

Rendezvous

The article, “Ute Indians of Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico” describes the “rendezvous” that trappers organized to expand trade. [ChatGPT used for easier reading]

<https://books.google.com/books?id=dMS9AwAAQBAJ&lpg=PR7&ots=M1sig7MP6C&dq=ute%20trade&lr&pg=PA51#v=onepage&q&f=false>

In 1825, north of the Uinta Mountains, William Ashley held the first “rendezvous,” a big meeting for traders, trappers, and Native Americans who wanted to exchange goods. These gatherings meant trappers no longer had to travel all the way to places like St. Louis, Santa Fe, or Taos to sell what they had. Over time, the rendezvous became yearly summer trade fairs. Most were held near the Uinta Mountains or the Green River area at Brown’s Hole, although one took place in Colorado’s San Luis Valley. That location was given up because the nearby town of Taos charged very high taxes on trade.

People traded items that were very valuable to Native groups—things like guns and ammunition, wool blankets, knives, tobacco, traps, colorful powders, ornaments, and sometimes whiskey. In return, trappers and Native Americans brought furs, hides, meat, horses, and other goods. After spending long, freezing winters setting traps in icy rivers, many trappers spent their earnings quickly during the lively celebrations at the rendezvous. Because whiskey was common at these events, some Native Americans ended up trading their items for less than they were worth, and in some cases, Native women were treated unfairly and traded or pressured into harmful situations.

Original

““In 1825, north of the Uinta mountains, Ashley held the first rendezvous for traders, trappers, and Indians who had joined in opportunities to trade. The rendezvous eliminated the need for trappers to journey to St. Louis, Santa Fe, and Taos and evolved into annual trade fairs, held in the summer. Most took place near the Uinta Mountains or in the Green River country at Brown’s Hole, although at least one was held in Colorado’s San Luis Valley, a location that was abandoned to avoid high tariffs imposed at nearby Taos.

The trade offered a wealth of goods desired by native people– guns and ammunition, woolen blankets, knives and tobacco, vermilion and ornaments, traps, and whiskey. Trappers and Indians brought furs, hides, meat, horses, native women, and a colossal appetite for debauchery. Following a long cold winter setting traps in icy water, the trappers enjoyed a frenzy of recreation that often wiped out all their profits, while, besotted by whiskey, Indians accepted less than fair value in trading and sold their women as prostitutes.”

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