

THE TIME

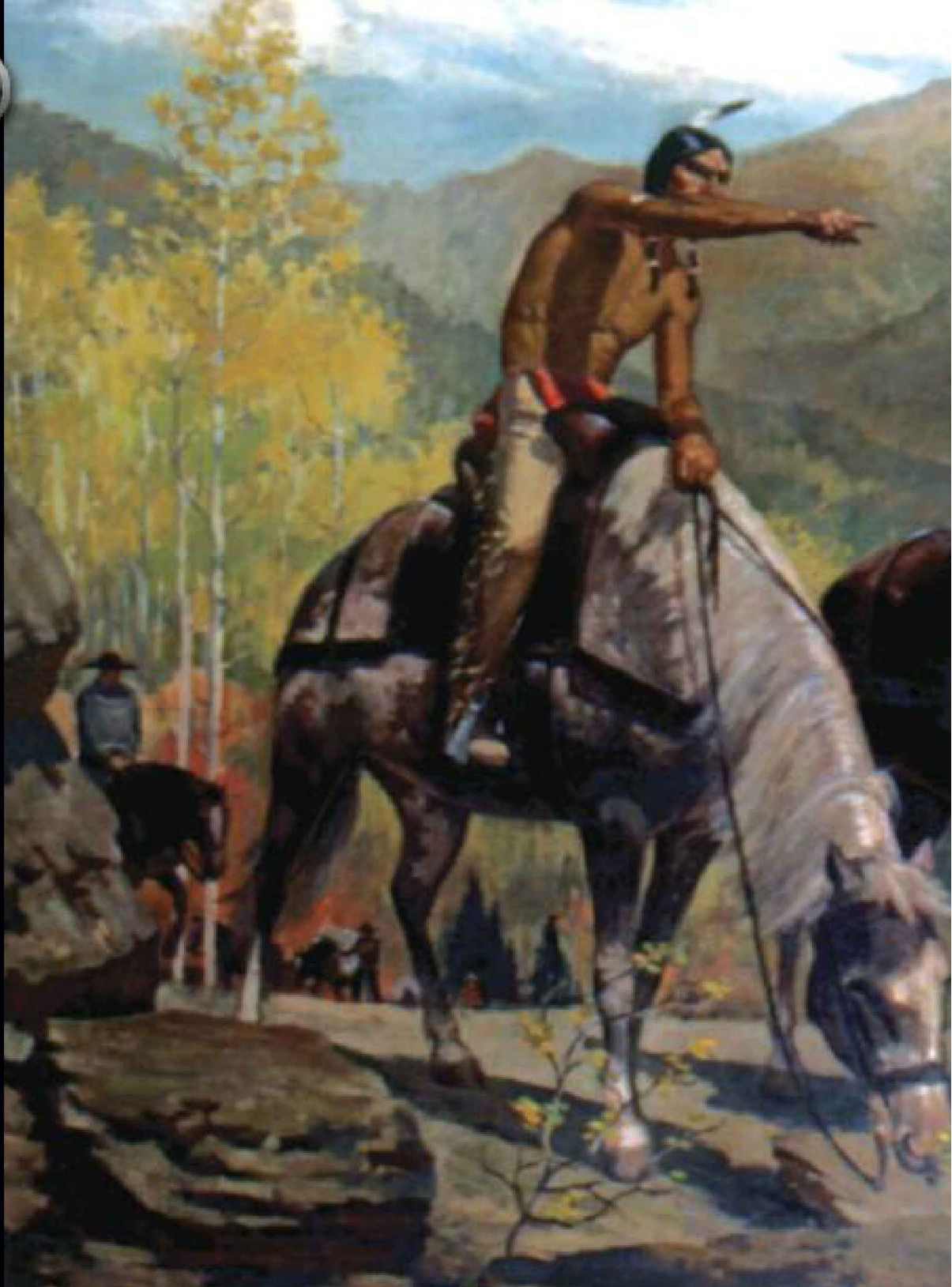
1770–1840s

PEOPLE TO KNOW

- James Beckwourth
- Jim Bridger
- Christopher Columbus
- Francisco Dominguez
- Silvestre Escalante
- Joaquin
- Juan Rivera
- Peter Skene Ogden
- Miera y Pacheco
- Etienne Provost
- Antoine Robidoux
- Silvestre
- Jedediah Smith
- Walkara
- Joseph Walker

