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Article Summary: Two men named Nathaniel Pryor are mentioned in accounts of western expeditions in the 1820s. Nathaniel Miguel Pryor, a hunter, trapper and trader, may have been related to Captain Nathaniel Pryor of the Louis and Clark expedition, a soldier who became a trader.

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Cataloging Information:

Names: Nathaniel Miguel Pryor, Captain Nathaniel Pryor, Jacob Fowler, Hugh Glenn, Jesse Van Bibber, Isaac Slover, Thomas James, George C Sibley, Benjamin Reeves, Thomas Mather, Sylvester Pattie, James Ohio Pattie, Tecumseh, the Prophet (Tecumseh's brother), Baptiste Peno

Place Names: Fort Smith, Arkansas; Taos and Santa Fe, New Mexico; Dubuque, Iowa

Expeditions Mentioned: Lewis and Clark Expedition, Glenn-Fowler Expedition, James and McKnight Expedition, George Sibley Expedition, Sylvester Pattie Expedition

Keywords: Verdigris River, Arkansas River, Huerfano River

Photographs / Images: "Fur Traders on the Missouri attacked by Indians" (W M Cary sketch, 1868); Shahaka, a Mandan chief

## A PROBLEM IN IDENTITY: TWO NATHANIEL PRYORS

RAYMOND W. AND MARY LUND SETTLE

WHEN Jacob Fowler, second in command of the Glenn-Fowler Indian trading and trapping expedition to the upper Arkansas River, 1821-1822, made up what may be regarded as the official roster of the twenty members of the party he included the name of "Nat Pryer."<sup>1</sup> With characteristic inconsistency and disregard for spelling he later wrote the man's name as "Prier," "Priar,"<sup>2</sup> or "Prior," as suited his fancy at the moment. Never did he spell it correctly thereafter in his *Memorandum of the Voige by Land From Fort Smith to the Rocky Mountains*. Seventy-seven years later Dr. Elliot Coues, editor of that document in 1898, identified Fowler's "Nat Prier" as ex-Sergeant (now ex-Captain in the United States Army)

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob Fowler, *Memorandum of the Voige by Land From Fort Smith to the Rocky Mountains*, (New York, 1898), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 4, 5, 61, 155, 156.

*Mr. and Mrs. Settle of Monte Vista, Colorado are well known for their books on Western History. Their latest work, Saddles and Spurs, deals with the Pony Express.*

Nathaniel Pryor of the famed Lewis and Clark expedition, 1804-1806.<sup>3</sup>

In making this identification Dr. Coues appears to have known of only one man named Nathaniel Pryor. It so happens, however, that there were two contemporaneous men by that name, both of whom were in the lower Verdigris River-Fort Smith area in the fall of 1821, where the Glenn-Fowler expedition was organized. One of them was the ex-Sergeant and the other Nathaniel Miguel Pryor, Fowler's "Nat Pryor". The relationship between them is not definitely known. Some have said that Nathaniel Miguel Pryor was a son of Captain Pryor and others that he was a "nephew and namesake."<sup>4</sup> The latter seems the most plausible.

Nathaniel Miguel Pryor, silversmith, clock-maker, trapper, and hunter was born in Kentucky near the Falls of the Ohio River (Louisville) in 1798. He moved to Missouri in 1820, and the following year, at the age of twenty-three, went to the lower Verdigris area, where Captain Pryor had a small trading house at the mouth of that stream and about a mile below Hugh Glenn's establishment.

Setting out from Fort Smith, the point of rendezvous, on September 6, 1821, the Glenn-Fowler expedition passed what was evidently Captain Pryor's institution and reached that of Hugh Glenn, where they halted nineteen days making final preparations for their departure. Here five hunters abandoned the enterprise, leaving thirteen of the original eighteen named in Glenn's trading license.<sup>5</sup> The places of these deserters were filled, and two additional men hired,

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<sup>3</sup> Grant Foreman, *Nathaniel Pryor*, in *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, (Oklahoma City) vol. vii, pp. 152-154.

<sup>4</sup> Kate L. Gregg, *Road to Santa Fe*, (Albuquerque, 1929), p. 255.

<sup>5</sup> William Bradford, *Hugh Glenn License to Trade With Indians and Trap, August 5, 1821*. The names of the eighteen men mentioned in the document are Hugh Glenn, Jacob Fowler, Robert Fowler, Baptiste Roy, ..... Handy, Baptiste Peno, Jaques Bono, Louis Revas, Joseph Barbo, Abraham Holloway, Jonathan Padget, Francis August, Henry Duval, Julian Pera, Francois Gunneville, Neville and Paul, negroes, and Richard Walters. The names of nine of these, including the five deserters, are not listed in Fowler's official roster. Gregg, *op. cit.*, p. 255; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (San Francisco, 1886), vol. iv, p. 795.

which brought Fowler's roster up to twenty. Among the new recruits was Nathaniel Miguel Pryor.

