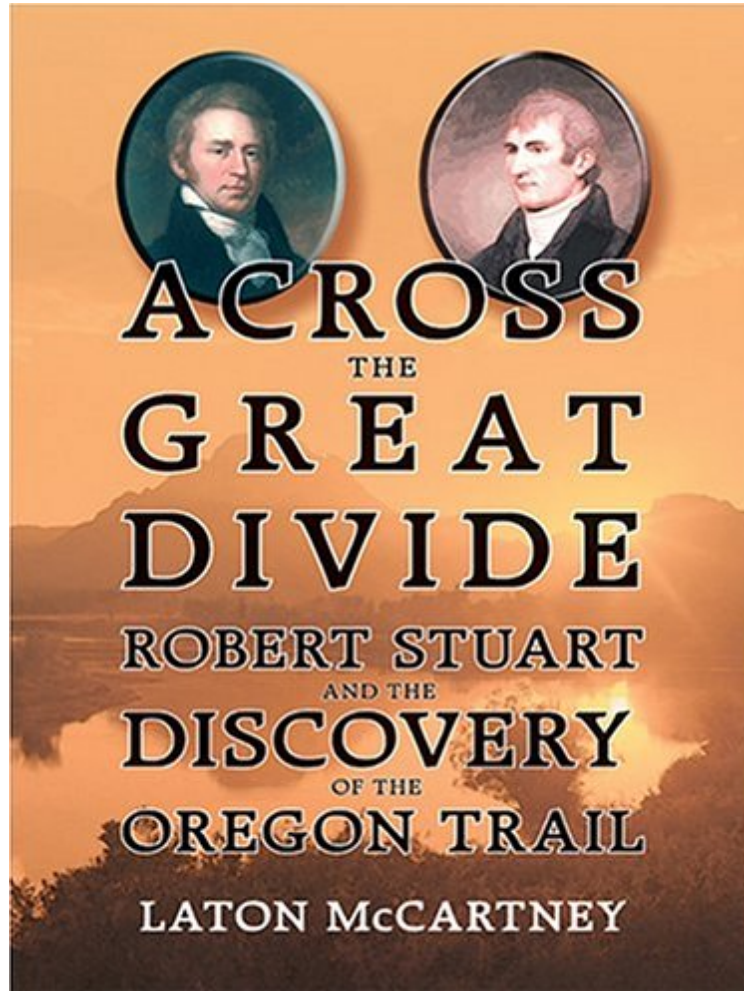


Across The Great Divide: Robert Stuart and The Discovery Of The Oregon Trail

Laton McCartney

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Laton McCartney : Across The Great Divide: Robert Stuart and The Discovery Of The Oregon Trail before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Across The Great Divide: Robert Stuart and The Discovery Of The Oregon Trail:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. How many wagons on The Oregon Trail knew who to thank ?By Mr. M. TimberlakeDuring an overnight stay in hospital I put this book to an unfair test. Not feeling to well I read the chapters out of sequence. For me every chapter was a justifiable interesting read. That is surely an exceptional test of a writer. This book is worth its shelf space for any lover of adventure and any follower of American history.Laton McCartney is a descendant of Robert Stuart. He has from unpublished family letters and journals been able to make

Stuart's place in history together with Astor's commercial interests come alive to the reader throughout the book. The fact that Stuart's undertaking was West to East where any support was infinitely more difficult and against a background of British colonial force and Indian hostility makes this even more remarkable. Many of the men sent on these expeditions were not at the start explorers. In view of this what some of them achieved was incredible. The debt that the wagon trains owe to Robert Stuart for blazing The South Pass trail and enabling the opening up of the American west to them is immense and very undervalued in history. The terrible sea voyage with a brutal captain, being seen as fair game to be picked off or stolen from by Indian tribes, but helped by some, hunting or starving to near cannibalism, near death illness, gear and food being swept away in the rivers, just being in open country during the wrong season or having to build a winter retreat and hunker down - it's all there and much more to find. My future resolution, to get a big contoured map and relive the endurance these iron men by tracing their tracks on the landscape. If you want to see the type of country these men came through by horse, on foot, by scratch built canoe and raft just look on the Internet and remember they were on their own. The book does Robert Stuart justice in full measure. I will be buying another copy for my son and his children.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Spectacular. By Michael E. Fitzgerald

