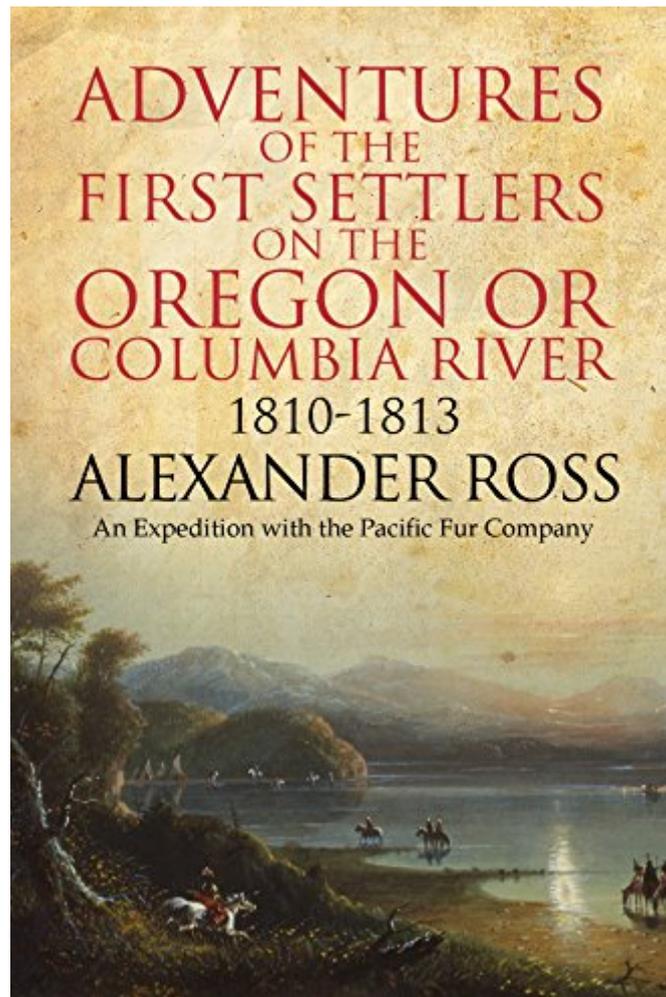


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Adventures Of The First Settlers On The Oregon Or Columbia River, 1810-1813



Synopsis

In 1810, Alexander Ross joined John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company to explore the northwest region of America and gain control of the fur trade. For the next three years the Company and its men would face extreme hardships in the quest to create a monopoly in this potentially lucrative enterprise. Ross provides fascinating details on the Native American tribes of the Columbia River in the early nineteenth century. He was in frequent contact with the Chinooks, but also came across Clatsops, Cathlamux, Wakicums, Wacalamus, Cattleputles, Clatscanias, Killimux, Moltnumas and Chickelis. Throughout the book Ross provides a day by day account of what the Company did, where they explored, who they traded and fought with, even to smaller details of how they hunted and what they ate. Life was extremely difficult for the adventurers. At points conflicts broke out with Native Americans, the deadliest of which was when the Captain Thorn of the ship Tonquin insulted a Native American causing the Natives to kill all those on board and destroy the ship. This action left the Company's outpost without seaborne transport for the next year. The conflicts with Native Americans, brutal forces of weather and geography, along with the tough competition from the more experienced rivals such as the North West Company, meant that the Pacific Fur Company did not survive past 1813, and during its three-year existence sixty one people lost their lives. *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River* is a brilliant first-person account of the trials and tribulations that early nineteenth century explorers met when attempting to delve deeper into the uncharted areas of America. After 1813, Ross joined the North West Company until it was merged with the Hudson Bay Company in 1821. Eventually he settled in Red River Colony, present-day Manitoba, where he served as Sheriff, Post master, and a member of the council. He published this book in 1849 and died in 1856.

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Customer Reviews

An excellent first hand narrative with lively and descriptive writing by one of the first pioneers to help settle the untamed Northwest. Alexander Ross joined Astor's Pacific Fur Company expedition in 1810 and this is his story of the day to day struggles which he and the other men had to overcome. He left New York on the soon to be ill-fated, doomed ship the Tonquin, with a pompous and overbearing Captain Thorn. They sailed around the tip of South America, then to Hawaii and finally to the mouth of the Columbia River, all the while prevailing over many hardships during this voyage. Upon landing and without delay, the men began to construct the trading post Astoria. Ross' detailed descriptions of their adventures amidst the forces of Mother Nature, Indian relations, the Northwest Fur Company, geography, etc. makes this book a real page turner. They all had many obstacles to overcome, and as I said, his writing skills are exemplary. He devotes the last few chapters to the culture and customs of one of the local Indian tribes. The man was a keen and acute observer of all his surroundings and this is an energetic effort on his part to put it in writing.

This is a first person report on Astor's attempt to set up a trading post to get a piece of the Pacific Rim trading action. It is written by a managing partner. It is interesting, particularly as to personalities and relationships with native Americans. It is also self serving or at least has a different perspective than other histories written close to that time. It is interesting, not too long, and ends shortly after the British took possession of the property.

Unending adventure. High adventure in an untamed wilderness. Well told and very interesting. There is much to be learned from this book of history, anthropology, geography, business and certainly of the human spirit. Highly recommended.

This has got to be one of the best historical books I've ever read. I found it more enjoyable than

many works of historical fiction because all of the crazy situations happened in real life. Ross makes apologies in his introduction for not being a "real" author, but his gift for writing really shines. He writes succinctly and beautifully, matter-of-factly, often with grace and humor. This is a refreshing break from the other authors of the time who were so full of themselves they wrote page-long paragraphs. The story of the doomed voyage of the Tonquin, and the founding of Fort Astoria is unbelievable. Partly explaining the incredible hardships is the fact that Ross describes the captain as what we would call today a Militant Perfectionist, as well as a Paranoid Delusional. The voyage has many inconceivable and tragic events occur simply because the only person who was crazy on that ship was in charge. Notwithstanding the "normal" hazards of sailing without the modern luxuries of motors, radio or GPS. Ross's descriptions of the natives is wonderful. It is refreshing to see natives through the eyes of explorers who didn't want to change the Native Americans or take their land, just do business with them. It is an especially interesting read to people living in the Pacific NW, as Ross describes the local scenery and things you never knew. For example paddles on the Columbia past an Indian burial ground full of mummies, draped on rocks near where Longview is today. If I could give the book 6 stars I would.

This drags in a couple spots, so I took one star off the rating. For example, the last chapter about how best way to deploy Christian missionaries was a real chore to get through. This guy was really there, however, and he tells the story in a real level-headed, down-to-earth way. It does tend to be a little flat-footed and serious, but it's still plenty gripping and inspiring. This is the third book I've read by one of the Astorians (the other two were by Ross Cox and Gabriel Franchere) and the description of the behavior of Captain Thorn of the Tonquin makes my blood boil every time I read it. His sequel to this, "Fur Traders of the North-West", is also very worthwhile.

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