The expedition took up its westward march along the Verdigris and Little Verdigris on September 25, 1821, and struck the Arkansas River on October 14 near the site of present Wichita, Kansas. Following this stream upward they rounded the great bend, and on November 20 made camp a few miles below the mouth of the Huerfano River where Nepesta, Colorado, was later located. While camped here a party of six men, one of whom was Nathaniel Miguel Pryor, was sent upstream to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains on December 3, 1821, to trap beaver. The leader was Isaac Slover.<sup>6</sup> They returned on January 11, 1822, having been unsuccessful on account of the intense cold which prevented the animals from leaving their houses.

On December 30, 1821, a party of Spanish traders or Comancheros from Taos, who had been trading with the vast horde of Comanche, Kiowa, Arapaho, and other Indians congregated on the upper Arkansas River at that time, came in with the information that government restrictions on foreign traders entering New Mexico had been abolished. When they set out for home on January 2, 1822, Hugh Glenn, Baptiste Roy, Baptiste Peno, and two other unnamed men went with them.<sup>7</sup> Glenn's intention was to go to Santa Fe and secure permission from the governor to trap in New Mexico. Having achieved his purpose Glenn sent Baptiste Peno and a small party of Spaniards back to the Arkansas River to guide Fowler and the fourteen men with him across the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to Taos. Meanwhile Fowler had moved to the site of Pueblo, Colorado, where he built a stockade on the north side of the Arkansas River. There Peno and the Spaniards found them on January 28, 1822. Three days later the party set out for Taos, where they arrived on February 8. Hugh Glenn and the other members of his small party were waiting

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<sup>6</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 51, 61, 88.

<sup>7</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 71-72, 74-75.

there for them.<sup>8</sup> The entire party was thus reunited for the first time since Glenn went to Santa Fe on January 2.

Two days after the reunion of the party in Taos, on February 10, 1822, two parties, one commanded by Jesse Van Bibber and the other by Isaac Slover were sent out to trap upstream along the Rio Grande to the San Luis Valley and remain out until May 1, 1822. Whether Nathaniel Miguel Pryor remained in Taos with Hugh Glenn, and a little later went to Santa Fe with him or accompanied Van Bibber or Slover is not known, but he probably went with the latter. Having been with him in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains it seems plausible that he would go with him on this excursion. On February 12, Fowler himself and four men "set out on a traping tower", which also took him upstream along the Rio Grande River into the San Luis Valley.<sup>9</sup>

Although it would be highly interesting to recount the toils, hardships, and experience of the three parties in ascending the Rio Grande as far as Wagon Wheel Gap, such a recital is not necessary to the purpose of this article. All three parties remained in the San Luis Valley until the latter part of April, not taking enough beaver to pay expenses, and returned to Taos on April 26 to make preparations for their homeward journey. There they found Hugh Glenn, the Van Bibber and Slover parties, the General Thomas James expedition, and a small party of French-Canadians, members of the Glenn-Fowler expedition.<sup>10</sup>

On June 1, 1822, the combined parties set out eastward along a trail leading over the Taos Mountains through Taos Pass, and on to the divide between the Canadian and Arkansas Rivers until they intercepted their westbound trail of 1821, at present Coolidge, Kansas.<sup>11</sup>

Fowler's first mention of Nathaniel Miguel Pryor in his *Memorandum* after December 3, 1821, was in his June

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<sup>8</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 94, 95, 96, 103-104.

<sup>9</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 106, 108.

<sup>10</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 134, 137, 142.

<sup>11</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 144, 148, 153.

14, 1822, entry, where he says George Douglas and Pryor left the Glenn-Fowler expedition and joined that of James. Two days later they returned to their own party.<sup>12</sup> This is the last mention Fowler makes of Pryor.

These brief references are important for they definitely place Nathaniel Miguel Pryor with the Glenn-Fowler party from September 6, 1821 to June 16, 1822.

Where Nathaniel Miguel Pryor lived, and what he did during the following three years is shrouded in mystery. In the summer of 1825, however, he was at Fort Gibson on the lower Neosho River, where he and three unnamed trappers formed a party to go to New Mexico along the route he had traveled in 1821 with the Glenn-Fowler expedition. Setting out upstream along the Arkansas River they reached Walnut Creek at the top of the big bend on August 27. There they found the camp of Commissioners George C. Sibley, Benjamin Reeves, and Thomas Mather, who were engaged in surveying and marking the Santa Fe Trail.<sup>13</sup>

Since both parties were traveling in the same direction Pryor and his three men traveled with the Sibley expedition as far as the Caches on the Arkansas River, where they arrived on September 10. Having completed their work on American soil, and lacking authority to carry it into Mexican territory, the Commissioners decided to divide their party. Reeves and Mather led one back to Missouri, while the other under Sibley set out for Santa Fe, spent the winter there, and secured permission from the government of New Mexico to complete the survey in the spring

