

Commentary to

"The Rocky Mountain West in 1867"

By

LOUIS LAURENT SIMONIN

(1830-1886)

Originally in French as
Le grand-ouest des Etats-Unis
(The Great West of the United States)

Translated into English in 1966 and annotated

By

WILSON O. CLOUGH

(1894-1990)

University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

Commentary

By

Kenneth E. Morrow
Member of Rocklin (CA) Historical Society
(August 2012)

NOTE: To retain the ability to use the table of contents and the index of the original book, the page numbers of the original have been embedded and are enclosed in braces [XX]. The page numbers, of the original book, appeared at the bottom of the page.

Joel Parker Whitney's life holds many fascinating tales that almost defy belief. Aside from the fact that he became "The Richest Man In Placer County", he was at the forefront of the development of sheep ranching, the recognition of the importance of agriculture to northern California, the development of the Sacramento delta area and the promotion of silver mining in Colorado among other things.

The story of how "The Rocky Mountain West in 1867" (Rocky Mountain) came to be written is intimately related to the adventures that surround the life of Joel Parker Whitney. In Parker's book, "The Reminiscences of a Sportsman" (Reminiscences), he explains how he became the Commissioner representing Colorado at the 1867 World Exposition.

While visiting Colorado to check on some investments that he had made in Colorado mines, Parker discovered that three Commissioners had been designated to create the Colorado exhibit to be presented at the World Exposition to be held in Paris, France but were unable to get the job done due to a lack of funding. Parker had no interest in becoming the fourth Commissioner and not being the least bit bashful, volunteered to finance the exhibit if he were appointed the sole Commissioner. Parker had just recently retired and sold all of his businesses in Boston and probably believed that he had all of the money that he would ever need. At the time, it is doubtful that he had any idea how wealthy he would eventually become. His offer received no immediate reply and he returned to Boston where he received notice, several weeks later, that he had become the Commissioner to represent the Territory of Colorado. Parker paid to have his large collection of ore specimens that weighed many tons, transported to New York and then shipped to Paris. He then booked passage for his first visit to Europe.

To promote the exhibit, he decided to write a small pamphlet entitled "Colorado: Schedule Of Ores" which described the mines and locations from which his specimens were derived. He kept putting off writing it until the last minute and on page [178] of "Rem" gives an account of the trouble he had in completing the job because all of Paris was inviting him to dinners, dances, balls, theatre productions, operas and other functions which he could not bring himself to refuse. He complains that he "found it very difficult to do much sober work."

He did finish the writing on time and had 15,000 pamphlets printed; 5,000 in each of the languages, English, French and German. He made sure that these pamphlets got into the hands of people who had money to invest in the mines of Colorado. By that time, Parker had invested significant money in silver mines and made every effort to get European investors interested as well.

Parker audaciously placed his exhibit, all 6 tons worth, right in the center of the space allocated to the United States in the main pavilion even though mining exhibits were supposed to be located outside the main pavilion. He worked feverously, and hired French workers to work all night to get his exhibit in place and then dared the official responsible for space allocation to make him move it outside. He had also expanded his space by many more feet in each direction beyond that which was intended. Amazingly, he was not forced to relocate the Colorado display and it was such a hit that he won a gold medal. Not long after receiving the award, he was informed that Emperor Napoleon the Third requested his attendance at an audience at the Tuileries. The following 3 paragraphs are in Parker's own

words, at page [185] in "Reminiscences", and explain how these two books became bound together in an amazing fashion.

I took pains to impress upon the Emperor the conspicuous importance I believed Colorado would gain in the future from its practically inexhaustible mineral [185] wealth, which resulted in his conclusion to have a commissioner sent out to examine and report officially upon the subject. This afterwards led to the appointment of Louis Simonin, author of *La Vie Souterraine*, a prominent French work on mines, and of other mining works, and Professor of Geology in the French "Ecole des Mines." Monsieur Simonin was also a prominent contributor to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, published in several languages, in which after his visit he gave extensive accounts of Colorado and his experiences there.

I returned to Colorado from Paris with the parties [189] mentioned, taking the cars from Omaha part way across the plains, and then taking stage the balance of the way.

With my associates, Simonin, Heine, and Geise, we left Paris the latter part of September 1867, by the French steamer from Havre to New York and on to Omaha. The Union Pacific Railroad was then completed some two hundred miles out on the plains, and from its termination [in Julesburg, CO] we took stage to Denver. Our passage by the latter method required four days of travel night and day. The railroad was not then dispatching daily trains, and the semi-weekly one which we occupied was of slow progress on the new road and carried an unusual number of cars, conveying a small body of Mormons for Salt Lake, escorted by an elder of the elect, and several carloads of young western people, going out to occupy lands acquired from the railroad.

Parker and Louis Simonin actually sat beside each other on their train trip from Omaha to Julesburg and then on the same stagecoach to Denver. After arriving in Denver, Parker, Louis and Col. Heine spent several weeks together on horseback exploring gold and silver mines in the Golden City, Central City and Georgetown areas of Colorado. The Rocky Mountain book consists of individual letters that Simonin wrote and mailed to a friend in Paris. Because Louis dated the letters, it is possible to account for their movements daily. The accompanying table traces Simonin's travels, day-by-day, from Paris, France to the Rocky Mountains and back.

