

Native Place, Environment, and the Trade Fort Concentration on the South Platte River, 1835–45

Cody Newton, *University of Colorado*

Abstract. This article analyzes the unusual trading post concentration—Fort Vasquez, Fort Jackson, Fort Lupton, and Fort St. Vrain—that operated simultaneously along the South Platte River during the late 1830s. These trading posts, or forts, dealt almost exclusively in bison robes provided by Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho hunters. The reasons behind this trading locus, which was unique to the fur trade era of the western Great Plains, are examined in the context of indigenous instrumentality and ecological factors. Heretofore unexamined environmental and archaeological data combined with historical research into intertribal conflict and place provide a more holistic explanation for this unique conjuncture.

On 30 July 1835, a detachment of dragoons under the command of Colonel Henry Dodge entered the upper Arkansas River valley after having left Fort Leavenworth in May, traveled up the Platte River, then South Platte River, and down the Front Range. The dragoons were on a tour of the Central Plains to both demonstrate US military prowess and establish formal relations with the Indian groups of the region. The troops had not encountered any Indians since making peaceful entreaties to the Pawnee near the mouth of the Grand River in June, but this changed on the upper Arkansas. Here, in short order, the detachment encountered Arapaho in possession of recently stolen Ute horses, a Cheyenne war party on its way to raid the Comanche, and two other camps of Cheyenne near the recently constructed adobe stockade trading post of William Bent.¹ What Dodge witnessed was a state of endemic warfare in the region and considerable indigenous political turmoil. As allies of the Arapaho, the Cheyenne were actively warring with other groups of the Central and Southern Plains, but “were in a great

state of disorganization . . . and had separated into three villages, and were wandering about the prairie without any leader.”²

After leaving Bent’s Fort, the dragoon detachment arrived at another Cheyenne camp some fifty miles down the Arkansas River. The following day discharged firearms announced the arrival of a party of Loup Pawnee and Arikara, who came to make peace with the Cheyenne. The former were welcomed into camp, given horses and feasts, and, counseled by Dodge, formalized a peace, which the colonel thought would “be of immense advantage to these Indians, as they will thereby have an extensive country opened to them, covered with innumerable buffalo, where they can hunt in safety.”³ This détente ended the enmity between two longtime and bitter enemies engaged in a territorial conflict over the rich bison grounds of the western Central Plains. This was a watershed event for the region: the uncontested bison hunting not only would allow easier tribal access to the herds, it could also facilitate a heretofore largely unexploited market in bison robes.

To the Euro-Americans associated with the Dodge expedition, the economic ramifications of the Pawnee peace with the Cheyenne were readily apparent.⁴ Members of the military expedition, such as Lieutenant Lancaster Lupton, had been entertained with stories of trade from John Gantt, an expedition scout and erstwhile trader in the region, as well as made aware that bison robes purchased in the plains for \$.25 could be sold in St. Louis for \$5–6.⁵ The Pawnee and Cheyenne peace helped to catalyze a Euro-American economic response that was realized shortly thereafter in the construction, on a short stretch of the South Platte River, of four adobe stockade trading posts that came to be known as Fort Vasquez, Fort Lupton, Fort Jackson, and Fort St. Vrain. This region—marked as “hostile ground” on earlier maps—went from ephemerally occupied to the center of an active trading locus in less than two years after Dodge passed through the region.⁶

The recent historiographical focus on the hegemonic impacts of Plains Indians in the economic and territorial evolution of European/Euro-American expansionism has resulted in a much more robust view of plains history and underscored the importance of understanding the impact of native influence on post-contact processes.⁷ In the western Central Plains of the late 1830s, it was native (i.e., Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Sioux)⁸ politics, place, and the environment that were responsible for florescence of trade on the South Platte River, and these factors dictated the Euro-American economic response. An examination of the South Platte trading posts in the context of native dynamics and ecological factors is proffered as a demonstration of how historical phenomena traditionally viewed as the one-sided inevitability of colonialism was, for a time at least, much more nuanced and complex.

Ecological factors along with native group dynamics and territoriality coalesced to produce large numbers of bison, which were hunted for robes in the region east and north of the forts and may have provided a significant incentive to establish these posts. Evidence from the historical record is combined with archaeological and paleoenvironmental data to determine whether this conjecture bears out in terms of indigenous ties to this location having dictated the location of the posts; the number of bison in the area; climates favoring forage production; and relations between native groups in the region whose conflict and allegiance could have provided favorable conditions for both bison and Euro-American traders alike.

The Adobe Entrepôt: Historical Background and the Founding of the South Platte Posts

On the same day Rufus Sage arrives at Fort Lupton in the late summer of 1842, he describes passing three other trade forts, two of which were deserted: “Twelve miles below [downstream from] Fort Lancaster [Fort Lupton] we passed Fort George [Fort St. Vrain]. . . . Six miles further on [from Fort George], we came to a recently deserted post. . . . Between this point and Fort Lancaster, I noticed the ruins of another trading post.”⁹ At the time Sage passed through this region, Fort Lupton and Fort St. Vrain were still operating as trading establishments. The deserted and ruined posts that Sage describes were Fort Vasquez and Fort Jackson.

Sage was witness to the waning of a short-lived, intense trading locus unique to the bison hide trade of the Great Plains. These four trading forts, located along a thirteen-mile stretch of the South Platte River, had operated simultaneously for a period of roughly a year and a half during 1837–38.¹⁰ The four posts were located practically within sight of one another along the eastern bank of the river on the periphery of the Central Plains with vast expanses north and south between the nearest other permanent trading posts (see fig. 1).

Prior to the 1830s, trading activity in the western Central Plains was a small-scale entrepreneurial activity that is lightly documented but seems to have occurred sporadically throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In one of the earliest accounts of directed trade in the region, Amos Stoddard, in his history of the Louisiana Territory, states, “While Louisiana was in the hands of France [before 1762], some of the French traders from the upper Mississippi, transported a quantity of merchandise, by way of the Arkansas, to the Mexico mountains, where they erected a temporary store, and opened a trade with the Indians, and likewise with the Spaniards of north Mexico.”¹¹ Jules De Mun in 1815, along

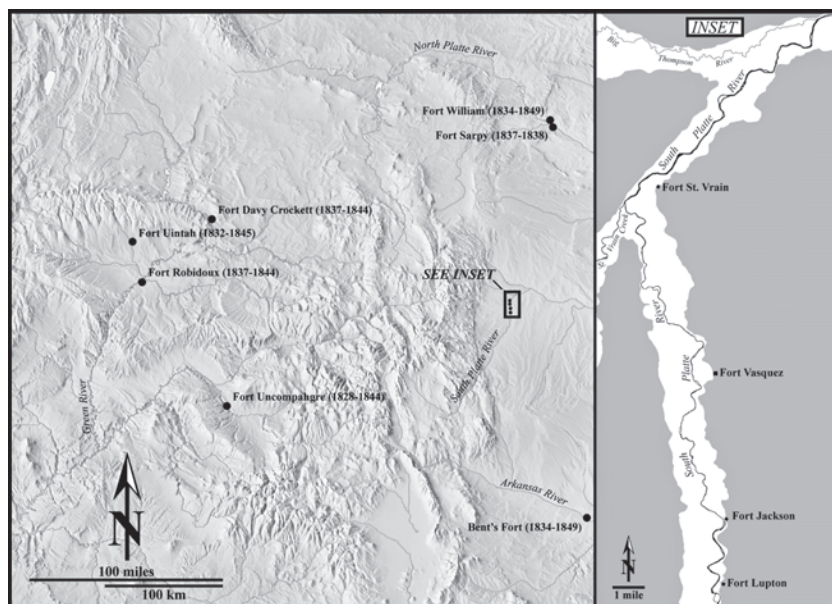


Figure 1. The western Great Plains and southern Rocky Mountains showing the trading posts in operation during 1837–38 (base map courtesy of Tom Patterson). Approximate floodplain indicated by white area of inset

with Auguste Chouteau, “fitted out an expedition to go to the headwaters of Arkansas river, to trade with the Aarapahos, and with other Indians living thereabout,” wherein they eventually end up trading with Kiowa, Arapaho, and Cheyenne at the mouth of Cherry Creek on the South Platte River.¹² By the 1830s, the previously temporary trading forays into the western Central Plains were increasingly replaced by more permanent trapping and trading endeavors.

