

The Colorado History Gazette

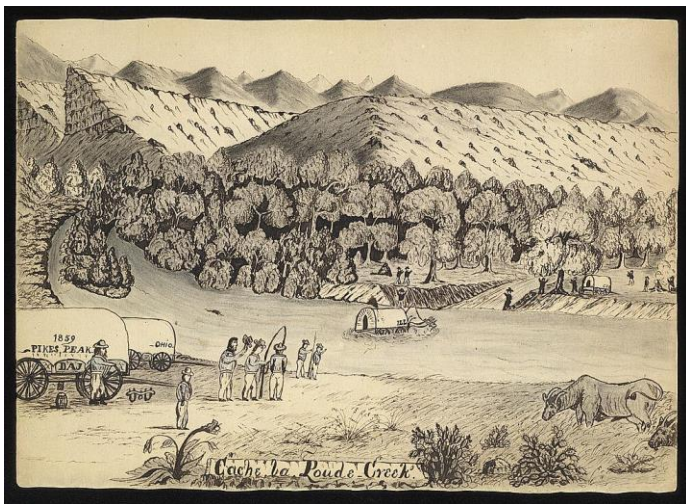
Volume 35

Fort Collins, 1883

HOW THE CACHE LA POUDE RIVER GOT ITS NAME

TODAY WE ARE VISITED BY ABNER LOOMIS WHO TOLD US THE HISTORY OF HOW THE CACHE LA POUDE RIVER GOT ITS NAME. MR. LOOMIS WAS A LONG-TIME FRIEND OF ANTOINE JANIS, ONE OF THE ORIGINAL SETTLERS IN LARIMER COUNTY AND A GENTLEMAN WHO WAS A MEMBER OF A PARTY OF FREIGHTERS THAT GOT STUCK NEAR THE TOWN OF BELLVUE IN NOVEMBER OF 1836. IT WAS THIS EVENT THAT GAVE THE POUDE RIVER ITS NAME.

IN NOVEMBER OF 1836, ANTOINE JANIS WAS TWELVE-YEARS OLD AND TRAVELING WITH HIS FATHER AND A LARGE PARTY OF TRAPPERS AND FREIGHTERS WHO WORKED FOR THE AMERICAN FUR COMPANY. HIS FATHER WAS THE CAPTAIN OF THE EXPEDITION AND THE GROUP CAMPED ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER NEAR WHERE THE BELLVUE SCHOOL HOUSE ONCE STOOD. AS THEY CAMPED, SEVERE WEATHER COATED THE SURROUNDING AREA WITH SNOW, MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE TO MOVE THEIR HEAVILY LOADED WAGONS.



WHEN THE SNOW FINALLY STOPPED, THE ORDER WAS GIVEN TO LIGHTEN THE WAGONS SO THEY COULD PROCEED TO THEIR DESTINATION. A LARGE, DEEP PIT WAS DUG A FEW RODS SOUTH OF CAMP AND EVERYTHING THAT COULD BE SPARED FROM THE WAGON WAS STORED IN THIS PIT. THE PIT AND SUPPLIES WERE COVERED AND BRUSH WAS PLACED ON TOP OF THE DISTURBED GROUND AND LIT ON FIRE, GIVING THE AREA THE APPEARANCE OF A CAMP. THEY WERE TRYING TO HIDE THE CACHE FROM THE SHARP EYES OF NATIVE AMERICANS.

THE EXPEDITION, THEIR WAGONS SIGNIFICANTLY LIGHTER, THEN TRAVELED OVER THE MOUNTAINS TO THEIR FINAL DESTINATION. LATER IN THE SEASON, SOME OF THE WAGON TEAMS RETURNED TO THE PIT, DUG IT OPEN, AND LOADED THE GOODS THAT HAD BEEN SAFELY CACHED AND DEPARTED FOR THE GREEN RIVER.

THE FUR TRADE USED THE WORD "CACHE" FOR PROPERTY THAT HAD TO BE TEMPORARILY LEFT FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER. FUR TRADERS OFTEN DUG PITS AND LINED THEM WITH STICKS AND DRY LEAVES BEFORE HIDING PROVISIONS AND FUR. IN ANTOINE JANIS' PIT, THERE WERE SEVERAL HUNDRED POUNDS OF POWDER. THE NAME CACHÉ LA POUDE IN FRENCH MEANS "WHERE THE POWDER WAS HIDDEN" AND THUS THE RIVER WAS NAMED.

REFERENCES:

1. Fort Collins *Courter*, February 8, 1883.
2. Ansel Watrous, *History of Larimer County, Colorado*, (Fort Collins, Colorado, The Courier Printing & Publishing Company, 1911) 160-162, <https://ia800203.us.archive.org/27/items/cu31924028878936/cu31924028878936.pdf>.
3. Cache la Poudre Creek, Daniel Jenks, Library of Congress, ppmsc 04814, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004661636/>.