

Zenon Trudeau, the lieutenant governor of Upper Louisiana, reported (from St. Louis, January 15):

The Kancé tribe has its village located on the banks of the river of that name. They number about 400 men, and are all better hunters than the Osages, and at the least as great rogues as they. This tribe would have an easy entrance to the river of Akanzas [the Arkansas] if it were not for the Osages who prevent them, and certainly they would commit more acts of piracy and roguery than these latter. This is the only tribe whose trade is not exclusive. It is usually divided into six equal parts, each one valued at the sum of eight hundred pesos. These six parts are distributed by lot among all the merchants of San Luis and Santa Genoveva. Those which have drawn the lot one year are excluded from it the next year, and until all have shared in this advantage. From this tribe 180 packs of furs are obtained annually.

Ref: Houck’s Spanish Regime ..., v. 2, p. 252.

1800

Gregoire Sarpy and [J. P.?] Cabanne, who had been traders among the Kansa for two years, suggested (in a letter, April 26) to Spanish authorities that if they were given the trade of the neighbor-
ing Panis also, they could probably mediate a peace treaty between
the two nations "for a long time enemies and always at war. . . . ."
The conflict affected the hunting and trade of both. (Sarpy was
among the Kansa again in 1801.)

Ref: Nasstir, op. cit., v. 2, pp. 592, 614-616.

On October 1, by the secret treaty of San Ildefonso, Napoleon
secured Louisiana from Spain. The territory ceded was to be the
same which Spain had received from France 37 years earlier.

1802

François Marie Perrin du Lac (young French writer) came to the
United States in 1801 with a particular desire to visit the upper Mis-
souri and its Indians. Chapter 24 of his Voyages dans les Deux Lou-
isianes (published in Paris, 1805) described that part of his travels.
(He supplemented his own observations of the region by using ma-
terial from Truteau’s 1796 description.) Also in the volume was his
Carte du Missouri (1802)—a map more accurate for that country
than any published earlier.

Perrin du Lac and ten others (one perhaps Truteau), set out from
St. Louis on May 18, 1802, to trade up the Missouri. When they
reached the mouth of the Kansas they turned their boat up its chan-
nel to the Kansa village [presumably the site two miles east of
present Manhattan—see 1790-1791]. For 12 days [in June?] they
traded and feasted among the Kansa, who, wrote Perrin du Lac,
"are tall, handsome, vigorous, and brave . . . active and good
hunters, and trade is carried on with them by the Whites without
danger. . . . ."

On returning to the mouth of the Kansas (navigable, he stated,
at all seasons for 500 miles), the traders cached their furs, and pro-
ceeded once again up the Missouri. They found the first old village
of the Kansa 35 miles upstream, and the second old village 22 miles
beyond.

Continuing to the Platte they ascended it to the Great Panis vil-
lage where they spent eight days. "We were better received by the
Great Panis than we had been by the Kanses," wrote Perrin du Lac.
"They were at war with the nation called Republicans, and had only
a small number of fire-arms, without any powder. We supplied
them with some in exchange for . . . skins. . . . The Great Panis are not so tall as the Kanses. They are active, and good
hunters. . . . Their manners very closely resemble those of the Kanses.”

After visiting the Mahas and Poncas, the traders continued as far up the Missouri as the White river (where there was a Cheyenne village). On August 26 they started downstream. Stopping at the mouth of the Kansas to pick up their cached furs, they saw a party of Sioux approaching and re-embarked hastily, leaving the less valuable pelts behind. They had “hardly gained the opposite shore” when they were “saluted with a discharge of musketry; but night coming on, the savages abandoned their pursuit.” On September 20 they reached St. Louis.

Perrin du Lac’s map of the Missouri showed the “R. des Kancés” (with the “Village des Kancés”); its tributary the Blue (“R. de l’Eau bleue”); and its Republican fork (“Fourche des Republiques”) with the “Village des Republiques” located well above the 39th parallel. Also shown were the two “Ancien” villages of the Kansa on the Missouri.

[An enlarged section of Perrin du Lac’s map is reproduced facing p. 209.]

Ref: Nasatir, op. cit., v. 2, pp. 706-712; F. M. Perrin du Lac’s Travels . . . (1807 English ed.); Wheat, op. cit., v. 1, map facing p. 159.

About 1802

As the Lewis and Clark expedition traveled up the Missouri in the summer of 1804, a site several miles below the mouth of Wolf river [in present Doniphan county] was pointed out to the explorers as the former location of a French “settlement.” William Clark’s journal entry on July 9 stated:

. . . at Six Miles passed the mouth of Creek on the L. S. [leeward, or Kansas side] called Monter’s [Montain’s] Creek, about two miles above is some Cabins where our Bowman & Several frenchmen Camp’d, two years ago. . . .

And Sgt. Charles Floyd wrote in his journal on July 9:

. . . Passed a prairie on the South Side where several French famileys had setled and made Corn Some Years ago. Stayed two years the Indians Came Freckentley to See them and was very frendley. . . .

Ref: Reuben G. Thwaites’ Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (New York, 1904), v. 1, p. 72.

1802-1803

The Great and Little Osage trade, in 1802, was granted for five years to Manuel Lisa and his partners Gregoire Sarpy, Charles Sanguinet, and Francois M. Benoit. (The new four-year contract
Auguste Chouteau had received from the Spanish in 1801 for the exclusive Osage trade was thus cancelled.) In 1803 Lisa acquired Sarpy’s and Sanguinet’s shares.

Ref: Nasatir, op. cit., v. 2, pp. 591, 592.

Cashesegra’s band of Great Osages and some of the Little Osages (including many of the best hunters) removed from the Osage river [in present Vernon co., Mo.] in 1802 or 1803, to the lower Verdigris [in northern Oklahoma, some 60 miles above the Arkansas-Verdigris junction]. Pierre Chouteau induced them to move in order to regain part of the trade he had lost to Manuel Lisa.

[ Lt. James B. Wilkinson, of Pike’s 1806 expedition, reported that Cashesegra (Big Track) was the nominal leader, but Clermont was the “greatest warrior and most influential man” among them.]


With two companions, James Purcell (once of Bardstown, Ky.) trapped on the Osage headwaters in 1802. They were perhaps in what is now east central Kansas when some Kansa stole their horses. Purcell and his friends cached their furs and pursued the thieves into the Kansa village. The “mad Americans” (so called by the Indians) got all but one horse back, only to lose the animals again, when near the Osage river, to unknown robbers. Later their make-shift canoe overturned and the trappers’ furs were lost near the mouth of the Osage. His companions then continued homeward, but Purcell joined a trader going up the Missouri to the Mandan country. After trapping and trading with the Padoucas and Kiowas, he arrived in the upper South Platte area. (While in present Colorado he made perhaps the first gold discovery by the whites there.) In June, 1805, he reached Santa Fe and remained for 19 years. Capt. Z. M. Pike who met “Pursley” there in 1807 recorded some of his adventures.


1803

In January President Jefferson sent a confidential message to congress urging the establishment of Indian trading houses on the United States frontier. Also, he proposed that an exploring party be sent “to trace the Missouri to its source, to cross the Highlands,
and follow the best water communication which offered itself from thence to the Pacific Ocean." Congress approved and voted $2,500 "for the purpose of extending the external commerce of the United States." Jefferson chose Meriwether Lewis to head the expedition, and Lewis suggested William Clark as coleader.


Napoleon sold Louisiana (acquired just three years earlier from Spain) to the United States on April 30. Formal transfer ceremonies took place on December 20, at New Orleans.

*(Part Three Will Appear in the Autumn, 1961, Issue.)*