Louis Vasquez was active in the area by the early 1830s; he may have established a temporary trading post at the confluence of Clear Creek and the South Platte River (about twenty miles south of Fort Lupton) known as Fort Convenience, based on a reference in a letter written by Vasquez in 1834.¹³ Soon thereafter, however, Vasquez and Andrew Sublette (who also had previous trapping and trading experience in the region) established Fort Vasquez. William Clark in St. Louis issued a trading license to Vasquez and Sublette on 29 July 1835 for trade on the South Platte after which the traders journeyed west.¹⁴ In the late summer they reached their destination and likely began construction on the adobe fort that came to be known as

Fort Vasquez. In a letter dated 2 November 1835, William Sublette reports to Robert Campbell, “Andrew and Vasquez on South Platte all well,” and in another letter, dated 9 February 1836, “Vasquez & Sublette had about 50 lodges of Chiens at there fort on the South fork.”¹⁵

Following the dragoon expedition, Lupton resigned from the army in March 1836 and journeyed west to become a trader. By that summer, he was trading on the South Platte out of wagons, and in the following spring Fort Lupton was built.¹⁶ Thus, when Peter Sarpy and Henry Fraeb “had started to build [Fort Jackson] on the South [fork of the Platte]” in the summer of 1837 there were “two other Companies that were on the South Fork.”¹⁷ Robert Newell in the employ of Bent, St. Vrain & Company in 1836 was sent to the South Platte River “with 5 men and goods to trade with the Chiannes and Remained with them till Spring 1837,” indicating that Bent, St. Vrain had yet to build Fort St. Vrain at this time.¹⁸ However, in the summer and fall of that year Fort St. Vrain was constructed.¹⁹ With its completion, a concentration of established permanent posts was created that was without precedent in the Great Plains.

The constructed permanence, trading focus, and proximity of the South Platte posts makes this a trading locus unlike any other in the Great Plains during the fur trade era (1807–40) when compared to a comprehensive synthesis of known trading posts.²⁰ The South Platte trade forts represent some of the first posts built specifically in response to the robe trade of the western Great Plains, which, unlike the diminishing fur trade of the time, was based on Indian hunters killing and processing the raw bison hides into robes prior to trade with Euro-Americans. And although competing traders operated in proximity to each other all throughout the plains at shifting temporary camps, the establishment of four adobe stockades marked a considerably greater investment in location and provides a tangible unit for comparison with other loci in the Great Plains.²¹

Beginning in 1800, there are many three-fort concentrations that were operating simultaneously in this region, but the South Platte is the only location where four permanent posts were built.²² The greatest similarity to the South Platte fort concentration occurred at the confluence of the Laramie and North Platte rivers when four trading posts began trading simultaneously in 1841–42. However, the key distinction between these posts and the South Platte forts lay in their construction, as the post of Lock, Randolph & Company and Fort Adams (built by Sibille, Adams & Company) were cabins constructed of cottonwood, a markedly different and less permanent enterprise than the construction of adobe stockade posts.²³

The South Platte Enigma: A History of Questions and Questioning History

The archaeologist W. James Judge, who carried out investigations at Fort Vasquez decades ago, recognized the unusual proximity of the four forts. In relation to Fort Vasquez, which was constructed first, Judge wondered “why these other forts were not established in the areas intervening between Fort Vasquez and Fort William on the one hand, and Fort Vasquez and Bent’s Old Fort on the other.”²⁴ He goes on to say that location further downstream, next to a major tributary such as the Cache la Poudre River or Crow Creek, or even locating posts on the Arkansas River upstream from Bent’s Fort would have made more sense. Judge suggested that

the establishment of three trading posts in a cluster next to Fort Vasquez is not easily rationalized on the basis of “competition” alone, the reason implicit in many of the historical accounts of the phenomenon . . . it seems odd to construct four posts next to each other if the primary purpose of the trading post was to attract Indians away from one’s competition. . . . [T]here is little to indicate that any one trading post on the South Platte could offer anything much different from any other in the way of material goods.²⁵

Judge hypothesized that the proximity of the forts was a secondary factor compared to the trading system, because he believed these locations represented bases of operation for far-ranging traders, and the availability of suitable material (i.e., soils and wood) for fort construction limited the dispersal of the forts. However, placing posts so close together that they would be constantly in competition for food and forage resources makes little sense with miles of unoccupied river both north and south.²⁶ As well, this explanation fails to address the nature of the bison robe trade where the location of overwintering Indian groups keyed most of the trade. Justification for the location and propinquity of the posts is not to be found by looking at the posts themselves but by expanding beyond traditional explanations for this phenomenon.

Our current historical knowledge of the South Platte posts is based on the scholarship of eminent historian LeRoy Hafen.²⁷ However, even before Hafen, it was acknowledged that a comprehensive historical understanding of the South Platte posts would be difficult given the significant lacunae in this particular historical record.²⁸ Perhaps because of the record available and the temporal context of when the initial research was conducted, a theme arose that infuses explanations of their emergence. Hafen describes the fur trade as “very keen in the whole region during the late thirties,” and

the “various concerns sparred for position and advantage in the trade.”²⁹ In a later work, Hafen suggests that the initial fort (Fort Vasquez) had advantages that “induced other traders to make their competition more effective by building similar posts.”³⁰ This competitive nature of the trade becomes the dominant theme of later descriptions of the South Platte forts: Judge recognized this, as did Diane Brotemarkle, who argues that “the commercial rivalries among the South Platte trading posts intensified and this theme would pervade historical commentary for another century.”³¹

However, economic records of business conducted between the posts paints a somewhat different picture. A receipt for \$32 to “Frab and Sarpie” signed by Bent and St. Vrain at Fort Lookout, 11 April 1838, indicates trade occurred between the competitors, as does an entry in Lupton’s diary/ledger book that is a list of items under the heading “Bent & St Vrain,” along with other references to “Marciline [Marcellus St. Vrain, in charge at Fort St. Vrain]” and “Sublette,” all indicating economic interactions with the owners and managers of these posts.³² Given the isolation of these posts and distance from supply centers, it is conceivable that interpost trade was a forced economic reality and, whether amicable or not, was necessary. However, the occurrence of economic interaction between the “rival” traders does show that competition was not all consuming and demonstrates that the rivalry has been overemphasized. Furthermore, framing the trade on the South Platte as an intense rivalry between the Euro-American traders certainly draws attention away from the indigenous side of this history as it suggests a mostly Euro-American endeavor.

