

Report of an Expedition Up the Yellowstone River, Made in 1875 (Classic Reprint)

James W. Forsyth



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Colonel: Pursuant to an agreement with Mr. S. B. Coulson, the contractor for freight on the Upper Missouri, the steamer Josephine will be placed at your disposal at Bismarck, Dakota Territory, for an examination of the Yellowstone River from its mouth to the mouth of the Big Horn, or still farther up, if practicable.

You will therefore proceed to Bismarck without delay, accompanied by Lieut. Col. F. D. Grant, of my staff, where the steamer Josephine will be in readiness for you; and after landing such freight as she may carry for Forts Stevenson and Buford at these respective points, you will take on board from the garrison at Fort Buford a sufficient escort for the accomplishment of the object in view. I want a careful examination made of the south bank of the Yellowstone and the mouths and immediate valleys of the rivers coming in from the Black Hills, and especially those of Tongue River, Rosebud, and Big Horn, and if you go higher up the Yellowstone, the Big Rosebud, giving an account of the timber, soil, and geological formation, also the depth of the water in a general way, and the character of any rapids passed over above the mouth of Powder River. Make your examination as complete as possible, without any unnecessary detention of the boat, and return from any point when, in your best judgment, there is not sufficient water, or any other obstacles to impede your progress.

It may be necessary, at some time in the immediate future, to occupy by a military force the country in and about the mouths of Tongue River and the Big Horn. You will, therefore, make especial examination of these points with this view.

I decline to authorize you to allow any person whomsoever to accompany you except Lieutenant-Colonel Grant, who is a part of your expedition, and whom you may put on special or general duty with you and the officers accompanying the troops forming your escort.

The captain, officers, and pilots of the boat, and Mr. Coulson, or any agent of his who is undoubtedly an employe or a member of the transportation company, and the necessary officers of the boat, will, of course have to go.

On your return you will be required to make an exact report of your trip, and you will telegraph my headquarters on your departure from Bismarck, and as soon as you return there.

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