John Jacob Astor led the life most people do not even dare to dream about. He was a serial entrepreneur at a time when most of the world was composed of farmers. He was so successful at his businesses that when he died he controlled one-fifteenth of all personal wealth in the United States! Across the Great Divide is a remarkably detailed account of one of his (failed) investments. Directly competing with the Hudson Bay Company for control of the North American fur trade, he is so successful that he is able to finance the establishment of the first American fort in Oregon and supports this effort with his own ships and men via Cape Horn. Returning east overland, one of his employees, Robert Stuart, discovers South Pass, the route that subsequently becomes the gateway to the Far West and the Oregon Trail! This is a most singular accomplishment. In February 1808 Thomas Jefferson, sixty-five years old and in the waning months of his second term as President, is approached by Astor seeking Jefferson's support for a far flung trading venture beyond the Mississippi River. The proposal captured Jefferson's attention. After embarking from New York City and rounding Cape Horn, Stuart arrives in Oregon in 1810, only 5 years after the Lewis and Clark expedition! It is stunning to realize that Fort Astoria's erection and provisioning, completed after a long, arduous sea voyage that included stops at the Falkland Islands and Hawaii, and which cemented America's claim to the Pacific Northwest, is finished just a few weeks before the arrival of Astor's primary competition, the Hudson Bay Company, could lay further claim to Oregon for Britain. In June 1812 Stuart, a junior partner in this venture, is chosen to lead an overland expedition back to St. Louis and New York to report to Astor. Only two American led expeditions had crossed the continent before him, Lewis and Clark's and Wilson Price Hunt's which was part of this Astor venture. However, instead of following the northern route of his predecessors, Stuart heads south along the Rockies and strikes South Pass, the only pass in the 3,000 mile Rocky Mountains passable by wagons. Stuart follows the Sweetwater and Platte Rivers across present day Wyoming and Nebraska. In the process, this obscure messenger-explorer discovers the trail that would become the central route of America's expansion, the emigrant road that opened up the Far West to settlement. Astor's Fort Astoria is captured by the British during the War of 1812 and Stuart never again sees Oregon. Subsequently, he becomes one of Astor's primary field agents, working out of Mackinaw Island in Michigan.

Laton McCartney's Robert Stuart is a most stalwart individual. When we stop to think that he was an entrepreneur, not an explorer, his accomplishment becomes all that much more impressive. He blithely embarks from New York on a three year endeavor that circumnavigates the known extent of the Western Hemisphere. His 10 month overland journey is so successful that all 7 people who start from Oregon reach civilization alive. This is a remarkably good book about American exploration and risk taking in an age and in a business when failure meant death. Well written and concise, it is the story of a long neglected explorer who discovered the Oregon Trail that 300,000 emigrants would cross on their way to the Pacific Coast.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. "The Men Who Don't Fit In" By Strawgold

There's a race of men that don't fit in, A race that can't stay still; So they break the hearts of kith and kin, And they roam the world at will...." ~Robert Service~ Beautiful words paying tribute to the intrepid souls of the adventurers; the individuals among us who found it impossible to live entirely within the confines of civilization. Some had the means to travel, some traveled without means, but both kinds richly deserve the words written for them; about them - no matter how harsh the reality of their story; for theirs is of achievement extraordinaire. This is a book like that. I found it interesting, obviously well-researched and containing much information I didn't know about the early explorers of my own state of residence. Mr. McCartney did an important work in presenting history and in paying tribute to his gutsy ancestor within the same accounting. This expedition followed the Lewis and Clark Corp. of Discovery by only a few years, long before Fremont made his journey into Wyoming. They were conducting the exploring of passageways for trade of all kinds, but for the moment, the fur trade - for John Jacob Astor, one of the most astute businessmen of that century. While Lewis and Clark made mighty discoveries, but didn't hit the jackpot with the intended waterways due to the imposing mountains, it was Stuart who discovered an equally important "northwest passage" in the South Pass route, far to the south which is really where the mountains meet the plains - the gentle ending of the Wind River mountain range - allowing the vast traffic West to begin to pass through. And pass they did, the natives watching astounded as they were pushed aside in the tidal waves