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<sup>12</sup> The man whose name was illegible may have been John Rueland (Ruland, Roland), who is credited with having much to do with opening the fur trade of the southwest. Joseph Hill, "Ewing Young In the Fur Trade of the Far Southwest," in *Oregon Historical Quarterly* (Portland), 1923), vol. xxiv, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Kate L. Gregg, *op cit*, p. 70. Fort Gibson, first known as Contonment Gibson, was established by Colonel Matthew Arbuckle on the east side of the Neosho River about two miles above the Three Forks of that stream, the Verdigris, and the Arkansas River. Louise Barry, "Kansas Before 1854: A Revised Annals," in *Kansas Historical Quarterly* (Topeka, 1961), vol. xxvii, p. 529.

of 1826.<sup>14</sup> Upon learning the Commissioner's plans Pryor decided to go on ahead. Two of Sibley's men, Dudley Dedmon and George West went with him. His party now numbered six men. On September 18 they set out upriver, still following the Glenn-Fowler route of 1821. After traveling about fifty miles to the neighborhood of present Deerfield, Kansas, they crossed to the south side of the Arkansas River. The route they followed from there to Santa Fe is not known.<sup>15</sup>

Three or four days after the Pryor party left the Caches, Sibley sent William S. ("Old Bill") Williams forward on a good horse to overtake them and tell them to wait until he caught up with them. Williams failed to find them and returned on September 22. Once again the curtain falls on Nathaniel Miguel Pryor. If he took his small party out trapping that fall nothing is known of it. Bancroft says he lived four years in New Mexico, but three years would probably be more correct. One tantalizing question is where did he learn silversmithing and clock making? Was it at Santa Fe on this trip, or was it in Missouri before or after the Glenn-Fowler expedition?<sup>16</sup>

By the year 1826 the fur trade and trapping in the southwest was developing rapidly. In that year Isaac Williams and Ceran St. Vrain led a party of twenty-odd men to trap on the San Francisco, Gila, and Colorado Rivers; Miguel Robidou and Sylvester Pratt took one of thirty or more; Juan Roles (John Rueland perhaps) had eighteen men under his command, and Joaquin Joon (as Ewing Young was known among the Mexicans) led a party of eighteen.<sup>17</sup> As to Nathaniel Miguel Pryor's activities in 1827, we find no documentary information. Since he told Sibley his party was on the way to New Mexico to trap we may assume they did so. Being a small party, they very likely joined a larger one, but whose it was we do not know.

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<sup>14</sup> Kate L. Gregg, *op cit*, p. 81.

<sup>15</sup> Kate L. Gregg, *op cit*, p. 81.

<sup>16</sup> Kate L. Gregg, *op cit*, p. 84.

<sup>17</sup> Hill, *op cit*, p. 8.

In September 1827 a party of thirty trappers was organized in Santa Fe to operate on the Gila and Colorado Rivers. Among its members were Sylvester Pattie and his fifteen year old son, James Ohio. The elder Pattie, a Kentuckian, immigrated to Missouri where he fought the Sac and Fox Indians during the War of 1812. After the close of that conflict he opened a saw mill on the Gasconade River and rafted lumber to St. Louis. The loss of his wife, however, prompted him to organize a trapping expedition up the Missouri River in 1824. Upon reaching Council Bluffs (Nebraska) their destination was changed to Santa Fe, where they arrived on December 5 of that year. During the succeeding four years the Patties trapped on the Gila, Colorado, and San Francisco Rivers, and Sylvester operated the Santa Rita copper mine.<sup>18</sup>

Having lost the business through the dishonesty of an employee in 1827 Sylvester Pattie organized another trapping expedition of thirty men. Among the members were his son, William Pope, James Puter, Richard Laughlin, Isaac Slover, and Nathaniel Miguel Pryor. With Sylvester Pattie as captain the party set out on September 23 and reached the Gila River on October 6. All went well until November 27 when the party divided. The seven above named men remained with the Patties, and the others went their own way.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Bancroft, *op cit*, vol. iii, p. 162; *Missouri State Historical Society Quarterly* (Columbia, 1932), vol. xxvi, pp. 21-22; James Ohio Pattie, *Personal Narrative*, (New York, 1962), p. 121. In fairness to the reader it should be said that although James Ohio Pattie is an authentic historical personality, a master of human interest narrative, and an explorer who ranks with the best of them, he is often unreliable as a writer of sober history. His chronology of events is badly scrambled, mostly incorrect, and sometimes off as much as two years. And yet there is a thread of truth running through his story. Perhaps Bancroft was right in characterizing him as a "self-conceited and quick-tempered boy with a freedom of speech, often amounting to insolence, and unlimited ability to make himself disagreeable." His *Personal Narrative* may be taken as pseudo-history, folk-lore, or even mythology, but there is at least a substratum of solid fact in it.