WORDS TO UNDERSTAND

- barter
- cache
- ethnocentricity
- pelt
- presidio
- rendezvous
- retrieve



Silvestre, a Ute guide, shows Father Escalante the lush Utah Valley and Utah Lake off in the distance. At the time, many American Indians lived in the valley around the lake.

(Painting by Keith Eddington)

Timeline of Events

1760



1765

Juan Rivera crosses into present-day Monticello, Utah.



1780

1776

Fathers Dominguez and Escalante enter Utah.

1800

Early 1800s

Europeans wore tall felt hats made of beaver fur.



The Great Encounter

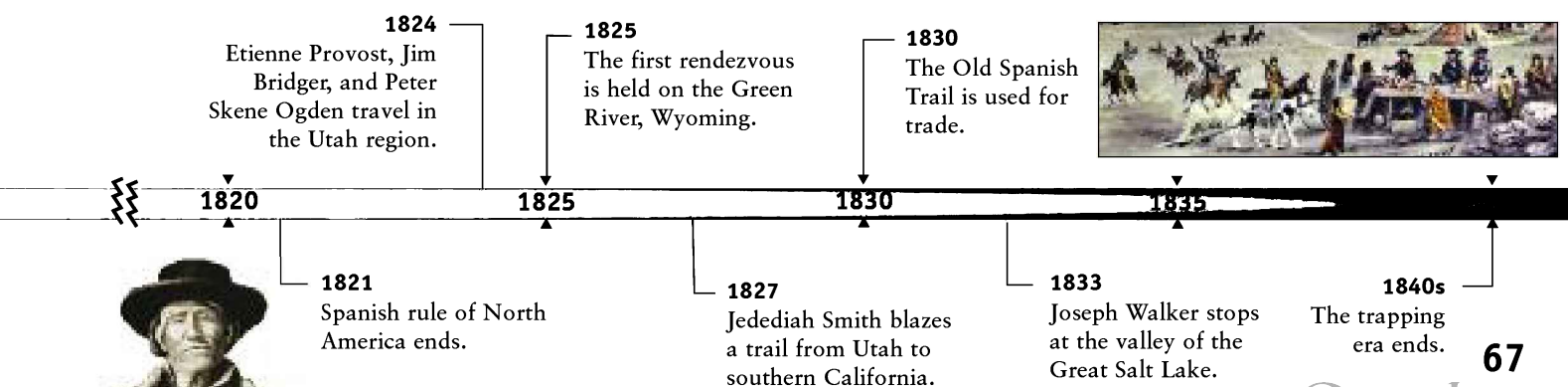
Chapter

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SETTING THE STAGE

Spanish explorers and Catholic priests visited the region we now call Utah. Later, trappers came to trap beaver for their soft, thick furs. They often traded with Indians, used Indian guides, and married Indian women. Then Mormon settlers crossed the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains into Utah. They were here to stay.

This interaction between the American Indians and the first white people is called “the Great Encounter.” There were many peaceful encounters, but there were also conflicts. Eventually the Indians were forced to change their lifestyle.



Age of Exploration

Millions of American Indians lived all over the American continents. The people lived in many groups with distinct cultures. They had a long history. At the same time, the people of Europe and the rest of the world did not even know the highly populated American continents existed. Then a series of events began that would change Indian life in dramatic ways.

In the 1400s, merchants in Europe wanted to buy and sell goods with people in faraway places. Travel on water is usually easier and faster than travel on land, so Christopher Columbus convinced the king and queen of Spain to give him ships and a crew to explore a new ocean route to the Indies and convert the people there to Christianity.

