



Early Western Travels 1748-1846 (Volume XXVI) : Part I of Flagg's The Far West 1836-1837

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In laying before the majesty of the public a couple of volumes like the present, it has become customary for the author to disclaim in his preface all original design of perpetrating a book, as if there were even more than the admitted quantum of sinfulness in the act. Whether or not such disavowals now-a-day receive all the credence they merit, is not for the writer to say; and whether, were the prefatory asseveration, as in the present case, diametrically opposed to what it often is, the reception would be different, is even more difficult to predict. The articles imbodyed in the following volumes were, a portion of them, in their original, hasty production, designed for the press; yet the author unites in the disavowal of his predecessors of all intention at that time of perpetrating a book.

In the early summer of '36, when about starting upon a ramble over the prairies of the "Far West," in hope of renovating the energies of a shattered constitution, a request was made of the writer, by the distinguished editor of the Louisville Journal, to contribute to the columns of that periodical whatever, in the course of his pilgrimage, might be deemed of sufficient interest. A series of articles soon after made their appearance in that paper under the title, "Sketches of a Traveller." They were, as their name purports, mere sketches from a traveller's portefeuille, hastily thrown upon paper whenever time, place, or opportunity rendered convenient; in the steamboat saloon, the inn bar-room, the log-cabin of the wilderness, or upon the venerable mound of the Western prairie. With such favour were these hasty productions received, and so extensively were they circulated, that the writer, on returning from his pilgrimage to "the shrine of health," was induced, by the solicitations of partial friends, to enter at his leisure upon the preparation for the press of a mass of MSS. of a similar character, written at the time, which had never been published; a thorough revision and enlargement of that which had appeared, united with this, it was thought, would furnish a passable volume or two upon the "Far West." Two years of residence in the West have since passed away; and the arrangement for the press of the fugitive sheets of a wanderer's sketch-book would not yet, perhaps, have been deemed of sufficient importance to warrant the necessary labour, had he not been daily reminded that his productions, whatever their merit, were already public property so far as could be the case, and at the mercy of every one who thought proper to assume paternity. "Forbearance ceased to be longer a virtue," and the result is now before the reader. But, while alluding to that aid which his labours may have rendered to others, the author would not fail fully to acknowledge his own indebtedness to those distinguished writers upon the West who have preceded him. To Peck, Hall, Flint, Wetmore, and to others, his acknowledgments are due and are respectfully tendered.

Early Western Travels, Flagg's The Far West, Sleep no more, Mississippi Valley, Ohio Cliffs, The Power of Steam, The Piasa

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