

have had their day in the old Wild West, and the creak of the crude Red River carts, drawn by oxen straining under the yoke, heralded the coming of the cattle ranchers and the farmers who were to make this vast area a region of peaceful homes. The Old West lives only in the Museum.

Willoughby M. Babcock
Curator

The following concerns and societies contributed the articles on display in this museum.

The Minnesota Historical
Society.....St. Paul, Minn.
Missouri Historical
Society.....St. Louis, Mo.
State Historical Society of North
Dakota.....Bismarck, N. D.
Eastern Washington State Historical
Society.....Spokane, Wash.
Hudson's Bay Company.....Winnipeg, Man.
Minnesota State Game and Fish
Commission.....St. Paul, Minn.
Gordon & Ferguson.....St. Paul, Minn.
The Golden Rule.....St. Paul, Minn.
The Glacier Park Hotel
Company.....Glacier Park, Mont.

Mr. L. A. Huffman of Miles City, Montana, has a special section devoted to photographs taken by him during the days of the buffalo and Indian wars in Montana.

(Printed in U. S. A.)



The Columbia River Historical Expedition 1926



Special
Museum Car

Passing the Old West in Review

In an attempt to visualize the West of the days when explorer, fur trader and Indian roamed the plains and the mountains, a collection of articles illustrating the past has been assembled from the historical societies of the Northwest under the direction of Willoughby M. Babcock, Curator of the Minnesota Historical Society Museum, and placed on exhibition in a special car on the Columbia River Special of the Great Northern Railroad.

Little does the traveler of 1926, speeding across country at forty or fifty miles an hour amid the luxury of modern railroad equipment, realize the problems of life in the West seventy-five or a hundred years ago. Woe unto the man who was compelled to make the long journey to Pembina and the Red River of the North in the winter-time when the streams were closed, for he must then travel by dog sledge with his snow-shoes in readiness to break trail. Lucky was he who could get to his destination by steamboat on rivers like the Mississippi and the Missouri. Much more likely was he to find that a birch bark canoe manned by Indians or sturdy French-Canadian voyageurs would be his easiest means of conveyance.

As the traveler moved westward his chances of securing birch bark enough for a canoe lessened, and he found his guides peering eagerly ahead for a herd of buffalo. The killing of a huge bull did not lessen his curiosity, for such an animal was too tough for food. The squaws, however, were rapidly skinning the carcass, and stretching it over a framework of willow. An hour later a boat, round, flat bottomed and clumsy, was ready for the crossing of the "Big Muddy"—the "Bull Boat" of the West.

The men of the wilderness, the free trappers began to appear from time to time, tricked out in fur caps, fringed buckskin hunting shirts and leggings ornamented with beadwork, each carrying his rifle, powder-horn, pouch and hunting knife on his way to some mountain rendezvous. Such men would be a great protection to any western traveler, and serve as trustworthy guides through the mountain passes. Bands of Indians crossed the trail at intervals, and with some of these the trappers held council by means of the sign language. Other parties elaborately dressed in war shirts fringed with human scalps, and war bonnets of eagle plumes, and bound for the war-path, were carefully avoided lest a stray white scalp or two should be added to the collection. A free trapper was fair game to many of the tribes.

At last one of the homes of these mountain trappers was reached, a low hut of logs huddled against the hillside as if for protection. The interior was rudely furnished with fireplace, and the inevitable kettle hanging in it, a rough bunk of balsam boughs, table, stump stools, and a miscellaneous litter of traps, guns, skins and other paraphernalia of a life in the open. Close at hand, in a tiny store-house, was the stock of goods for trade, guns, gun-flints, fire-steels, knives, pipe tomahawks, axes, hoes, tin kettles and jewelry, and the significant little wooden keg containing the "high wine" or alcohol, to be diluted into the rum of the Indian trade.

Further roaming in the West might bring the traveler to one of the great central posts, such as Fort Union, or Fort Benton, belonging to the American Fur Company, The Rocky Mountain Fur Company, or even the Hudson's Bay Company, whose traders battled with the Americans on American soil for the rich peltries of the region. There would be stories of the journeys of Lewis and Clark, the Astorians, and many others to be heard from the old-timers, and explanations of the Indian battles recounted on the painted buffalo robes.

The explorer, fur trader, and painted Indian with human scalps at his belt