Instead, the ships ran into a small group of islands in the Caribbean Sea of North America. Columbus claimed the land, the wealth, and the native people for Spain.

During the last years of Spanish rule, Juan de Anza led an expedition from a presidio at Tubac, Arizona, into the San Francisco Bay area. A caravan of 240 potential settlers, more than half of them women and children, were escorted by soldiers, priests, and Indians. The group never came into Utah, but showed the zeal of the Spanish in strengthening their presence in the Southwest.

For hundreds of years after Columbus, other explorers came to Central and South America seeking glory and gold and bringing their Catholic religion to the people. They set up large Spanish colonies and started ruling the Indian people. The Spanish opened mines and forced Indian men to work in them, often as slaves.

The Spanish Spread Out

Spanish explorers and priests moved on horseback from Mexico into today's New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Of course, this land was all Indian land then, but the Spanish had claimed it.

The large Coronado expedition of 1540–42 explored to the south rim of the Grand Canyon and went east into the Great Plains. Despite their valiant efforts, they found no rich cities of gold.

After a time, Santa Fe (in today's New Mexico) became an important Spanish town. Soldiers, explorers, and Catholic priests gathered there and then branched out in all directions. In the late 1600s, a report told about Indian tribes living west



of the mountains of Colorado. It told of a lake with people living around it. This place was probably Utah Lake, near today's Orem and Provo.

Juan Rivera Enters Utah

Almost 300 years after Columbus first came to the Americas, a Spanish explorer made his way to today's Utah. Juan Antonio Rivera and his party searched for the Colorado River and silver deposits. They entered present-day Utah near today's Monticello and passed the La Sal Mountains. Then they moved down Spanish Valley to reach the future site of Moab on the Colorado River. That October, on a white poplar tree there, Rivera carved a large cross. He wrote "Viva Jesus" at the top of the cross and his own name at the bottom.

Missions and Presidios

The Spanish did more than just explore. They also established missions and *presidios*. A *presidio* was a military post controlled by a governor and used to protect priests and other settlers from

