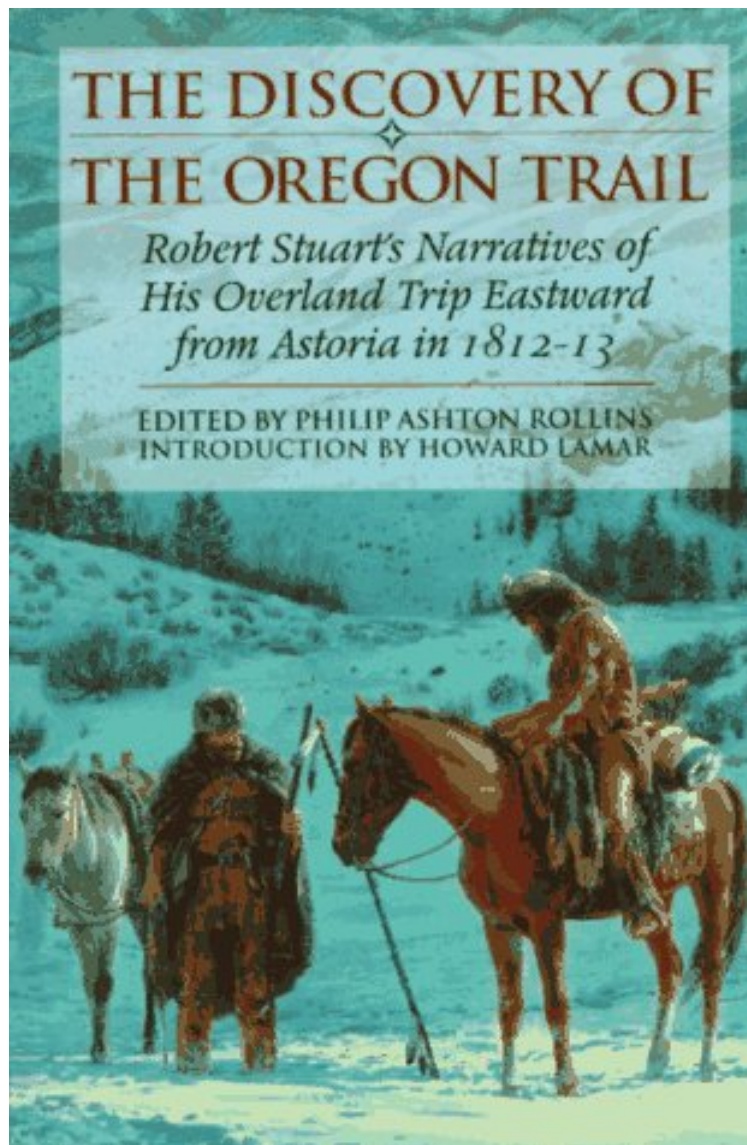


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The Discovery of the Oregon Trail: Robert Stuart's Narratives of His Overland Trip Eastward from Astoria in 1812-13

Robert Stuart

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Robert Stuart : The Discovery of the Oregon Trail: Robert Stuart's Narratives of His Overland Trip Eastward from Astoria in 1812-13 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Discovery of the Oregon Trail: Robert Stuart's Narratives of His Overland Trip Eastward from Astoria in 1812-13:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. An epic adventure of extraordinary proportions
By William J. Higgins, III
This is an excellent first hand account of the original discovery of what was to be the Oregon Trail (in reverse). Robert Stuart originally left New York on the ship the Tonquin, funded by John Jacob Astor, and sailed around the tip of South America and then eventually up to the mouth of the Columbia River in Oregon to establish a trading post. Stuart then proceeded to head back east to report to Astor about the state of affairs of the trading fort. With only a handful of men, they went by canoe, horseback and mostly by foot, from the mouth of the Columbia to St. Louis, then eventually to New York. This historical narrative is beyond words. They faced the hardships of hunger, fatigue, Indians, weather, and about everything else one can think of. It is truly a fascinating portrayal of day to day survival in the 1812 wilderness written from the hand of the man who was there. What I also enjoyed about the book was the Appendix on Wilson Price Hunt who, also working for Astor, took an expedition by land from St. Louis to Oregon at about the same time. His written account is also mind-blowing and puts the whole book into perspective. There is also an excellent forward by Rollins which gives you a background on what you are about to read.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Just a gazillion end notes
By Earnest Sludge
This is a total waste of time and money. From the cornball aftermath-of-cruel-indian-attack cover through the endless, hypeer-academic end noting, to the massive foreword and biographical sketch. The appendixes are useless and boring, too. The only one that's worth reading, the account of Hunt's overland trip westwards to Astoria, is already included in Alexander Ross's, "First Settlers", book, I believe, and is a much more worthwhile book overall. Stuart's narrative only takes up a bare quarter of the text in this big, heavy book! Some of the paragraphs are so heavily end noted that virtually every word is end noted! I learned my lesson about heavy end noting from reading "Chardon's Journal". I read Stuart's narrative on its own terms and only occasionally referred to the end notes for a clarification or elaboration. I was able to read it in almost one sitting. Luckily I bought this very cheaply as a used item or I'd be really unhappy.

