

— BOOK REVIEW —

Botanical Exploration of the Trans-Mississippi West, 1790-1850

By Susan Delano McKelvey, Oregon State University Press, pp1144, \$85

Frank Lang

The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University originally published Susan Delano McKelvey's treasure trove of botanical history in 1955. Her careful work brought together information about the famous and not so famous botanical collectors of western North America from many widely dispersed sources. Although many accounts are abridged, the extensive bibliography gets you to the original sources.

Until Oregon State University Press reprinted the book last year as part of its Northwest Reprint Series, it sold on the used-book market for as much as \$350, when available. The eminent botanical historian Joseph Ewan of the Missouri Botanical Garden wrote a foreword and added an updated, annotated bibliography. Stephen Dow Beckham of Lewis and Clark College wrote an introduction. Included are the nine original maps by Erwin Raisz and new color maps on the endsheets to show routes taken by the explorers discussed in the text.

Where else could you easily read about Archibald Menzies and the discovery of Madrone, *Arbutus menziesii*, or John

Kirk Townsend's account of a supper on the Nathaniel Weyth Expedition, September 1, 1834? From McKelvey's abridgement of Townsend's journal for that September day:

Having nothing prepared for dinner to-day, I strolled along the stream... and made a meal on rose buds... on returning, I was surprised to find Mr. N. and Captain T[hing] picking the last bones of a bird which they had cooked... the subject was an unfortunate owl which I had killed in the morning, and had intended to preserve, as a specimen. The temptation was too great to be resisted by the hungry Captain and naturalist, and the bird of wisdom lost the immortality which he might otherwise have acquired...

If you want to learn more: William Fraser Tolmie and Mount Rainier; or the German prince, Maximilian, botanizing the Missouri River; or how William Gamble met his end, McKelvey's **Botanical Exploration of the Trans-Mississippi West** is the book for you.



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