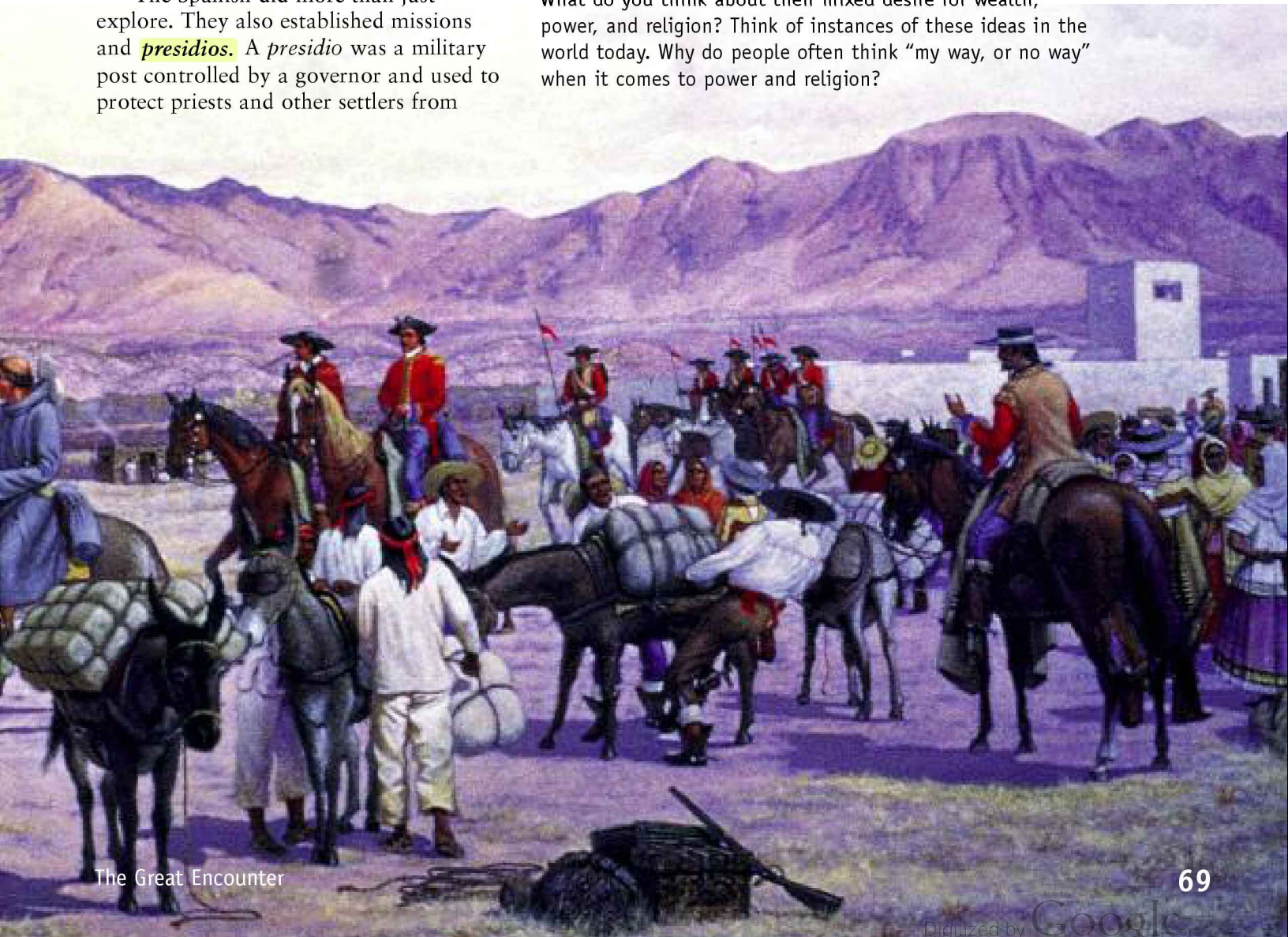
Indian attack. A mission was a place where the priests and Indians built a church and other buildings. Indians could live near the church, grow crops, and raise cattle, sheep, and horses. Missions were near the *presidios*. Two important missions were in San Diego and Monterey (in today's California).

Devoted young priests from Europe built and lived at the missions. They worked to teach Indians the teachings of Jesus Christ and how to live like Europeans. Indians often helped the priests by showing them where and how to get food and served as travel guides.

What do you think?

The Spanish explored for gold, conquered Indians, and brought devout missionaries to spread the Catholic religion.

What do you think about their mixed desire for wealth, power, and religion? Think of instances of these ideas in the world today. Why do people often think "my way, or no way" when it comes to power and religion?



The Utes Meet Father Escalante

Fathers Francisco Dominguez and Silvestre Escalante were Spanish Catholic priests who became the first non-Indians to explore the Great Basin. The priests, along with Spanish soldiers, mapmaker Miera y Pacheco, translators, and Indian servants, had been sent by the Spanish government to find a better route from Santa Fe to the mission in Monterey.

The group of fourteen men on horseback left Santa Fe eager for adventure. When they heard there were hostile Indians in what we now call Arizona, they avoided that route and went farther north into what is now Colorado. They moved north through rough terrain with little water and became lost.

After a time they met a Yuta (Ute) who guided them to an Indian man Escalante called Silvestre.

The Dominguez-Escalante expedition in the West started in July, 1776. What was happening at the time in the thirteen colonies in the East?

Dominguez-Escalante Expedition, 1776

Spanish explorers searched for a route from Santa Fe to their Catholic mission in Monterey. Where did they go instead?

- What present-day states are Santa Fe and Monterey located in?
- Did the group ever reach the Great Salt Lake?
- What present-day Utah towns are located on the explorers' route?
- What major river did they cross on their return trip?

Escalante wrote in his journal:

Aug. 30. Then we presented to . . . Silvestre a woolen cloak, a hunting knife, and some white glass beads, telling him we were giving these things to him so he would accompany us and continue as our guide to his country. He agreed and we gave him the present.