A Favorable Confluence: The Intersection of Traders, Bison, and the Environment

Plains Indian ties to the South Platte valley, especially following the movement south into the region by the Cheyenne and Arapaho groups, are important considerations when assessing the location of the posts. The South Platte valley had long been home to native groups and, especially after contact, there is considerable evidence that historically known Indian groups such as the Arapaho and Cheyenne preferred to camp where the South Platte River turned east. This location was (and is) on a natural crossroads of north-south travel up and down the Front Range and entry into the Central Plains following the river.

At the approximate location of Fort Jackson, there are stone artifacts indicative of a precontact terrace campsite overlooking the river as well as artifacts of metal and glass, recovered during surface and metal-detector surveys, that certainly fit the types of trade items expected in a Plains Indian

camp from the 1830s.³³ As well, a rock art panel located across the river from Fort St. Vrain containing an armored horse figure is explicit evidence that early equestrian groups, even those historically known, were spending time in the area.³⁴ In post-horse times, Indian groups wintered in this area due to the riparian resources, particularly livestock forage, as well as the proximity to the bison herds that wintered between the North Platte and South Platte Rivers. Cheyenne, Arapaho, and later Sioux were camping in the South Platte valley and hunting these animals throughout the winter in a manner quite similar to that witnessed elsewhere on the Front Range.³⁵ As Bent's Fort was built near the Big Timbers of the Arkansas, because this location was a previously established indigenous trading site being "away from the mountains where Indians could hunt bison in the winter," the South Platte posts were located in a spot favorable to wintering Plains Indian hunters.³⁶ This became especially acute in the late 1830s after the trade focus shifted from furs to buffalo robes and the dynamic of procurement changed as the currency of trade shifted from Euro-American to native hunters.³⁷

The surviving records of Fort Jackson provide inventories that indicate the size of the trade in bison robes entertained at the South Platte forts. In fact, Abel Baker Jr. was instructed by Henry Fraeb to "build a . . . Robe House . . . of Dobies" in order to accommodate the trade at Fort Jackson.³⁸ An account from the ledger books of Pratte, Chouteau, & Company to Sarpy & Fraeb dated 30 June 1838 showed that the season's trade resulted in 2,761 buffalo robes and 159 buffalo calf robes (combined value: \$9,715.87) being shipped to St. Louis, an amount that would have represented 6 percent of the estimated 50,000 bison robes shipped from St. Louis to points east the previous year.³⁹ By comparison, in 1839, 600 packs of robes (roughly 6,000 robes) from the previous year's trade at Bent's Fort arrived at Liberty, Missouri, and the same year a boat from the Platte region under the employ of W. Sublette and Campbell arrived in St. Louis carrying 160 packs of bison robes (roughly 1,600 robes).⁴⁰ These numbers indicate that the trade on the South Platte during 1837–38 was significant, and if all four of the posts did commensurate business, the bison robe intake would have been considerable: conservatively, one could estimate a volume of about 10,000 robes taken in during the winter trading season.

Large numbers of hides require large numbers of bison, and historical accounts provide evidence that the land between the forks of the Platte was full of these animals during the 1830s. It is estimated that 24 to 30 million of these animals populated the Great Plains in the early nineteenth century, with between 3 and 5 million bison in the Central Plains.⁴¹ Colonel Dodge, leading the 1835 expedition up the Platte to the Rocky Mountains, commented that in the country of the South Platte, "buffalo surrounded

us in large herds, making the prairie almost black by their immense numbers”; and Hugh Evans, a sergeant on the same expedition, provides a similar description: “both sides of the river [the South Platte] as far as we could see was covered with Buffalo of which we killed in great numbers.”⁴²

Bison, as nomadic grazing animals, had been attracted to the area by favorable range-grass growth. The region west of the forks of the Platte provided year-around forage for the resident bison herds that the posts depended on for trade.⁴³ As a wintering ground for bison, this region was important for the late fall and early winter hunts that provided the robes for trade as well as meat and other products for the Plains Indians. And by the late 1830s bison were increasingly hard to find in the southern and eastern portions of the plains. Josiah Gregg notes that in 1838 bison were “never seen so scarce” east of the Arkansas River crossing of the Santa Fe Trail, and it is argued that bison herds on the Southern Plains were overhunted beginning in the 1790s.⁴⁴

Paleoenvironmental data can provide a means to understand western Great Plains forage productivity through proxy measures of streamflow rates and drought severity. These proxies provide compelling evidence that favorable grazing conditions existed for bison during the 1830s. Reconstructed streamflow data confirm that conditions would have favored grass growth: the decade of the 1830s saw flow rates well above average in the local streams, especially in the period from 1835 to 1840.⁴⁵ The reconstructed flow rates indicate that during the decade of the 1830s flow rates in Middle Boulder Creek and Clear Creek were 9 percent and 19 percent higher, respectively, than the nineteenth-century annual average (fig. 2). These flow rate values more directly reflect the amount of precipitation, particularly the snowpack, in the mountains to the west, but increased streamflow would have enriched the riparian zone vegetation of the South Platte River—at times an important component of bison forage.⁴⁶

At this time, the plains to the east of the South Platte posts, unlike the plains to the north of the North Platte River, were also enjoying climatic conditions that were favorable to forage production.⁴⁷ The Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI) is a water-balance model that reflects how much soil moisture is available compared to normal conditions using precipitation and temperature data.⁴⁸ The PDSI values typically fall within the range of ± 4 , which defines extreme drought (-4) and extreme wetness ($+4$). In the Central Plains, which is largely mirrored by the Southern Plains, 1833 is considered a moderately to very wet year using Palmer’s classification. This is followed by a return to incipient wet conditions in the following years and then a return to moderately wet conditions in the second half of the decade.