This book is an absolute joy to read. Professor Clough (the translator) says that "Simonin writes with gusto and freshness and his writing style lends a sense of immediacy that enable us to share in his enthusiasm and excitement." Louis Simonin was a professor of Geology at the best college in France and had traveled extensively throughout the world. He had previously visited California and had begun to appreciate the uniqueness of the "Americans" that he met even though many were transplanted Europeans. Louis continually expresses amazement at the work ethic, self-sufficient nature and boundless energy of the people and says that he loves American freedom and democracy. He decides that this is the result of fact that all these people had fled oppressive governments and were determined to make a better life even if it killed them. For them it was either do or die, there was no going back.

After Parker had returned to Boston, Simonin was invited to attend meetings with various Indian tribes that constituted some of the last attempts by the United States to calm the Indians and finally treat them with some dignity. His accounts of these meetings provide a glimpse into the thoughts and pleadings of the mostly peaceful Indian tribes.

Both books describe various incidents that occurred on this trip from a slightly different perspective. Louis' writings were done within several days of their occurrence whereas

Parker's account was written almost 40 years later. Because of that, it is likely that Louis' account is more accurate.

Dr. Wilson Ober Clough (1894-1990) was a Professor of English and American studies, emeritus, at the University of Wyoming when he translated this book. He held honorary degrees from Union College, Schenectady, N.Y. (Litt.D., 1957) and the University of Wyoming (LL.D., 1961). He authored books, articles, short stories, poems, and reviews including, *Intellectual Origins of American National Thought* (1961) and *The Necessary Earth: Nature and Solitude in American Literature* (1964). Surprisingly, the published listings of his writings do not mention his French translation of this book or his many other translations of articles and books. He was a professor for more than 25 years and his poetry appeared in "Frontier," "Literary Digest," "Lyric West" and "Southwest Review."

Time Line of Louis Simonin's Trip to the Rocky Mountains

Date			Comment
Sep	13	1867	Simonin leaves Paris (Montparnasse Station) and travels by train to Brest to board the steamship Saint Laurent
Sep	14	1867	Arrives in Brest, France and boards the Saint Laurent
Sep	16	1867	The Saint Laurent leaves Brest for New York
Sep	24	1867	The Saint Laurent arrives in New York (traveling 3,000 Nautical Miles in 9 days)
Sep	26	1867	Louis and Col. Heine leave New York, in the evening, by train for Omaha, Nebraska (1,500 miles away)
Sep	27	1867	Arrives at Niagra Falls, New York
Sep	28	1867	Arrives in Chicago, Illinois in the morning (1000 miles from New York).
Sep	30	1867	Chicago, on Lake Michigan. Parker joins Simonin and Heine
Oct	1	1867	Omaha, Nebraska on the Missouri. It required 24 hours to travel the 500 miles between Chicago and Omaha.
Oct	2	1867	Julesburg, Colorado on the Platte River. They left Julesburg in the evening. A distance of 380 miles separated Omaha and Julesburg.
Oct	4	1867	Arrived in Denver, Colorado Territory around midnight. The 190 mile stagecoach trip from Julesburg took 30 hours. They were accompanied by six soldiers who were perched on the stagecoach.
Oct	6	1867	Denver, Colorado
Oct	7 - 22	1867	From Oct 7 through Oct 22, Simonin and Whitney, and others, visit gold and silver mines around Central City, Golden City and Georgetown. Simonin, a Geologist, mentions using his pick to explore the mines. W.A. Whiting's (Parker's mine manager) home in Central City may have been used as a base for these trips.
Oct	8	1867	Daily Miners' Register reports their arrival in Central City
Oct	23	1867	Georgetown, in the Rocky Mountains
Oct	25	1867	Central City, Colorado in the Rocky Mountains
Oct	26	1867	Golden City, Colorado at the foot of the Rocky Mountains
Oct	30	1867	Simonin is reported, by the Rocky Mountain News, to have returned to Denver in the evening.
Nov	1	1867	Cheyenne, territory of Dakota, at the end of the prairies. Parker left Simonin and Cheyenne on the morning of Nov 1 for travel to Boston.
Nov	1	1867	Fort Russell (Dakota), under the tent
Nov	9	1867	Lone Tree Creek, Dakota, under the tent
Nov	11	1867	Fort Laramie, Dakota
Nov	12	1867	Fort Laramie, Dakota
Nov	13	1867	Fort Laramie, Dakota
Nov	14	1867	Fort Laramie, Dakota
Nov	15	1867	Fort Laramie
Nov	16	1867	Camp on the Chug Creek, on the prairies on Dakota
Nov	18	1867	Cheyenne
Nov	24	1867	Pittsburgh, alias Fort Duquesne, state of Pennsylvania
Nov	27	1867	New York
Dec	1	1867	New York
Dec	13	1867	Arrives in Paris