Sept 2. Besides the guide Silvestre, we found here another Indian, still a youth, who wished to accompany us. Since we had not previously known of his desire we had not provided him with a horse, and so to avoid any further delay [one of the explorers] took him behind him on his horse. Very gladly, with Silvestre and the boy, whom we named Joaquin, we continued our journey.

The party made its way south, then followed a river through a canyon. Coming out of the canyon near today's Provo, the Spanish fathers were awed to see the many Indian villages dotting the shore of Utah Lake.

While the rest of the group set up camp at the foot of the mountains, Silvestre, the boy Joaquin, and an interpreter entered the Indian village. Here the Indian guides proved valuable and may have saved the lives of the others.

Sept. 23. Some of the men came out to meet them with weapons in their hands to defend their homes and their families, but as soon as Silvestre talked to them, the guise of war was changed into the finest and simplest expression of peace and affection. . . .

On seeing that the boy Joaquin was on such good terms with us that he paid no attention to his own people. He even refused to leave the father . . . sleeping at his side. . . .

The Spanish fathers then preached to the people, and Indian leaders offered the Spaniards land if they would stay, adding that the Indians would protect them from the Comanches, another Indian group in the region.

We told them that after finishing our journey we would return . . . to baptize them and live with them. . . . We then presented the chief . . . with a hunting knife and strings of beads, and Miera gave him a hatchet.

Since Silvestre was staying with the Utes, Dominguez asked for another guide, and it was agreed that “not only Joaquin, but also a new guide should go with us.”

After about ten days, however, without explanation, the new Indian guide “left us and went back without saying goodbye.” The men and Joaquin continued on. Lack of food, much hardship, and an early winter blizzard just north of today’s Cedar City stopped the explorers from going on to California. Instead, they returned to Santa Fe.

Outcome of the Expedition

After more than six months and 2,000 miles, the expedition ended. The men never found a route to Monterey, but Father Escalante’s journal and Miera’s map became a valuable tool for future explorers. Most of all, the Spanish fathers established friendly relations and trust with American Indians.

Father Dominguez was in charge of the expedition. Father Escalante, who kept a journal of the trip, was only in his twenties at the time. He died at age thirty of disease.

Ethnocentricity

Ethnocentricity is the belief in the superiority of one’s own ethnic group or culture. It is also a tendency to view other groups only from one’s own perspective.

The Catholic fathers offered to teach the Indians “how to farm and to raise livestock, whereby they would then have everything necessary in food and clothing.” However, the trip’s journal states that the Indians already ate well from fishing, hunting, and gathering.

“Round about it [Utah Lake] are these Indians, who live on the abundant fish of the lake. Besides this, they gather grass seeds . . . which they supplement by hunting hares, rabbits, and fowl. There are also buffalo not very far to the north, but fear of the Comanche prevents them from hunting them.”

Escalante noted with concern that the native people had no horses, guns, or metal pots. The priests thought the Indian people would benefit from changing to European ways.





In this etching, a lone trapper crosses a cold stream. What can you learn about a trapper's interaction with Indians and other aspects of his lifestyle by examining the art?

A trap meant death to beavers, who were valuable for their soft, thick fur pelts.

Mountain Men

Dominguez and Escalante came into Utah almost by accident. Fur trappers, on the other hand, came with a clear purpose. In the early 1800s, a few fur trappers followed Indian trails across the Rockies into Oregon. They traded with the Indians, exchanging metal objects and blankets for furs. Soon other trappers

came and started trapping furs. As they left the Great Plains to trap in the mountains, they became known as mountain men. They were employees of American, British, or Mexican fur companies. The company traders took the *pelts* to St. Louis to sell. Most of the fur eventually ended up across the ocean in Europe.

About 3,000 men, along with some women and children, went west to trap. They dressed like the Indians in shirts and trousers made of leather. Porcupine quills sometimes decorated their shirts. Around his neck a trapper hung a "possibles sack." Inside the sack was a mold to make bullets, a knife, flint, a tin cup, and other useful items. When game was plentiful, the trappers ate raw buffalo liver and feasted on buffalo steaks roasted over an open fire. During lean times, the trappers lived off the land as well as they could.