The short-grass steppe that characterizes most of the Central Plains

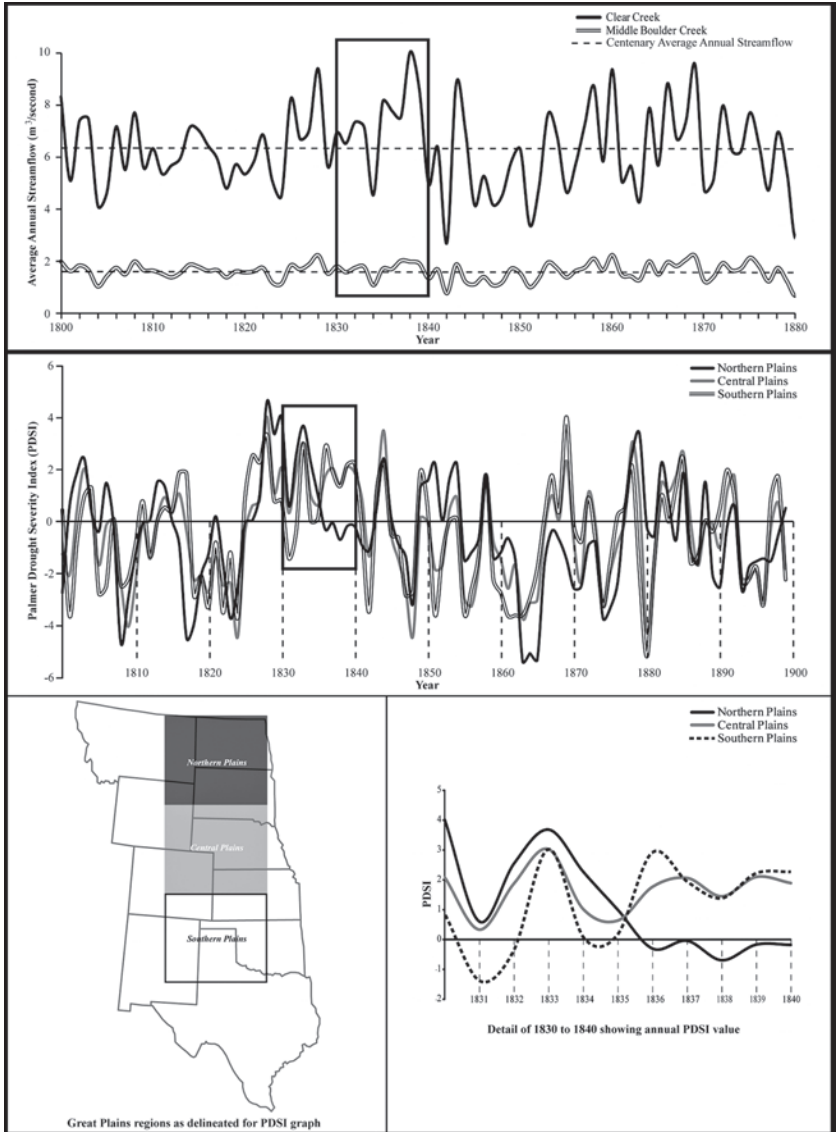


Figure 2. Reconstructed streamflow and PDSI data showing favorable conditions during the 1830s

region west of the forks of the Platte is primarily composed of drought-resistant blue grama and buffalo grasses.⁴⁹ These grasses do not benefit from excessive precipitation; however, following the very wet 1833, the incipient to moderately wet ensuing years would have resulted in better overall rangeland grasses, certainly benefiting the less drought-resistant species and riparian vegetation. This forage attracted and held grazing bison herds that, in turn, attracted the human groups economically involved in the hide trade.

Détentes and Discord: The Influence of Plains Indian Territoriality and Conflict

The Cheyenne were relative newcomers to the region, having moved into the area between the Arkansas and North Platte Rivers in the early part of the nineteenth century with something approaching permanency by the 1820s.⁵⁰ Alliance with the Arapaho who preceded them into the region allowed these groups to nominally occupy the region immediately east of the Front Range. These two groups are said to have initially camped together on the South Platte near its confluence with the Cache la Poudre River after moving into the area.⁵¹ The bison grounds to the east, however, remained contested, as was witnessed by Catlin and Dodge, among others, up into the mid-1830s.⁵²

After 1830, the Arkansas River appears to have been a rough demarcation line between the territory of the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache to the south and the Cheyenne and Arapaho to the north.⁵³ Initially, Cheyenne and Arapaho trade was primarily oriented south to Bent's Fort, but societal rifts caused the Cheyenne to split into northern and southern contingents during the early 1830s, which created new trading opportunities north of the Arkansas.⁵⁴ The division of the Cheyenne into northern and southern contingents could have been precipitated by the erosion of the traditional clan system that began around 1830 when Dog Soldier society members began to camp separately from the rest of the group.⁵⁵

Beginning around 1825, the Cheyenne and Arapaho tried to seize the rich buffalo range of the upper Kansas and Republican Rivers from the Pawnees.⁵⁶ These wars produced what Dan Flores describes as "an interesting type of ecological development . . . buffer zones occupied by neither side and only lightly hunted." According to Flores, one of these zones "was in present-day western Kansas, between the Pawnees and the main range of the Colorado tribes," and another "seems to have stretched from the forks of the Platte to the mountains." These liminal zones "allowed the buildup of herds that might later be exploited when tribal boundaries or agreements changed."⁵⁷ The region below Fort Laramie in these years was described as a "section of country . . . called the neutral ground," extending "from the

forks of the Platte almost to the foot of the mountains. It will not admit of the permanent resident of any Indians. . . . The Arepahas and the Cheyenes sometimes move into this country for a short time during the summer to hunt buffalo.”⁵⁸ These grounds became game-rich attractions for the Cheyenne and Arapaho and attracted the westering Sioux.

By the early 1830s, the Sioux had battled their way west into the Platte River drainage. Captain Ford witnessed, along the South Platte, “several places of defence logs & Brush thrown around by the Sooes last Winter on their March to Steal horses from the Pawnees when they were attacked & lossed about thirty of their men attacked by Pawnees.”⁵⁹ The few traders, who anticipated this move, including W. Sublette, positioned themselves to profit from Sioux expansionism.⁶⁰ The migration of the Sioux to the Platte River country at this time provided a new economic opportunity for the traders who subsequently founded the South Platte posts.⁶¹ Shortly after the convergence with the Cheyenne and Arapaho, the Sioux allied with these two tribes thereby consolidating control over the rich bison range opened up by previous treaty. Following the peace witnessed by Colonel Dodge, by 1838 the Dog Soldiers had carved out a new territory centered on the headwaters of the Republican and Smoky Hill Rivers.⁶²

Near the forks of the Platte River in May 1839, F. A. Wislizenus encountered a mixed camp of Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho and indicates that the “Ogallalas and the Sioux [whom Wislizenus considers the Cheyenne, Brulé, Teton, and Arapaho] had formerly been at war; but had made peace shortly before this, and had united.”⁶³ And Sage, camped on the North Platte at Ash Creek on 18 October 1841, describes the camp as being near “the scene of a fierce and bloody battle between the Pawnees and Sioux, in the winter of 1835,” wherein both sides suffered heavy losses but the Sioux were victorious as “the Pawnees abandoned the field. . . . This disaster so disheartened the Pawnees, they immediately abandoned their station and moved down the river some four hundred miles, — nor have they again ventured so high up, unless in strong warparties.”⁶⁴ As well, during the second half of the 1830s the Cheyenne and Arapaho were hostile to intrusions from Southern Plains groups (i.e., Comanche and Kiowa) who ventured into the western Central Plains.⁶⁵

Ephemeral Resources and Untenable Permanence: Why the Declension of the South Platte Trading Locus

In October 1838, Fort Jackson was transferred to Bent, St. Vrain, which took over its inventory and closed it down.⁶⁶ This transfer roughly coincides with an agreement dividing the region between Pratte, Chouteau, which

retreated to trade north of the North Platte, and Bent, St. Vrain, which assumed trade rights south of that river.⁶⁷ Fort Vasquez, acquired by Lock, Randolph in 1841, was out of business by the time Sage traveled through the area, due to mismanagement and bankruptcy.⁶⁸ Lupton's attempted inroad into the North Platte trade with his construction of Fort Platte next to Fort William in 1841 was short lived, and by 1842 he sold this post to Sibille, Adams.⁶⁹ Lupton went bankrupt around that time and continued to manage Fort Lupton for his creditors until it closed in 1845.⁷⁰ It was in 1845 that Fort St. Vrain closed its doors as well, and so ended this bison robe trade on the South Platte.⁷¹ The question remains as to how something so promising could end so indifferently.