<sup>19</sup> Pattie, *op cit*, pp. 118, 121, 124; *Missouri State Historical Society Quarterly*, *op cit*, p. 221; *Ibid*, vol. xxxiii, p. 81; Bancroft, *op cit*, vol. iii, pp. 163-178.

The Pattie party, with several horses, continued down the Gila, trapping as they traveled. On December 1, 1827, Indians stampeded their animals and drove them all off. Being left with no means of transportation, they buried their furs and traps, and on February 16, 1828, set out across a shimmering desert for California. After twenty-four days of indescribable agony from heat, thirst, and starvation they arrived at Santa Catalina Mission on March 12, 1828. Ten days afterward they were placed under arrest, taken to San Diego, and thrown into solitary confinement. There Sylvester Pattie died on April 24, without having seen his son again.<sup>20</sup>

Fortunately for the sake of the imprisoned men, a smallpox epidemic broke out in upper California. Jose Marie de Echeandia, governor of California, having heard that James Ohio Pattie had a quantity of vaccine with which his father had successfully inoculated his employees at the copper mines, and deeply alarmed for his own safety, requested the young man to vaccinate him. This James Ohio refused to do, unless both he and his six companions were set at liberty. After some hesitation the governor agreed to parole them for a year, if during that time Pattie would inoculate everyone in California, white people and Indians alike. The proposed task was a huge one but young Pattie accepted it and went to work. In his *Personal Narrative* he said he had vaccinated 22,000 before the year was out.<sup>21</sup>

None of the Americans were ever returned to prison. Pattie obtained permission to leave the country, and returned home by way of Mexico City, Vera Cruz, and New Orleans. In 1831 he told the story of his wanderings and hair's breadth adventures to Timothy Flint, who edited and published it under the title *The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie*. Three of the others, Richard Laughlin, Jesse Ferguson, and Nathaniel Miguel Pryor remained in

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<sup>20</sup> Pattie, *op cit*, pp. 121, 127, 150-151, 167; *Missouri State Historical Society Quarterly*, *op cit*, p. 221.

<sup>21</sup> Pattie, *op cit*, pp. 186-198.

California as permanent citizens. Pryor settled in Los Angeles, and his home became a stopping place for many noted Americans, among whom were General Stephen W. Kearny and the explorer, John Charles Fremont.<sup>22</sup>

Upon being released from prison Nathaniel Miguel worked for about a year at the San Luis Rey Mission. In 1829 he received a carta (letter of recommendation) from Governor Jose Marie Echeandia. Bancroft said he was then twenty-four years of age, which is evidently an error for he was about thirty-one years old at that time. From 1830 he lived in the neighborhood of Los Angeles, where he sometimes followed his trade of silversmith and clock maker. At other times he hunted otter along the coast.<sup>23</sup> In 1836 he received a certificate of long residence and good character from the Ayuntamiento, and a few years later married a Senorita Sepulveda, who died in 1840. He served against Micheltorena in 1845, commanded a company of artillery in 1846, and in the same year was arrested for aiding Americans in the Flores revolt. In 1847 he served as alderman in Los Angeles. He died in 1850 at fifty-two years of age.<sup>24</sup>

The place of Captain Nathaniel Pryor's nativity is a debatable question, with some saying it was Virginia and others Kentucky. Probably it was the latter. His first appearance upon the stage of important events was when he enlisted in the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804-1806. His career on that memorable journey is so well known that it need not be recounted here. After his return he was appointed ensign in the First United States Infantry on February 27, 1807. About midsummer of that year he was given command of twenty-four men and ordered to escort the Mandan chief, Shahaka commonly known as Gros Blanc

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<sup>22</sup> *Missouri State Historical Society Quarterly, op cit*, p. 221; Bancroft, *op cit*, vol. iii, p. 264; Kate L. Gregg, *op cit*, p. 255.

<sup>23</sup> Bancroft, *op cit*, vol. iv, p. 163; Kate L. Gregg, *op cit*, p. 255. If Kate L. Gregg is correct in saying Nathaniel Miguel Pryor was born in 1798, then Bancroft is in error and he would have been thirty-one years of age when he received the carta.