Rendezvous!

Through the fall, winter, and spring, the trappers tended their traps. They had too many furs to carry with them, so they often dug a hole, hid the furs, and covered the hole with dirt, large rocks, and brush. Such a hole was called a *cache*. In July, trappers came out of the wilderness and *retrieved* their furs from the caches. They met Indian men, women, and children, and other fur traders and their families at a place chosen the year before. They called the events a *rendezvous* (RAHN·day·voo).

For the trappers, traders, and Indians, the rendezvous was an important time. The rendezvous was usually managed by a large fur-trading company. The company and the mountain men *bartered*, or traded, furs for supplies. The rendezvous was a wild event. One trapper described it as a time of “mirth, songs, dancing, shouting, trading, running, jumping, singing, racing, target-shooting, yarns, [and] frolic.”

After the first day of having fun, the men bargained with the traders from large fur companies. The men usually got a good price for their furs. Thick beaver

At this rendezvous near the Green River in Wyoming, trappers and Indians sold furs to owners of large fur companies. What aspects of trapper and Indian life are shown in the painting?

pelts often sold for about \$6–\$10 each. Today that would be the equivalent of about \$100. But the traders charged high prices for flour, bullets, tobacco, knives, sugar, coffee, and other supplies they had hauled to the rendezvous.

Cache Valley

Most of the rendezvous sites were in Wyoming. However, six of the sixteen rendezvous were held outside the United States on land claimed by Mexico. This region included today's Utah.