Much like the factors that catalyzed the South Platte trade, the reasons for its demise are myriad and require elucidation. Shifting allegiances and territorial disputes were a facet of post-contact Plains Indian life, as was the routinized pattern of raiding-based warfare that pre- and postdates the South Platte posts.⁷² As such, the peace witnessed by the dragoons was neither permanent nor equivocal, and the wars over the bison grounds west of the Platte forks continued after about 1840.⁷³ Warfare inevitably directed effort away from commercial bison hunting.

This was not before a decline in bison numbers in the proximity of the forts due to the increased native hunting brought on by the robe trade. Evidence suggests that by the early 1840s bison were not wintering near the Front Range, as overwintering Euro-Americans such as George F. Ruxton and Sage were subsisting primarily on mule deer during their stay.⁷⁴ This also coincides with the Great Peace of 1840 between the Cheyenne/Arapaho and Comanche/Kiowa, which opened up portions of this area to even more indigenous hunters and is viewed as a crucial factor in the decimation of the Central Plains herds.⁷⁵ As the lack of hunting pressure was a factor that attracted bison to the region, the greatly increased hunting brought about by the hide trade dissipated herds to other areas of the plains. Trade at Fort Vasquez in 1839 amounted to eleven hundred robes, whereas trade remained substantial at Fort William and Bent's Fort, each taking in over ten thousand robes in a given season between 1840 and 1844.⁷⁶

There is evidence that after 1838 the relationship between natives and Euro-Americans began deteriorating. As stockade forts, these posts indicate that native and Euro-American relations may have been somewhat tenuous to begin with. In 1839, Wislizenus, informed that the Sioux were "very much embittered against all whites," was advised by persons at the South Platte forts to abandon plans of travel down the river and to instead use the Santa Fe Trail as the route east.⁷⁷ E. Willard Smith tells of Vasquez making a narrow escape from a war party of Pawnee on the Arkansas River

east of Big Timbers in 1839 and says that “the part of the road we are now travelling [along the Arkansas River] runs through the general war-ground of the different tribes of Indians.”⁷⁸ John Frémont was told at Fort Laramie in 1842 that the “Cheyenne and Sioux had gradually become more and more hostile to the whites.”⁷⁹ It is possible that this relationship was strained even further by the smallpox epidemic of 1837–40 that ravaged native villages on the Missouri and, although initially increasing the demand for robes due to lack of Indian hunters, led to animosity between Euro-Americans and natives.⁸⁰ As Jacob Halsey laments at Fort Pierre in the fall of 1837, “Buffalo . . . still in the greatest abundance but there will be few Indians to hunt them. . . . [As] diseases introduced by the whites . . . have a tendency to make them malicious, we consequently have something to fear.”⁸¹ The above factors—the decreasing bison numbers and deteriorating trade relations—played their part in the demise of the South Platte trade, but financial considerations had to factor in at least as much to the disintegrating situation.

In 1837, one of the most severe financial panics in US history gripped the nation.⁸² The panic of 1837 resulted in the nation’s first general suspension of specie and substantially reduced prices of securities and commodities in general.⁸³ The financial panic sparked a depression that lasted for the next five years and was felt throughout the country. Western traders, whose business was often dependent on credited merchandise, felt the effects of the depression. Outfitting traders for both the fur/hide trade and the Santa Fe trade was very important to the economy of Missouri, and the depression ruined merchants in St. Louis and led to bankruptcies by fur traders throughout the West.⁸⁴ This was typified on the South Platte in the short history of Fort Jackson, whose transfer marked the beginning of the end for this trading locus.

The depression was certainly felt on the South Platte, potentially first by the heavily financed Fort Jackson and then by the independent traders who either sold out or were forced to acquiesce to creditors. It was hoped by Pierre Chouteau Jr. in the spring of 1837 that “the furs will be their usual prices in spite of the big bankruptcies that have occurred in New York, and everywhere else; also because of the great scarcity of money the prices will not go down.”⁸⁵ It was during the height of the economic crisis that both Lupton and Lock, Randolph became unable to maintain their independent forts on the South Platte. Lock, Randolph abandoned Fort Vasquez after a few months of ownership. Lupton declared bankruptcy and was hired by his creditors to manage Fort Lupton. And Milton Sublette, brother of Andrew and William, at Fort William in the winter of 1839 says that he “lost the Cheyenne who returned to the South Fork” for lack of trade goods.⁸⁶

There was evidently enough trade after 1841, however, to keep Fort Lupton and Fort St. Vrain open for about another four years, but the financial situation during the depression undermined the ability to trade throughout the Platte region. Despite having purchased forty-two draft animals in anticipation of taking part in the upcoming winter trading season, W. Sublette writes in September 1842 that he “could not get off this fall and the reason was for want of money.”⁸⁷ During these times, means other than trade sustained some of those still on the South Platte. Frémont comments when he visits Fort Lupton in 1843 that it was now less a trading post and was “beginning to assume the appearance of a comfortable farm” with livestock and poultry and a garden.”⁸⁸

The closing of Fort St. Vrain and Fort Lupton in 1845 coincided with the beginning of a severe regional drought that lasted until 1856 and proved pivotal, along with increased human ecological disruption, in the severe bison depopulation in the following decades.⁸⁹ Beginning in the 1840s, the North Platte and Arkansas trade was sustained in part by Euro-American settlers migrating west along the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails. Fort William and Bent’s Fort remained important trading outposts, and the robe trade on the South Platte became a memory. However, the analysis of its history indicates that, no matter how short lived the four-fort concentration was, it was a unique occurrence that is best understood in terms of environmental factors and native group dynamics. The division of the Cheyenne and Arapaho into northern and southern bands and wars with groups to the south and east insulated the Platte Valley from intensive hunting. This, coupled with a decade of favorable precipitation, meant that the bison herds flourished there and throughout the west-central Great Plains. Traders who understood the western movement of the Sioux into the Platte region were prepared to take advantage of the economic opportunities that the migration of this group presented.

When the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho groups allied, they became a powerful coalition that controlled a large area of the western Great Plains that included the bison-rich forks of the Platte.⁹⁰ Herds that had grown huge in the context of previous warfare now were ripe for harvesting, and traders who understood what opportunities were opening scrambled to establish permanent posts in anticipation of a bonanza. Thus it was no coincidence that Lupton quickly returned to the South Platte following his resignation from the First Dragoons. It is also no coincidence that in the interim between his visit and his return to the region, Fort Vasquez had already been built. Pratte, Chouteau advanced over \$11,000 worth of trade goods and supplies to Fraeb and Sarpy for Fort Jackson, notwithstanding the persistence of the depression that began with the panic of 1837.⁹¹ Bent,

St. Vrain, which initially may have been satisfied with the Arkansas trade, had to respond with a fort of their own—the northern trade was too good to pass up.

The confluence of favorable native group relations and ecological considerations were fundamental to the South Platte trading locus. Alas, increased trade brought about by the establishment of the posts drove away the bison herds and led to increasingly contentious relations between natives and Euro-Americans. These factors intersected with the financial panic and depression of the late 1830s and early 1840s to spell the end of the South Platte forts. The financial panic helped spell the end of Fort Jackson, and its demise solidified the hold of the well established trading empire of Bent, St. Vrain, which persevered because of solid Indian relations, and the major portion of the trade fell on them and Fort William. The opportunities presented by the peace of 1835 and opened trading space were shored up by the larger interests. The Great Peace of 1840 further diminished the bison herds upon which the South Platte trade depended. Despite the movement of trade to other areas, this area remained important to the native groups that had traded on the South Platte, and the nomadic bison hunters who called this region home contested Euro-American intrusion in the following decades.