<sup>24</sup> Bancroft, *op cit*, vol. iv, p. 785.

or Big White, and his family from St. Louis to their home on the upper Missouri River. They had come to that city with Lewis and Clark the year before, and had been to Washington to visit President Thomas Jefferson. With him also was Auguste Pierre Chouteau with a trading company of thirty-two men. William Dorion (Young Dorion) and a party of ten men were also members of the party.<sup>25</sup>

The journey was uneventful until September 9, when they came opposite the Arikara village near the site of Mobridge, South Dakota, where they were attacked by about six hundred warriors of that tribe and some Sioux. Being heavily outnumbered, with four men killed and nine wounded, Pryor's party retreated and returned to St. Louis. He reported that from four hundred to a thousand men would be required to force their way through a tight blockade the Sioux had established on the Missouri River.<sup>26</sup>

On May 3, 1808, Pryor was promoted to second lieutenant. After about two years of service he resigned his commission on April 1, 1810, and secured a license from the governor of Missouri Territory to trade with the Winnebagos or Puans at a place called DeBuque's Mines where Dubuque, Iowa, now stands. This is the oldest settlement in that state. He erected a trading post, a lead smelting furnace, and soon developed a profitable business. About six months before the outbreak of the War of 1812 he received a letter from his old commander on the long march to the Pacific Ocean and back, General William Clark, now

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<sup>25</sup> Grant Foreman, "Nathaniel Pryor," in *Chronicles of Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City, 1929, vol. vii, pp. 152-154; *Missouri State Historical Society Quarterly* (Columbia, 1935), vol. xxix, p. 118; Elliot Coues, "Letters of William Clark and Nathaniel Pryor," in *Annals of Iowa*, Series Three, vol. 1, No. 8, January 1895, p. 613; Walter B. Douglas, "Manuel Lisa," in *Missouri Historical Collections* (St. Louis, 1911) vol. iii, pp. 252-253; Waldo P. Wedel, "Archeological Materials from the Vicinity of Mobridge, South Dakota," Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 157, *Anthropological Papers*, No. 45, (Washington D. C., 1955) p. 80; Doane Robinson, *Doane Robinson's Encyclopedia of South Dakota*, (Pierre, 1925), p. 37.

<sup>26</sup> Coues, *op cit*, pp. 614-620; Foreman, *op cit*, p. 53; Foreman is in error as to the date of this expedition and battle. It was 1807, not 1808. Leonard Jennewein, *Dakota Panaroma* (Mitchell, S. D., 1961), p. 54.

governor of Missouri Territory, requesting him to contact Tecumseh or his twin brother the Prophet who were working to form a great Indian confederacy against the white people.<sup>27</sup>

The execution of this task, plus the restlessness of the Indians due to the activities of Tecumseh and the Prophet, the influence of British agents, and loss of relatives and friends in the battle of Tippecanoe, turned the Winnebagos against Pryor and on January 1, 1812 they attacked his post at DuBuque's Mines. They killed two men, shot his oxen, and were preparing to put him to death when a woman living at the post diverted their attention for a moment from their murderous purpose. Instead they shut him up in the post under guard, intending to burn it with him inside. While they were occupied in plundering the place he escaped and crossed the Mississippi River on the ice. They robbed him of all his goods, some \$5,216.25 worth, and destroyed his buildings, furnace, and cattle.<sup>28</sup>

What he did for about a year and a half following this catastrophe is not known. On August 13, 1813, he was appointed first lieutenant in the Forty-Ninth Infantry of the United States Army and served under General Andrew Jackson in the battle of New Orleans on January 8, 1815. On October 1 of that year he promoted to captain. He served gallantly until the end of the war and was honorably discharged on June 15, 1815. Not long afterward he formed a partnership with Samuel B. Richardson, took a stock of goods down to Arkansas Post on the Arkansas River some fifty miles above its junction with the Missis-

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<sup>27</sup> Foreman, *op cit*, p. 156; Henry William Elson, *History of the United States* (New York, 1914), p. 410; James K. Perkins, and J. M. Peck, *Annals of the West* (St. Louis, 1850) p 801.

<sup>28</sup> Kate L. Gregg, "The War of 1812 on the Missouri Frontier," in *Missouri State Historical Society Quarterly* (Columbia, 1938), vol. xxxiii, p. 11; Foreman, *op cit*, p. 152.

issippi and opened a trading post. Early in 1817 they bought five acres of land.<sup>29</sup>

After about two years there, under date of November 28, 1819, he secured a license from the acting governor of Arkansas Territory to trade with the Osage Indians in Arkansas and to ascend the Arkansas River with one boat load of goods to the "Six Bull" (Neosho) or Verdigris River.<sup>30</sup> He built a little post on the latter stream, a mile and a half above its junction with the Arkansas, where Hugh Glenn also built. It was possibly at this time he became a partner with Abraham Gallatin, brother of Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury under President Jefferson, 1810-1813. Joseph Bougie (Bogy?) also established a post at the falls of the Verdigris River about two and a half miles above that of Pryor.<sup>31</sup>