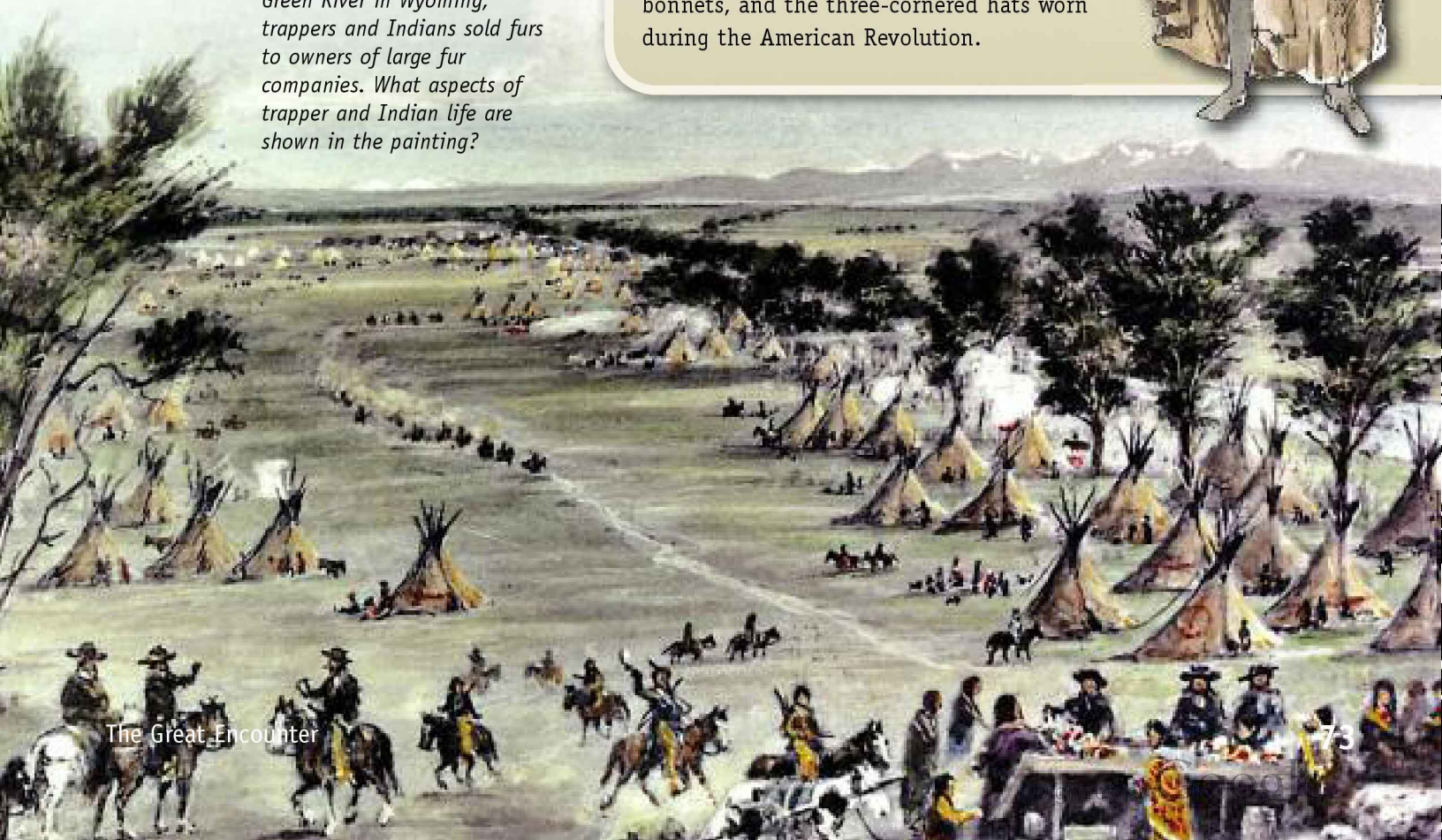
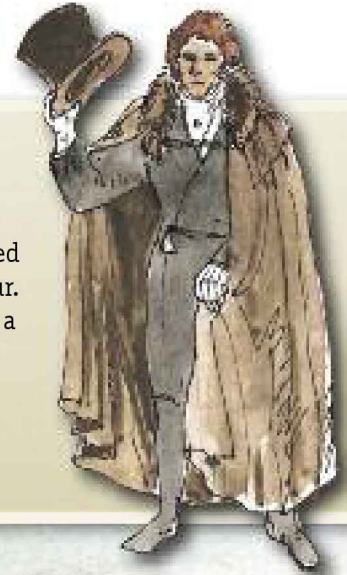
Cache Valley, home of the Shoshone, was one of the sites. It got its name because it was a place trappers used to cache their supplies. Can you visualize a rendezvous of hundreds of campsites, maybe 500 mountain men, one or two thousand Indians, and thousands of horses in beautiful Cache Valley?



A pelt is the animal skin with the fur still attached.

Beaver Hats

In the early 1800s, fashionable Europeans and people in the eastern part of the United States wore tall felt hats made of beaver fur. Hat makers used the short-haired fur from a beaver's belly to produce the soft felt. The hats came in all shapes—top hats, felt bonnets, and the three-cornered hats worn during the American Revolution.



