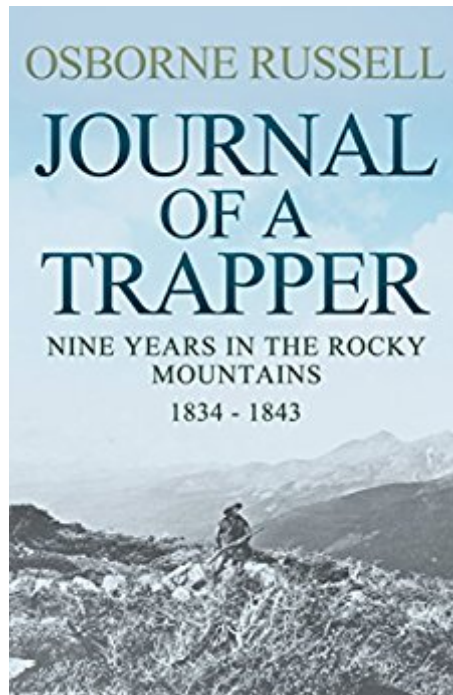




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# Journal Of A Trapper: Nine Years In The Rocky Mountains, 1834-1843



## Synopsis

Perhaps the best account of the fur trapper in the Rocky Mountains when the trade there was at its peak. • Aubrey L. Haines In 1834, Osborne Russell joined an expedition from Boston, under the direction of Nathaniel J. Wyeth, which proceeded to the Rocky Mountains to capitalise on the salmon and fur trade. He would remain there, hunting, trapping, and living off the land, for the next nine years. *Journal of a Trapper* is his remarkable account of that time as he developed into a seasoned veteran of the mountains and experienced trapper. In Russell's own words he explains to the reader "if you are in search of the travels of a classical and scientific tourist, please lay this volume down, and pass on, for this simply informs you what a trapper has seen and experienced. But if you wish to peruse a hunter's rambles among the wild regions of the Rocky Mountains, please read this". Russell encounters grizzly bears, hunts buffalos, trades with Native Americans and suffers from the extreme conditions of his mountainous environment. His account is written in vivid prose that transports the reader to nineteenth century Northwest America. Of particular note are his descriptions of the landscapes in which he lived. Although it had not been designated a national park during Russell's time, his portrayal of Yellowstone is truly breath-taking. This is the perfect book for anyone wishing to find out more about the lives of the mountain men, what they ate, how they hunted, what shelters they used and how they survived in some of the most inhospitable conditions. After this book was written Osborne Russell became a politician who helped form the government of the state of Oregon. He was born in 1814 in Maine. He ran away from home as a young man for a life at sea, but eventually found employment as a trapper. In 1844, he was elected to the second Executive Committee of the Provisional Government of Oregon, but after he was not re-elected he eventually went and lived in California. He died in 1892. This edition was published in 1921.

## Book Information

File Size: 2291 KB

Print Length: 167 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 1520105053

Publisher: Foresight Publishing (November 15, 2016)

Publication Date: November 15, 2016

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01MYMW9AQ

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #20,378 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #3 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > State & Local > Pacific Northwest #3 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Sports > Outdoors & Nature > Hunting & Fishing > Hunting #3 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > United States > Regions > West > Mountain

## Customer Reviews

Osborne Russell was the real article: a respondent to Ashley's famous advertisement "to enterprising young men", Russell was one of the few who both survived and wrote about the experience. His life as a trapper was an enviable one, for he both survived and thrived in his nine years in the mountains, and those experiences stood him in good stead for the remainder of his life as a frontiersman in Oregon and California. However, his writings consist primarily of an uninspired travelogue: spend two weeks trapping on this creek, then three weeks on this other creek, then crossed the divide and descended this river to that fort, then spent two weeks trapping that river, etc. There are a few good yarns mixed in and he met many famous people, but you'll find more yarns, better told, and more insights, and better biography, in other books. If you've read a dozen good books about the mountain men, then you should add Russell to your list, but first you should read *A Majority of Scoundrels: An Informal History of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company*, which is fantastic, and also *Across the Wide Missouri*, equally so, even though they were both written by modern authors. If you want an eyewitness account, then your first stop should be *Tough Trip Through Paradise, 1878-1879*, one of the best books about a mountain man's life by anybody, from anywhen. You'll also want to check out *Mountain Men and Fur Traders of the Far West: Eighteen Biographical Sketches* to get some more background on some of these characters, and after that, you'll probably want to read more about the likes of Jed Smith, Jim Bridger, John Coulter and Hugh Glass (who came closer than any other man to getting et by a grizzly without actually dying) before you turn to the relatively humdrum life of Osborne Russell. So, to sum it up, I'd trade moccasins with Osborne any day, but there are better tales in store from other mountain men.

Even for me who thrives on these early American tales this is tough to get through. It plods along in a monotone way. The author does warn in the beginning that if you are looking for an adventure novel this is just his "diary" of sorts and isn't that exciting, more of a testimonial. I love the authors matter-of-fact way of describing what's going on around him whether it's an Indian attack or the man from Pennsylvania getting swept down the swollen river and drowning. These people were TOUGH and had to be to cut it back then. For \$1 it's worth it.

There is a lot of text about going up a canyon, turning Southeast, continuing to the North, passing through a mile-wide valley, etc, etc. But the stories in between are just incredible! And to hear it in the words of the person who experienced it more than 150 years ago! I live in the same part of the country where this took place and it really makes me want to get out in the wilderness more.

Fun and interesting read. It is fairly easy to follow the wording and easier to read than I expected as it is a diary format. I read it on a Kindle and it would have helped to have had an easier way to reference a map. Nonetheless, as an outdoorsman, I appreciated the diary and the descriptions of his travel and camping. I have my doubts as to how accurate it is - he seems to have covered many miles in short times - but it is worth the read.

I really enjoyed reading about the life of this man as a trapper less than two hundred years ago. It amazed me to consider the amounts of distance that he traveled through the Rockies only on foot or horse back with out benefits of roads or even established trails. I wish that maps would have been provided to better follow his travels.

Not what I expected from this book. I was thinking it was more story like. It is written in journal form and slightly hard to follow due to his daily travels. I would like more description of the surrounding country. Cannot recommend if you are looking for stories of country and the people who lived there.

What could have been an interesting true story is unfortunately a boring diary, told in the barest of details. I couldn't finish it.

It was a journal of his travels--mostly direction and river crossings. It would probably be of more interest to someone living in that area. It was OK.

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