of emigrants that followed. I couldn't help it - the naughty thought occurred to me that Fremont, while indeed serving his country in his travels, was primarily the son-in-law of a politician wishing to make a name for himself after the real work was done. It does have controversy, of course - any great discovery is subject to it in the course of hashing out history. John Colter may have crossed it after he split from the LC expedition - it has been suggested - I'm not enough of a scholar to question some of it but for certain, this man was of the first white men to see it, and documented his journey. The list of names, rivers and landmarks bring it vividly to life for me, as they are dear, familiar places that I visit on a regular basis, thinking all the while of these men who came before. The Platte, Bessemer Bend, Independence Rock, the Snake river, Henry's Fork of the Snake, Fort Hall; the people of Stuart, Hoback, McClellan, Hunt, all of these people live on vibrantly in our country here - with the landmarks memorializing them. For them, life was to be lived - or lost - in the trying. I doubt that many of them aspired to the greatness they achieved - it was simply answering the call of the wild and unknown, reminding me of yet another free spirit - Robert Service - who said it all in his poem "The Men Who Don't Fit In." One scenario I found difficult to believe was the part where the explorers were close to death from starvation. Men with firearms, ammunition, should have had no trouble feeding themselves. The country abounds with game even to this day, and it was abundance of twenty fold then. Even if the big game had become scarce in certain areas due to migrations, there were certainly rabbits, even in the winter. It made mention that they "were reluctant to fire their weapons" for fear of attracting the hostile Crow back to their whereabouts, which had to be the most of it, even though it didn't actually come out with the reason. Our Native people are, at long last, taking their rightful place in history too - this book demonstrates it too - for it was their homes that were being invaded and one can scarcely blame them for being insulted. A mass paperback tale it is not. I thoroughly enjoyed this book, found it scholarly enough without being dry, well-conceived, well-written, and am glad I found it. I'm also thankful for the reviews given it, which helped me decide to read it. It has a well-deserved place in my personal library.

Resurrecting a pivotal moment in American history, this is the never-before-told story of the young Scottish fur trader and explorer who discovered the way West, changing the face of the country forever. Lewis and Clark had struggled across the high Rockies, but their route had been too perilous for wagon trains to follow. Six years later, Robert Stuart and six companions - on the return trip from establishing Astor's fur trading post at Astoria - made the trailblazing discovery of the Oregon Trail.

From Publishers Weekly Lewis and Clark might have won all the early acclaim for their transcontinental journey, but the actual opening of the West to American settlement came a few years later as part of a commercial enterprise. Robert Stuart was a member of a venture financed by John Jacob Astor that set up an outpost near the mouth of the Columbia River as an initial step in a plot to monopolize fur trade in the western territories. In June 1812, Stuart was chosen to lead a small party on a journey back east to give Astor an update on how they were faring. After wandering around the northwest for a bit, they eventually found the one gap in the Rocky Mountains wide enough to cross by wagon. In the decades following, about 300,000 pioneers would take the Oregon Trail to settle in the western territories. It would be easy for McCartney (Friends in High Places), a direct descendant of Stuart, to focus solely on his ancestor's accomplishments, and there's no shortage of stunning vistas and threatening experiences with Native American war parties. But McCartney never loses sight of the big picture, depicting the fierce competition among early 19th-century fur traders and the impending threat to Astor's project from the onset of the War of 1812. Despite the hoopla surrounding his return, Stuart's reputation eventually languished for more than a century. This gripping account may not lift him fully out from under the shadow of his more famous predecessors, but it should guarantee he won't soon be forgotten again. Photos. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist When fur magnate John Jacob Astor set up a trading post at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1811, among his recruits was Robert Stuart, whose task was to report back to the boss in New York. Although Astor must have been less than delighted with Stuart's news about the venture's troubles, Astor's losses were the adventure-loving reader's gain, as Stuart's journal of his year-long, cross-continental trek has been a source for writers (such as Washington Irving) about the Old West and its explorers, mountain men, and Native Americans. McCartney elevates that source to center stage in this rendition of Stuart's odyssey, which is significant in exploratory annals for Stuart's discovery of the South Pass in Wyoming, the future Oregon Trail's conduit over the continental divide. Finding South Pass ended one of the tribulations of Stuart and his small party (namely, eluding Crow warriors); numerous other trials, varied and perilous, are recounted by McCartney with a distinct admiration for his indomitable ancestors, a feeling his readers will share. Gilbert Taylor Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "This work helps to address a neglected area in the history of western American expansion." -- starred, Library Journal (Library Journal)