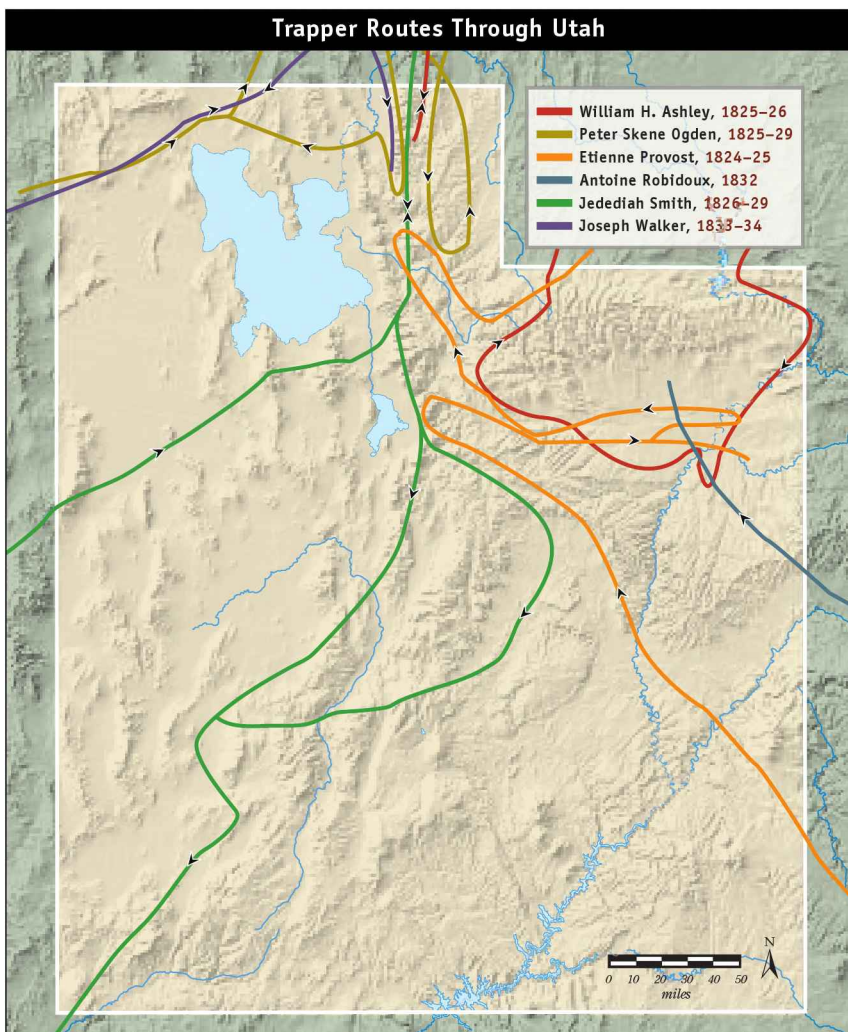
Indian-Trapper Conflict

Many times the Indian people were friendly to the trappers and served as guides along the rivers and trails. They sometimes let the trappers spend the winters in their lodges, and some Indian women married trappers. Sometimes, however, Indian people did not want the trappers on their land, disturbing their way of life. To drive the trappers off their land, Indians attacked them and took their horses and furs.

The story of the mountain men is a complex one. Historians now see the subject differently. For a long time, historians mostly saw the story of the mountain men in very positive terms. They saw the fur trade as an episode in "The Winning of the West."

Now, historians write about the costs, not just the benefits. They talk about not only what it meant for whites, but what it

Choose one of the trapper routes on the map, and then read about that trapper on the following pages. Who came closest to your town?



meant for American Indians. They see trapping as a money-making venture by men with no particular love of nature or respect for Indian ways.

Mountain men were seen as heroes in their time, but today we see that they represented the best and the worst in people. They were brave, hardworking men. However, they often did not understand American Indians. Instead of respecting them, many trappers often saw Indians as people in the way, or people to be used to help the trappers obtain wealth.

What do you think?

Is it wrong if earning a living harms or changes the lifestyle of other people? Choose a point of view from the text above. Can you defend your point of view?

Trapping Companies

Two large fur trapping companies sent trappers to Utah. Other trappers also came and worked alone or in groups.

1. British trappers from the **Hudson's Bay Company** were first. They followed the Bear River to Bear Lake and then into Cache Valley. Later they went down into what is now the Ogden Valley. **Peter Skene Ogden** worked for this group.
2. Americans who worked for the **Ashley-Henry Fur Company** were next. They found the Green River and other places in Wyoming loaded with beavers. Ashley directed the first supply caravan to the mountains at a place where all of the trappers could buy supplies and sell their pelts. Ashley's men then sent the pelts to St. Louis. It was the first of 16 annual rendezvous. **Jim Bridger, Jedediah Smith, Jim Beckwourth, John Weber, and Jim Clyman** worked for this company.
3. Trappers such as **Etienne Provost, Antoine Robidoux, Joseph Walker, Osborn Russell, and Miles Goodyear** also trapped and explored in Utah. They did not work for the large fur companies.