The 1830s likely represent the last real time that native groups could claim this power in the region. Like the crumbling ruins of the abandoned adobe forts witnessed by Sage, the relationship between the native groups and Euro-Americans would deteriorate in the coming decades as increasing numbers of Euro-Americans entered the area, and the middle ground of the South Platte bison robe trade would diminish much like the vast herds of bison that once blackened the South Platte valley. But, despite the ultimate outcome of the interaction between Euro-Americans and the Indian groups of the western Great Plains, this does not minimize the demonstration of native puissance that the history of the South Platte trade forts bespeaks.

Notes

- 1 US House of Representatives, *Colonel Dodge's Journal*, 24th Cong., 1st sess., 1836, H. Doc. 181, 23–24.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 24.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 4 All nonnative Americans will be referred to as Euro-American—in the sense that these persons were European, or of European descent, and in a region that was a US territory at the time.
- 5 Janet Lecompte, “Gantt’s Fort and Bent’s Picket Post,” *Colorado Magazine* 41 (1964): 112–25; Lemuel Ford, “Captain Ford’s Journal of an Expedition to the Rocky Mountains,” ed. Louis Pelzer, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 12 (1926): 566–67.

- 6 George Catlin, "Outline Map of Indian Localities in 1833," *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians*, vol. 1 (New York, 1973), xxiv.
- 7 See, for example, Brian Delay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven, 2008); Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT, 2008).
- 8 In the context of this article, the term *Sioux* primarily refers to Teton Sioux, particularly the Brulé and/or Oglala tribes, but could also mean any Western or Plains Sioux group that traded at the South Platte posts during this time.
- 9 Rufus B. Sage, *Rocky Mountain Life, or Startling Scenes and Perilous Adventures in the Far West, During an Expedition of Three Years* (Boston, 1857), 207–8.
- 10 Sage's estimation of the distance from the northernmost post (Fort St. Vrain) to the southernmost post (Fort Lupton) as twelve miles is very close to the actual straight-line distance of thirteen miles calculated from USGS maps. *Ibid.*
- 11 Amos Stoddard, *Sketches, Historical and Descriptive, of Louisiana* (Philadelphia, 1812), 147.
- 12 Jules De Mun, "The Journals of Jules De Mun," ed. Thomas Marshall, *Missouri Historical Society Collections* 5 (1928): 172–5.; Edwin James, "Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, Performed in the Years 1819, 1820, vol. 2," in *Early Western Travels, 1748–1846*, vol. 14, ed. Ruben Thwaites (Cleveland, 1905), 282.
- 13 Louis Vasquez to Benito Vasquez, 30 December 1834, copy in Louis Vasquez biographical file, Colorado Historical Society, Denver. LeRoy Hafen references the account of a Colorado pioneer, Frank Hall, who gave the location and stated in 1832 that Vasquez built a trading post formed of cottonwood logs. LeRoy Hafen, "Louis Vasquez," *Colorado Magazine* 10 (1933): 17. William E. Wilson explores the issue of Fort Convenience and a "hunter's cabin" possibly built by Vasquez in the mountains to the west around the same time. William E. Wilson, "Louis Vasquez in Colorado and the Uncertain Histories of Fort Convenience and a Hunter's Cabin," *Colorado Heritage*, winter 2003, 4–9.
- 14 St. Louis Superintendency, 1824–51, Letters received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824–80, National Archives, Washington, DC, microfilm, 1966.
- 15 William Sublette to Robert Campbell, 2 November 1835, Robert Campbell Family Papers, Missouri History Museum Archives, St. Louis (hereafter Campbell Collection); William Sublette to Robert Campbell, 9 February 1836, Campbell Collection.
- 16 Some suggest that Lupton built his fort in the summer of 1836. Cleon Roberts, *Fort Lupton History 1836 to 1976* (Denver, CO, 1982), 39–40; David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807–1840* (Lincoln, NE, 1992), 73. However, in 1836 Robert Newell only mentions encountering Lupton's wagons rather than a fort. David Lavender, *Bent's Fort* (Garden City, NY, 1954), 172; Janet Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn* (Norman, OK, 1978), 133.
- 17 Fredrick Laboue to P. D. Papin, 26 November 1837, Papers of the St. Louis Fur Trade, part 1: The Chouteau Collection, 1752–1925, University Publications of America, Bethesda, MD, 1991, microfilm (hereafter St. Louis Fur Trade, part 1). Trade merchandise in the amount of \$10,909.75 billed to these two men, by Pratte, Chouteau on 13 May 1837 provides a date by which to estimate when they left for the South Platte River. Inventory of merchandise furnished to Sarpy & Fraeb by Pratte, Chouteau, & Co., St. Louis Fur Trade, part 1. This merchan-

- dise was brought west by wagon, and the estimate of early summer is based on the fact that it took thirty days for W. Sublette to travel from Missouri by wagon train to the confluence of the North Platte and Laramie Rivers in 1834 and thirty-nine days for wagons to travel from Independence, MO, by the Santa Fe Trail to Bent's Fort, then north to reach Fort Lupton in 1839. William Marshall Anderson, *The Rocky Mountain Journals of William Marshall Anderson*, ed. Dale L. Morgan and Eleanor Towles Harris (San Marino, CA, 1967); Wishart, *Fur Trade of the American West*, 195–97; E. Willard Smith, "The Journal of E. Willard Smith," in *To the Rockies and Oregon, 1839–1842*, ed. LeRoy Hafen and Ann Hafen (Glendale, CA, 1955), 154–67.
- 18 Robert Newell, *Memorandum of Robert Newell's Travels in the Territory of Missouri*, ed. Dorothy O. Johansen (Portland, OR, 1959), 33–4.
 - 19 LeRoy Hafen, "Fort St. Vrain," *Colorado Magazine* 29 (1952): 242.
 - 20 R. G. Robertson, *Competitive Struggle: America's Western Fur Trading Posts, 1764–1865* (Boise, ID, 1999).
 - 21 Lieutenant William B. Franklin, passing by the deserted posts on 21 July 1845, indicates: "All the forts are built like Fort Laramie [William] except they generally have no bastions at the angles. St. V's [Vrain] and Lupton's forts are both larger." William B. Franklin, "March to South Pass: Lieutenant William B. Franklin's Journal of the Kearny Expedition of 1845," ed. Frank N. Schubert, *Engineer Historical Studies* 1 (1979): 25. The archaeological work at Fort Vasquez established that the fort dimensions were 100 by 98.5 ft., and historic accounts indicate a wall height of 14 ft. W. James Judge, "The Archaeology of Fort Vasquez," *Colorado Magazine* 48 (1971), 187. And based on remote sensing and archaeological work, the dimensions of Fort St. Vrain were approximately 127 by 106 ft., and Fort Lupton was approximately 125 by 150 ft. Heather Mrzlack, *A Ground-Penetrating Radar Survey of the Fort St. Vrain Site (5WL814)*, Weld County, Colorado (Fort Collins, CO, 2005); Richard F. Carrillo and Steven F. Mehls, *A Search for the Remains of a Fur Trade Post of the 1830s: Historical Archaeology at the Site of Fort Lupton (5WL1823)*, Weld County, Colorado (Fort Lupton, CO, 1992). By all accounts, the yet-to-be-located Fort Jackson would have been similar in size and appearance.
 - 22 There were four forts at the confluence of the Missouri and the Platte Rivers; however, one of these forts—Fort Atkinson—was strictly a military post.
 - 23 Robertson, *Competitive Struggle*, 30, 151. See note 21: "All the forts are built like Fort Laramie [William]," which at the time was constructed of adobe. Franklin, "March to South Pass," 25. As well, historical photographs, corroborating accounts, and Hafen's own reconnaissance verify that all four South Platte forts were stockade adobe structures. All four forts were constructed of adobe bricks, made by mixing sand, clay, and grass or straw with water, formed and allowed to dry or cure for about six weeks. Diane Brotemarkle, *Old Fort St. Vrain* (Boulder, CO, 2001), 4–5. Fort Vasquez alone would have required more than 34,000 bricks to construct. Guy Peterson, *Four Forts of the South Platte* (Fort Myers, FL, 1982), 30.
 - 24 Judge, "Archaeology of Fort Vasquez," 200. Fort William, on the North Platte River at the mouth of the Laramie River, was built in 1834 and subsequently had a quick succession of owners and name changes, but it will be referred to by its original moniker in this analysis.