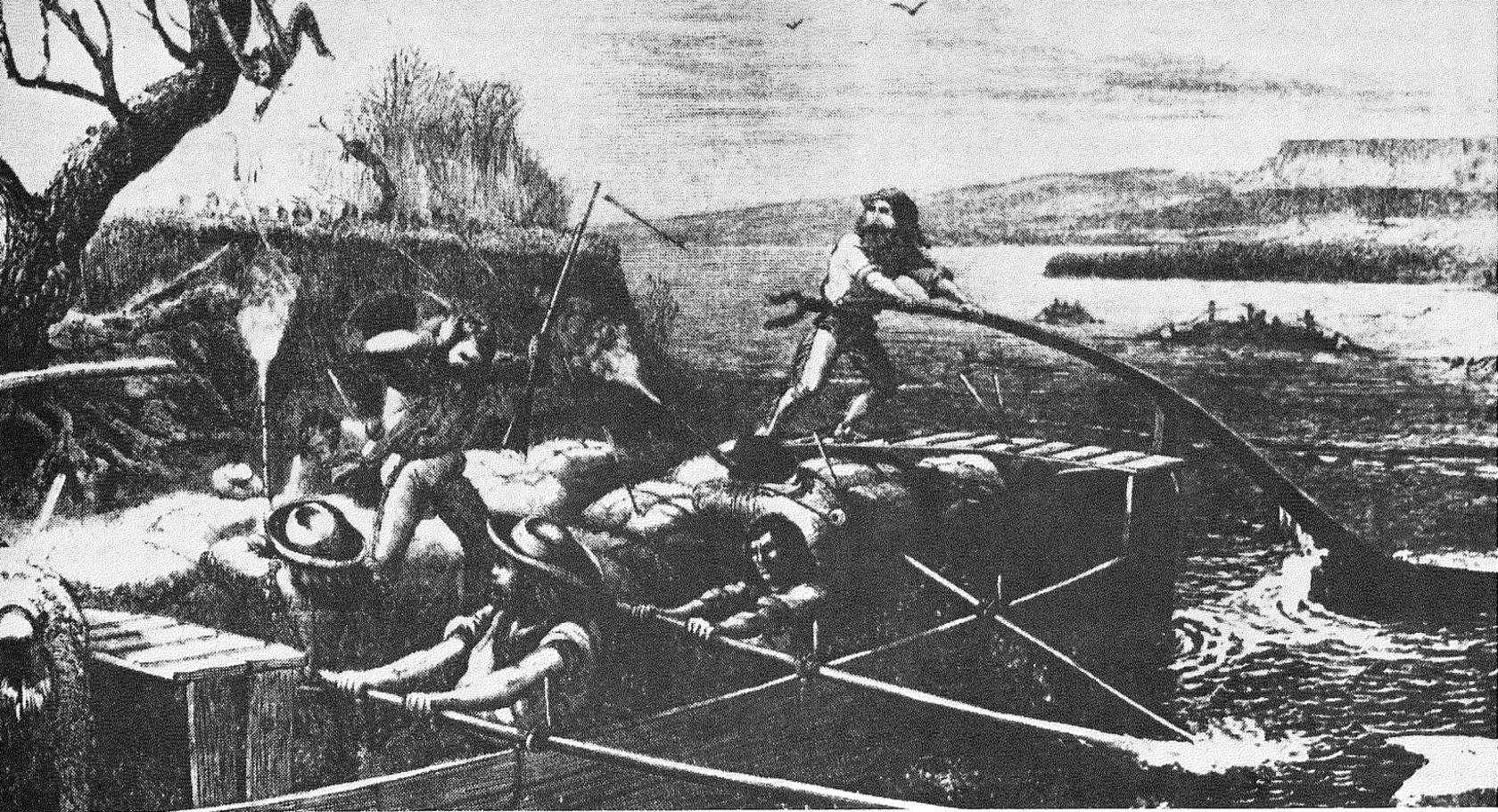
Pryor's association with the Osages was very intimate, especially so with Clermont, surnamed "Builder of Towns," whose village was situated near the site of present Claremore, Oklahoma. He spent much time among them, married a woman of that tribe, and assisted them in resolving the numerous difficulties they had with other tribes and white people. Here Jacob Fowler and General Thomas James found him in the fall of 1821, when both were making preparations for their epochal journeys to New Mexico. Of him James said, "On the reduction of the army (after the War of 1812), he was discharged to make way for some parlor soldier and sunshine patriot, and turned out

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<sup>29</sup> Foreman, *op cit*, pp. 152-153, 162. Arkansas Post was the oldest settlement in the lower Mississippi Valley. Thomas Nuttall, who visited the place in 1819 said it had existed upward of two centuries, and at that time had scarcely forty houses. Richard G. Beidleman, "The Arkansas Journey of Thomas Nuttall," in *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (Little Rock, 1956), vol. xv, p. 254.

<sup>30</sup> In very early days the Neosho River was, for some unknown reason called "Six Bull." The French called it "Grand River", and the Indians "Neosho", the name it bears today. It is derived from two Osage words, "ne" meaning water, and "osho", "bowl". Applied to the stream they mean deep places or holes shaped like bowls. Alice Strieby Smith, "Through the Eyes of My Father," in *Kansas Historical Society Collections* (Topeka, 1928), vol. xvii, p. 708; Foreman, *op cit*, p. 155.

