

1818 TRAVEL JOURNAL: INTERPRETING PRIMARY SOURCES

Read the journal and answer questions on back side.

This journal entry was written December 30, 1818, by Henry R. Schoolcraft, geographer, geologist, and ethnologist, noted for his early studies of Native American Cultures. His journal was the first written account of a European-American exploration of the Ozarks.

**JOURNAL**

OF

A TOUR

INTO

THE INTERIOR OF MISSOURI AND ARKANSAW,

FROM

*Potosi, or Mine à Burton, in Missouri Territory, in a South-West
Direction, toward the Rocky Mountains;*

PERFORMED IN THE YEARS 1818 AND 1819.

By HENRY R. SCHOOLCRAFT.

Wednesday, Dec. 30th.

In pursuing up the valley of Swan Creek, about nine miles, we fell into the Osage trace, a horse-path beaten by the Osages in their hunting excursions along this river, and passed successively three of their camps, now deserted, all very large, arranged with much order and neatness, and capable of quartering probably 100 men each. Both the method of building camps, and the order of encampment observed by this singular nation of savages, are different from any thing of the kind I have noticed among the various tribes of aboriginal Americans, through whose territories I have had occasion to travel. The form of the tent or camp may be compared to an inverted bird's nest, or hemisphere, with a small aperture left in the top, for the escape of smoke; and a similar, but larger one, at one side, for passing in and out. It is formed by cutting a number of slender flexible green-poles of equal length, sharpened at each end, stuck in the ground like a bow, and, crossing at right angles at the top, the points of entrance into the ground forming a circle. Small twigs are then wove in, mixed with the leaves of cane, moss, and grass, until it is perfectly tight and warm. These tents are arranged in large circles, one within another, according to the number of men intended to be accommodated. In the centre is a scaffolding for meat, from which all are supplied every morning, under the inspection of a chief, whose tent is conspicuously situated at the head of the encampment, and differs from all the rest, resembling a half cylinder inverted. Their women and children generally accompany them on these excursions, which often occupy three months. The boys and lazy drones who do not help in hunting, are obliged to eat the intestines of the animals killed. The white hunter, on encamping in his journeys, cuts down green-trees, and builds a large fire of long logs, sitting at some distance from it. The Indian hunts up a few dry limbs, cracks them into little pieces a foot in length, builds a small fire, and sits close by it. He gets as much warmth as the white hunter, without half the labour, and does

not burn more than a fiftieth part of the wood. The Indian considers the forest his own, and is careful in using and preserving every thing which it affords. He never kills more meat than he has occasion for. The white hunter destroys all

In the Years 1818 and 1819.

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before him, and cannot resist the opportunity of killing game, although he neither wants the meat, nor can carry the skins. I was particularly struck with an instance of this wanton practice, which lately occurred on White River. A hunter returning from the woods heavy laden with the flesh and skins of five bears, unexpectedly arrived in the midst of a drove of buffalo, and wantonly shot down three, having no other object than the sport of killing them. This is one of the causes of the enmity existing between the white and the red hunters of Missouri. On reaching the third Osage encampment, we left the valley of Swan Creek, holding a north-west course, and immediately entered on a high, sterile ridge of land, which separates the waters of Swan Creek from Findley's River. Finding no water at the proper time for stopping, we travelled two hours after dark, and encamped in a barren little valley without wood. Distance twenty miles.

ANALYSIS - QUESTIONS:

1. How many people could live in the camps he describes? (How is the journal not clear on this?)
He says up to 100 "men" (but does "men" mean just males? or total people? or men and their families?)
2. Why do you think the Osage village is "deserted"? (Think about "these excursions" he mentions later) These camps are semi-permanent hunting camps, used only when Osage are on hunting trips or "excursions"
3. How long does he say the Osage are gone on these trips?
Up to three months
4. How does he describe the lodges' shape and construction?
(varies) circular made of bent poles stuck into ground and tied at top, smoke opening and top and door on side
5. What is the arrangement of the "tents" (lodges)?
In large circles, one inside the other
6. What does he say is the covering used on the lodges to make them "tight and warm"?
small twigs, mixed with leaves of cane, moss and grass
7. How does he compare the fire-making practices of the Indians and the whites?
The Indians use already-fallen dry limbs and build a small fire they sit close to. The whites go to work of cutting down trees and build a fire of long logs they sit further away from.
8. What incident does he describe having witnessed recently which was an example of a white hunter's wasteful behavior?
A white hunter killed three buffalo just for sport
9. How does he say this affects relationships between the "white and red hunters"? (What does "enmity" mean?)
it creates opposition, hostility
10. Why would the Osage care so much about this?
(varies) The wild game are their food - that they and loved ones depend on for survival
11. How would you judge the credibility of this source? WHY?
(varies, amount of detail, attitude toward Indians, facts vs. guesses)
12. What type of historical source is a travel journal? primary source Why are they so important? - Only lasting (written) record actually created at the time; only other evidence of the time is oral tradition (less reliable) and artifacts (no explanation to go with them)