- 25 Judge, “Archaeology of Fort Vasquez,” 200–201.
- 26 The use of adobe would mitigate a lack of building wood.
- 27 Initially presented in LeRoy Hafen, “The Early Fur Trade Posts on the South Platte,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 12 (1925): 334–41.
- 28 Hiram Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, vol. 2 (New York, 1902), 941.
- 29 LeRoy Hafen, “Fort Jackson and the Early Fur Trade on the South Platte,” *Colorado Magazine* 5 (1928): 11.
- 30 Hafen, “Fort St. Vrain,” 241.
- 31 Judge, “Archaeology of Fort Vasquez”; Brotemarkle, *Old Fort St. Vrain*, 7–8.
- 32 Receipt to Fraeb and Sarpy from Bent & St. Vrain, St. Louis Fur Trade, part 1. This leather-bound book is part diary and part ledger book that spans a period from 16 May 1833 to at least 1844. Lancaster P. Lupton Collection, Colorado Historical Society, Denver. There are also numerous entries in the ledger books of Pratte, Chouteau, after 1838 known as Pierre Chouteau, Jr. & Co. and/or the Western Fur Co., that show this company did business with Bent, St. Vrain between 1835 and 1841. Papers of the St. Louis Fur Trade, part 2: Fur Company Ledgers and Account Books, 1802–71, University Publications of America, Bethesda, MD, 1991, microfilm.
- 33 Archaeological survey and conversations with the current landowner have provided this evidence. Precontact artifacts include stone scraping/cutting tools as well as grinding stones. The metal and glass artifacts include a frizzen spring fragment, a musketball, and a glass trade bead. Currently fieldwork is under way using remote sensing equipment in an attempt to locate Fort Jackson with a primary research goal being the subsequent location of contemporaneous Plains Indian camps around this post.
- 34 Armored horse figures are thought to be representative of the early post-horse and pre-gun era (ca. 1650–1750) of the plains when horses were clad in leather armor to repulse arrows and spears, a diffusion of Spanish military technology. Mark Mitchell, “Tracing Comanche History: Eighteenth-Century Rock Art Depictions of Leather-Armored Horses from the Arkansas River Basin, South-eastern Colorado, USA,” *Antiquity* 78 (2004): 116–17.
- 35 In the winter of 1821 Jacob Fowler describes a mixed camp of western Plains Indians on the upper Arkansas River that eventually reaches seven hundred lodges and is consuming one hundred bison a day. Jacob Fowler, *The Journal of Jacob Fowler*, ed. Elliot Coues (New York, 1898), 65.
- 36 Pekka Hämäläinen, “The Western Comanche Trade Center: Rethinking the Plains Indian Trade System,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 29 (1998): 512; George Hyde, *Life of George Bent* (Norman, OK, 1968), 60; also see note 35.
- 37 Hafen, “Fort St. Vrain,” 241.
- 38 Henry Fraeb to Abel Baker Jr., 22 April 1838, St. Louis Fur Trade Part 1.
- 39 This inventory only indicates that fifty-three beaver were traded during that time. Pratte, Chouteau & Co. to Sarpy & Fraeb, St. Louis, 30 June 1838, St. Louis Fur Trade, part 1; “The Fur Trade,” *Daily Harold and Gazette*, 22 September 1838.
- 40 “More Fur,” *North American*, 17 July 1839; “Fur Trade,” *Daily Herald and Gazette*, 29 June 1839.
- 41 Dan Flores, “Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy: The Southern Plains from

- 1800 to 1850," *Journal of American History* 78 (1991): 470-71; Tom McHugh, *The Time of the Buffalo* (New York, 1972), 16-17; Elliott West, *The Way West: Essays on the Central Plains* (Albuquerque, NM, 1995), 52-53.
- 42 US House of Representatives, *Dodge's Journal*, 19; Hugh Evans, "Hugh Evans' Journal of Colonel Henry Dodge's Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1835," ed. Fred S. Perrine, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 14 (1927): 204.
- 43 Many travelers through the region noted large bison herds upon passing the forks of the Platte, in accounts from spring, summer, and winter. James, "Account of an Expedition"; US House of Representatives, *Dodge's Journal*; William H. Ashley, "The Ashley Narrative," in *The Explorations of William H. Ashley and Jedediah Smith, 1822-1829*, ed. Harrison Clifford Dale (Lincoln, NE, 1991), 121; Anderson, *Rocky Mountain Journals*; John R. Bell, *The Journal of Captain John R. Bell: Official Journalist for the Stephen H. Long Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, 1820*, ed. Harlin M. Fuller and LeRoy R. Hafen (Glendale, CA, 1957). For information on resident herds, see Henry Epp and Ian Dyck, "Early Human-Bison Population Interdependence in the Plains Ecosystem," *Great Plains Research* 12 (2002): 323-37.
- 44 Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, 1850), 312; Pekka Hämäläinen, "The First Phase of Destruction: Killing the Southern Plains Buffalo," *Great Plains Quarterly* 21 (2001): 101-14.
- 45 This includes streamflows for Clear Creek, which flows into the South Platte River twenty miles south of Fort Lupton, and Middle Boulder Creek, a tributary of St. Vrain Creek which flows into the South Platte River one mile south of Fort St. Vrain. The streamflow reconstructions are based on tree-ring data. Connie A. Woodhouse, "A Tree-Ring Reconstruction of Streamflow for the Colorado Front Range," *Journal of the American Water Resources Association* 37 (2001): 561-69; Connie A. Woodhouse, "Extending Hydrologic Records with Tree Rings," *Water Resources Impact* 2 (2000): 25-27.
- 46 It is acknowledged that streamflow rates do include the annual spring flooding when the precipitation contributes little to plant growth. However, although spring snowmelt flooding contributes a significant amount of water to the annual streamflow, as an expected annual event this flooding may only be detrimental in cases of exceptional snowpack. Documentation from the Sierra Nevada Mountains indicates that particularly large snowmelt floods occurred in cases where the snow deposition was more than twice the average amount and persisted into April and May. Richard Kattelman, "Impacts of Floods and Avalanches," in *Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project: Final Report to Congress*, vol. 2 (Davis, CA, 1996), 1263.
- 47 This is based on reconstructed annual summer (June-July-August) values of the Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI) using tree-ring data. The PDSI correlates well with vegetation growth, so it provides a good proxy for rangeland conditions. Data from E. R. Cook, D. M. Meko, D. W. Stahle, and M. K. Cleaveland, North American Summer PDSI Reconstructions, IGBP PAGES/World Data Center for Paleoclimatology, Boulder, CO, Data Contribution Series #2004-45.
- 48 W. C. Palmer, "Meteorological Drought," U.S. Weather Bureau Research Paper 45 (1965); E. Cook, R. Seager, M. Cane, and D. Stahle, "North American Drought: Reconstructions, Causes, and Consequences," *Earth-Science Reviews* 81 (2007): 93-134.