<sup>31</sup> Louise Barry, *op cit*, p. 498; Joseph J. Mathews, *The Osages* (Norman, 1961), pp. 478-489.



“Fur traders on the Missouri attacked by Indians”  
(From a sketch by W. M. Cary, 1868)



Shahaka, A Mandan Chief

in his old age upon the 'world's wide common'. I found him here among the Osages, with whom he had taken refuge from his country's ingratitude, and was living as one of the tribe, where he may yet be, unless death has discharged the debt his country owed him."<sup>32</sup>

As before mentioned in the fall of 1821 Nathaniel Miguel Pryor was also on the lower Verdigris River. When he came there, and why, we do not know. Neither are we informed as to how long he had been there or from whence he came. All we know is that when Hugh Glenn and Fowler were recruiting replacements for the five hunters who walked out on them the young man was enrolled as "Nat Pryer."<sup>33</sup>

General James and his partner, John McKnight, had come from St. Louis by way of the Mississippi River and up the Arkansas to the lower Verdigris with a boat load of trade goods on their way to Santa Fe. Peter Baum, a member of the ill-fated James Baird-William Chambers-Robert McKnight party of 1812, had told him the Arkansas was navigable to a point sixty miles from Taos, New Mexico. So imperfect and limited was knowledge of the southwest at that time nobody actually knew whether Baum's statement was correct or not.<sup>34</sup>

The first of the westward bound expeditions to get off was that of James and McKnight, probably between the first and middle of September. With oars and towing rope they laboriously navigated their heavily laden craft up the Arkansas River to a point thirty miles above the mouth of the Cimarron, or Salt Fork of the Arkansas as the stream was then known. Here they were brought to a dead stop by low water. Knowing no rise in the stream was to be expected at that time of the year, the idea of going to New Mexico by water was abandoned. Dropping back down-

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<sup>32</sup> W. Julian Fessler, "Jacob Fowler's Journal (Oklahoma Section)," in *Chronicles of Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City) vol. 8; General Thomas James, *Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans* (Chicago, 1953), p. 117.

<sup>33</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> James, *op cit*, p. 115.

stream four miles they halted at an Osage road and sent three men to a village of that tribe two day's journey to the east and south.<sup>35</sup>

Five or six days later the men returned with forty Osage hunters on their way to make their fall hunt and Captain Nathaniel Pryor. James took some goods from his boat, and with his brother, John G. James, Francois Mal-saw, Captain Pryor and the hunters went back to the Indian village to trade. There, on September 29, they found the Glenn-Fowler expedition and Major Bradford from Fort Smith. James bought twenty-three pack-horses from the Indians, and accompanied by Captain Pryor and his Osages, returned to his boat on the Arkansas River. He cached (buried) on an island in the Arkansas River that portion of his goods not adapted to packing on horses, and arranged with Captain Joseph Barbour to take them up the following spring, transport them downstream to his trading post at the mouth of the Verdigris, which he operated in partnership with George W. Brandt, and sell them. Having made the best disposition possible of his goods, James showed Captain Pryor where he had buried them. Loading the remainder on the pack-horses and still accompanied by the Captain and the Osage hunters, he struck out in a general southwest direction toward Santa Fe. After two days together James bore directly to the west, while Pryor and the Indians continued on toward the southwest.<sup>36</sup> It is very likely that they intended to make their fall hunt on the Canadian River. When the Glenn-Fowler party set out upstream along the Arkansas River on September 26 Nathaniel Miguel Pryor was with it.

Since the *Union Mission Journal* does not mention Captain Pryor from September 20 to December 10, 1822, it may be assumed he was with the Osage hunters during

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<sup>35</sup> James, *op cit*, pp. 115-117; Grant Foreman, *Pioneer Days in the Southwest* (Cleveland, 1926), pp. 47-56. It is not certain which village is meant here, for it appears there were several at various times. This one was probably that of Clermont.

<sup>36</sup> *Union Mission Journal*, September 12, 20, 1821; Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 15, 16, 17, 17; James, *op cit*, pp. 117-118.

that time. This would not have been strange, for Indian traders often accompanied their customers from place to place and on their hunting expeditions. The above entry in the *Union Mission Journal* for the latter date specifically says that he returned from the Osage hunt. This entry, plus the fact that Captain Pryor was with James after the Glenn-Fowler expedition departed is important, for taken together they reveal the fact that the Captain never was a member of the Glenn-Fowler party or even traveled with it. When he visited the Mission on December 10 he informed the missionaries that the Cherokees had attacked the Osages, possibly the party he was with, about November 1 and defeated them with considerable losses.<sup>37</sup> Special attention is called to the fact that the Captain's visit to the Mission occurred seven days after Nathaniel Miguel Pryor went into the Sangre de Cristo Mountains with Slover almost a thousand miles to the west.