This book is about the discovery of the Oregon Trail, i.e., a safe and painless way for immigrants to travel overland, therefore it should come as no surprise that this narrative is safe, painless and almost totally free from any interesting drama or incident. For example, one of the more exciting details cited is how Stuart's party boiled their shirts in lye water to free them of lice while they sat around "practically in a state of nature"! Oh mama!

This book is for Astoria completists only. I've never read Irving's "Astoria" (I despised his "Captain Bonneville"), but I can say that Alexander Ross's books and Ross Cox's are very enjoyable accounts of the incredibly overworked Astoria episode.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. One of the best books on the West ever published
By Bomojaz
This book represents a major achievement in the annals of western exploration, and deserves a prominent spot on anyone's American history shelf. In 1810, Robert Stuart, a partner with John Jacob Astor, shipped to the mouth of the Columbia River, where he helped establish Astoria. But troubles at the post with the British during the War of 1812 impelled Stuart with six other men to make an overland winter journey over the Rockies to St. Louis. Throughout the journey Stuart kept a journal, in which he recorded everything encountered along the way: the precise route taken, various Indian tribes, flora and fauna, perspective trapping grounds - and their own personal hardships, which included, near starvation, freezing weather, and hostile Indians. He gave the journal to Astor, who sent it to President James Madison. Stuart then wrote a more formal version of the journey, which was published in France. The original journal made its way back to the Stuart family, where it remained forgotten until it was discovered in a cupboard and finally published in 1935. This book publishes both the original journal and the French rewrite, known as the "Traveling Memoranda." Both are meticulously edited by Philip Ashton Rollins, which is the key that makes this edition not only definitive but a masterwork. With Rollin's notes it's possible to follow Stuart's route precisely. He is especially detailed where the men crossed South Pass, the first known whites to do so, though their "discovery" would go unrecognized (Jedediah Smith is credited with making the first "recorded" crossing of the Pass in 1824.) In addition to these works, there is a 70-page Forward that summarizes events and puts the Narratives into perspective and a detailed Biographical Note on Stuart's family history. The book indeed is a major accomplishment. Anyone interested in the early exploration of the West must read this book. Highly recommended.

Robert Stuart saw the American West a few years after Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and, like them, kept a journal of his epic experience. A partner in John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company, the Scotsman shipped for Oregon aboard the Tonquin in 1810 and helped found the ill-fated settlement of Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River. In 1812, facing disaster, Stuart and six others slipped away from Astoria and headed east. His journal, edited and annotated by Philip Ashton Rollins, describes their hazardous 3,700-mile journey to St. Louis. Crossing the Rockies in winter, they faced death by cold, starvation, and hostile Indians. But they made history by discovering what came to be called the Oregon Trail, including South Pass, over which thousands of emigrants would travel west in mid-century. Besides Stuart's narrative, this volume contains important material about Astoria and the fate of the Tonquin, as well as the harrowing account of Wilson Price Hunt, who headed a party of overlanders traveling east to join the Astorians.

.com Robert Stuart, a partner in John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company, helped found an ill-fated trading post in Astoria, Oregon, at the mouth of the Columbia River. The post fell to disease and hostile attacks, but by then, Stuart

had left, heading back east to report to corporate headquarters. In making his way overland across mountains and vast prairies, Stuart blazed what would become the Oregon Trail. His journal, reproduced here, recounts his hardships and observations along the way, and it makes for fascinating reading. In this University of Nebraska Press edition, the noted Western historian Howard Lamar provides an introductory essay that discusses the significance of Stuart's trek to the later settlement of the Pacific Northwest. A major contribution to Americana. . . . Not only has Mr. Rollins brought to light one of the most important and absorbing records of early Western exploration but . . . he has also presented an example of American historical research at its best. The volume is beyond praise. New York Times