- 49 W. K. Lauenroth, I. C. Burke, and M. P. Gutmann, "The Structure and Function of Ecosystems in the Central North American Grassland Region," *Great Plains Research* 9 (1999): 223-59; Waldo Wedel, *Central Plains Prehistory* (Lincoln, NE, 1986), 16.
- 50 George Bird Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians: Their History and Ways of Life*, vol. 1 (New Haven, CT, 1923), 39; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 33; Fowler, *Journal of Jacob Fowler*; James, "Account of an Expedition," 282; De Mun, "Journals of Jules De Mun," 172-75; U.S. House of Representatives, *Dodge's Journal*, 24.
- 51 Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 34.
- 52 U.S. House of Representatives, *Dodge's Journal*; Ford, "Captain Ford's Journal"; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*; Catlin, "Outline Map."
- 53 Grinnell indicates it was around 1835 when the Cheyenne pushed the Kiowa and Comanche south of that river. George Bird Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes* (New York, 1915), 36-37; Joseph Jablow, *The Cheyenne in Plains Indian Trade Relations, 1795-1840* (Seattle, 1966), 65.
- 54 U.S. House of Representatives, *Dodge's Journal*, 24; Jablow, *Cheyenne in Plains Indian Trade Relations*, 64.
- 55 John H. Moore, "Cheyenne Political History, 1820-1894," *Ethnohistory* 21 (1974): 331-33.
- 56 Flores, "Bison Ecology," 475.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 475-76; the same phenomenon occurred in the Ohio Valley during the late eighteenth century. Richard White, *The Middle Ground* (Cambridge, UK, 1991), 487.
- 58 U.S. House of Representatives, *Dodge's Journal*, 19; for a map that shows these areas, see West, *Way West*, 64.
- 59 Ford, "Captain Ford's Journal," 560.
- 60 William Sublette founded Fort William on the North Platte River. Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of American History* 65 (1978): 334.
- 61 Bernard DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri* (Boston, 1947), 316.
- 62 John H. Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation: A Social and Demographic History* (Lincoln, NE, 1987), 198.
- 63 F. A. Wislizenus, *A Journey to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1839* (St. Louis, MO, 1912), 55.
- 64 Sage, *Rocky Mountain Life*, 76.
- 65 A Kiowa group camped north of the Arkansas River in the summer of 1836 was attacked by the Cheyenne, and in the following two years the Cheyenne and Arapaho raided into the Southern Plains against the Kiowa and Comanche. James Mooney, *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians*, Seventeenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, part I (Washington, DC, 1898), 271-73.
- 66 Receipt of Bent St. Vrain & Co. to Abel Baker Jr. for Fort Jackson with its merchandise, peltries, etc., formerly property of Sarpy & Fraeb, St. Louis Fur Trade, part 1.
- 67 Agreement between Bent, St. Vrain & Co. and the Sioux Outfit, 27 July 1838, St. Louis Fur Trade, part 1; Wishart, *Fur Trade of the American West*, 73.
- 68 Sage, *Rocky Mountain Life*, 208.

- 69 Ibid., 73; Robertson, *Competitive Struggle*, 205.
- 70 LeRoy Hafen, "Old Fort Lupton and Its Founder," *Colorado Magazine* 6 (1929): 224; Lecompte, *Pueblo*, 7.
- 71 Lieutenant William Franklin passes by the posts on 21 July 1845 and says, "They are all deserted now, the trade having become too small to support them." Franklin, "March to South Pass," 25.
- 72 Anthony McGinnis, *Counting Coup and Cutting Horses: Intertribal Warfare on the Northern Plains 1738-1889* (Evergreen, CO, 1990).
- 73 Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 53-54.
- 74 Sage, *Rocky Mountain Life*; George F. Ruxton, *Adventures in Mexico and the Rocky Mountains* (New York, 1848).
- 75 West, *Way West*, 62-63.
- 76 George Vrtis, "The Front Range of the Rocky Mountains: An Environmental History, 1700-1900," PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2006, 136.
- 77 Wislizenus, *Journey to the Rocky Mountains*, 137.
- 78 Smith, "Journal of E. Willard Smith," 161.
- 79 John Frémont, *The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains* (Buffalo, NY, 1852), 56.
- 80 Andrew Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), 116-19.
- 81 Jacob Halsey to Pratte, Chouteau & Co., 2 November 1837, St. Louis Fur Trade, part 1.
- 82 Reginald McGrane, *The Panic of 1837* (New York, 1965), 1.
- 83 Peter Rousseau, "Jacksonian Monetary Policy, Specie Flows, and the Panic of 1837," *Journal of Economic History* 62 (2002): 457; Warren Hickernell, "An Index of Ten Commodities, Monthly, 1815-60 in the New York City Wholesale Markets," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 34 (1939): 7; Arthur Cole, "Statistical Background of the Crisis Period, 1837-42," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 10 (1928): 182-95.
- 84 Dorothy Dorsey, "The Panic and Depression of 1837-43 in Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 30 (1936): 134-36; Lecompte, *Pueblo*, 23; "Failure of the American Fur Company," *Cleveland Daily Harold*, 21 September 1842; Grace Nute, "The Papers of the American Fur Company: A Brief Estimate of Their Significance," *American Historical Review* 32 (1927): 537-38.
- 85 Pierre Chouteau Jr. to P. D. Papin, 16 April 1837, St. Louis Fur Trade, part 1.
- 86 Milton Sublette to Pratt, Choteau & Co., 15 December 1836, St. Louis Fur Trade, part 1.
- 87 William L. Sublette to W. D. Stewart, September 1842, "Correspondence of Robert Campbell, 1834-1845," *Glimpses of the Past* 8 (1941): 43.
- 88 Frémont, *Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains*, 133.
- 89 Connie A. Woodhouse, Jeffrey J. Lukas, and Peter M. Brown, "Drought in the Western Great Plains, 1845-56," *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society* 83 (2002): 1485-93; Douglas Bamforth, "Historical Documents and Bison Ecology on the Great Plains," *Plains Anthropologist* 32 (1987): 1-16; Flores, "Bison Ecology," 465-85; Isenberg, *Destruction of the Bison*, 206.
- 90 Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," *Journal of American History* 90 (2003): 860.
- 91 Hafen, "Fort Jackson," 10; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 173.