On December 29 the missionaries recorded in their *Journal* that they had made particular request of Captain Pryor not to "treat" the Osages with liquor when they visited his trading post to trade. The following day he left the Mission to go to the Osage village to invite them down to his place on the Verdigris River. At the same time that Captain Pryor was leaving for the Osage village, Nathaniel Miguel Pryor was far to the West with Isaac Slover's small party of trappers. A resume of his movements may be in order. The party remained in the mountains until January 11, 1822, when they abandoned the enterprise and returned to the main party because the intense cold kept the beavers in their houses.<sup>38</sup> This is the last reference Fowler makes to Nathaniel Miguel "Prior" until mid-June, 1822, when they are descending the Arkansas River on their homeward journey.

On December 30 a party of Spanish traders from Taos arrived on the Huerfano River. They said Mexico had be-

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<sup>37</sup> *Union Mission Journal*, September 20, December 10, 1821; Mathews, *op cit*, pp. 482-483.

<sup>38</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 61, 83; *Union Mission Journal*, December 29, 30, 1821.

come an independent nation, the restrictions on foreign traders had been abolished, and Americans would be welcome. After three days they set out for home, accompanied by Hugh Glenn and four companions. The latter were Baptiste Roy, Baptiste Peno, and two others whose names are not mentioned.<sup>39</sup>

The little party made the trip to Santa Fe, obtained a license to trap and trade in New Mexico, and sent back a small party under Baptiste Peno to guide the remainder of the expedition to Taos. When they arrived there on February 8, 1822, they found Glenn there and waiting for them.<sup>40</sup> Plans for taking advantage of the opportunity to operate in New Mexican territory were immediately made, and on February 10 two trapping parties, led by Jesse Van Bibber and Isaac Slover, were sent upstream along the Rio Grande to remain out until May. It is likely that Pryor went with the Slover party.<sup>41</sup>

These two parties and a third, led by Fowler himself, worked up the Rio Grande to the San Luis Valley, where they trapped with only mediocre success until April 26, 1822. On that date they set out downstream for Taos. There they remained making preparations for their homeward march. The James expedition was there also, for it had been arranged that the two parties would combine for the journey back across the plains. On June 1, 1822, they set out, crossed the Taos Mountains to the east, traveled in a north easterly direction and struck the Arkansas River at the site of present Coolidge, Kansas, on June 11.<sup>42</sup>

On June 14, 1822, the combined party separated, and three of the Glenn-Fowler expedition, George Douglas, Nathaniel Miguel Pryor, and a man whose name is illegible, went with James. Two days later they returned to their own party. These are the last references Fowler makes to Nathaniel Miguel. The Glenn-Fowler expedition steered its

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<sup>39</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 71, 74, 75.

<sup>40</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 94, 95.

<sup>41</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, p. 106.

<sup>42</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 134, 153; James, *op cit*, p. 177.

course toward Fort Osage, where they arrived July 5, 1822. That of James left the Arkansas at the Little Arkansas River, traveled in a northeasterly direction to the Osage River where they made bark canoes, floated down it to its mouth, and on down the Missouri River to St. Louis. Neither of these expeditions as a whole went back to the lower Verdigris and Neosho. Two men from the Glenn-Fowler party however, did go that way. They arrived at Union Mission on July 6, 1822, and gave the missionaries much information concerning the Indian tribes they encountered or heard about. One is inclined to make a guess that one of them was Nathaniel Miguel Pryor, drawn thither by the fact that Captain Pryor operated a trading post in that neighborhood.<sup>43</sup>

As will be seen from reading this article, the documentary evidence upon which the conclusions in it are based on Jacob Fowler's *Memorandum of a Voige by Land From Fort Smith to the Rockey Mountains*, Kate L. Gregg's *Road to Santa Fe*, which contains the Diary of George C. Sibley's Survey and marking of the Santa Fe Trail in 1825, and the *Union Mission Journal*, as published in the *American Mission Journal*, vol. ii, (1822) pp. 398-399.

While this documentary evidence is admittedly much less than voluminous, and may even be said to be fragmentary, it is, when supported by what may be called circumstantial and deduced evidence sufficient to establish the facts as stated. Judging from the record it seems doubtful that Dr. Coues consulted the *Union Mission Journal*, and he never saw the *Sibley Diary*, for in 1898 it lay buried in the Sibley Collections of manuscript material at Lindenwood College, St. Charles, Missouri, until Kate L. Gregg gave it to the world in 1952. Whether he consulted Hubert Howe Bancroft's *History of California* is doubtful. It is also doubtful that he consulted General Thomas James' *Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans*.

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<sup>43</sup> Fowler, *op cit*, pp. 155, 172; James, *op cit*, pp. 183-186, 201, 209; *Union Mission Journal*, July 6, 1822.