

American Fur Traders and the Utes

This is part of an article called "Prelude to Dispossession: The Fur Trade's Significance for the Northern Utes and Southern Paiutes," by the historian John R. Alley Jr. Alley cites the writing of Thomas James, an American trapper, who quotes a message sent to him by the Utes. [Changed for easier reading using ChatGPT.] Original found at https://issuu.com/utah10/docs/uhq_volume50_1982_number2/s/134298

In 1822 the Southern Utes told Thomas James about their desire to trade more with them:

The Ute people sent a message saying, "We know you are Americans. We want to trade with you. Come to our land with your goods and trade with the Utes. We have plenty of horses, mules, and sheep—more than we need. We've heard you want beaver skins.

Come visit us, and you can have as many as you like. The Spaniards won't trade fairly with us—they won't even give us two loads of gunpowder and lead for one beaver skin, and that's because they don't have enough supplies themselves."

The American fur traders agreed and began moving north from New Mexico. Within two years, they traveled through the lands of the Southern Utes and into the homeland of the Northern Utes. In 1824, several groups entered Utah, but none was more important than the one led by Etienne Provost. While camped near the Jordan River, eight of Provost's men were killed by a group of Shoshone led by Bad Gocha. After that, Provost turned to the nearby Utes for protection and to trade with them. The next spring, another trapper named Peter Skene Ogden met Provost in Weber Canyon. Provost was traveling with about twenty Utes, three of whom wore Spanish crosses. That year, he got most of his furs from trading with the Utes.

Original

“In 1822 the Southern Utes indicated to Thomas James their desire to increase the trade:

‘You are Americans, we are told . . . We want your trade. Come to our country with your goods. Come and trade with the Utahs. We have horses, mules, and sheep, more than we want. We heard that you wanted beaver skins. . . . Come over among us and you shall have as many beaver skins as you want. . . . These Spaniards . . . wont even give us two loads of powder and lead for a beaver skin, and for a good reason. They have not as much as they want themselves’

American fur traders responded. Within two years they had moved north from New Mexico through the lands of the Southern Utes and into the Utah homelands of the Northern Utes. Of the several parties that entered Utah in 1824, none was more important than that led by Etienne Provost. After Shoshones under Bad Gocha killed eight of Provost's men on the Jordan River, Provost turned to nearby Utes for protection as well as trade. When Peter Skene Ogden met him the next spring in Weber Canyon, Provost was accompanied by a band of twenty Utes, three of whom wore Spanish crosses. He apparently obtained many of his furs that year from the Utes.”