

**Originally Published In The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society, Vol. XVII, No. 1, March, 1916, Pages 50-51**

## Who Discovered the South Pass?

The *Detroit Advertiser* having asserted that Col. Fremont was the discoverer of the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, a correspondent of the *Detroit Free Press* denies the truth of statement and the editor of that journal publishes the following letter from Ramsay Crooks, Esq., of New York:

"New York, June 28, 1856.

My Dear Sir:-Just as I was about closing my letter to you of yesterday's date, I received the *Detroit Free Press* of the 21st inst., containing a laudation of Col. John C. Fremont taken from the *Detroit Advertiser* of the previous day and which (if it had been true) is not, in my humble opinion, a very important item in making up the essentials of such a man as should become President of this glorious confederacy.

I, however, presume it is intended to exhibit him as endowed with uncommon intrepidity and daring in exploring so wide a region, surrounded by savages and grizzly bears, thereby proving great firmness of character, so very desirable, but unfortunately so very rare in the head of a great nation.

But even if the Colonel had discovered the 'South Pass,' it does not show any more fitness for the exalted station he covets than the numerous beaver hunters and traders who passed and repassed through that noted place full twenty years before Col. Fremont had attained a legal right to vote, and were fully his equals in enterprise, energy, and indomitable perseverance, with this somewhat important difference, that he was backed by the United States treasury, while other explorers had to rely on their own resources.

The perils of the 'South Pass,' therefore, confer on the Colonel no greater claim to distinction than the trapper is entitled to, and his party must be pressed very hard when they had to drag in a circumstance so very unimportant as who discovered the 'South Pass.'

Although the *Free Press* conclusively proves that the Colonel could not be the discoverer of the 'South Pass,' the details are not accurate and in order that history (if it ever gets there) may be correctly vindicated, I will tell you how it was.

Mr. David Stuart sailed from this port in 1810 for the Columbia River on board the ship 'Tonquin' with a number of Mr. Astor's associates in the 'Pacific Fur Company,' and after the breaking up of the company in 1814, he returned through the Northwest Company's territories to Montreal, far to the north of the 'South Pass,' which he never saw.

In 1811, the overland party of Mr. Astor's expedition, under the command of Mr. Wilson P. Hunt, of Trenton, New Jersey, although numbering sixty well armed men, found the Indians so very troublesome in the country of the Yellowstone River, that the party of seven persons who left Astoria toward the end of June, 1812, considering it dangerous to pass again by the route of 1811, turned toward the southeast as soon as they had crossed the main chain of the Rocky Mountains, and, after several days' journey, came through the celebrated 'South Pass' in the month of November, 1812.

Pursuing from thence an easterly course, they fell upon the River Platte of the Missouri, where they passed the winter and reached St. Louis in April, 1813.

The seven persons forming the party were Robert McClelland of Hagerstown, who, with the celebrated Captain Wells, was captain of spies under General Wayne in his famous Indian campaign, Joseph Miller of Baltimore, for several years an officer of the U. S. army, Robert Stuart, a citizen of Detroit, Benjamin Jones, of Missouri, who acted as huntsman of the party, Francois LeClaire, a halfbreed, and Adré Valée, a Canadian voyageur, and Ramsay Crooks, who is the only survivor of this small band of adventurers.

I am very sincerely yours,

RAMSEY CROOKS.

Anthony Dudgeon, Esq., Detroit, Michigan."

OK JUN 14 1999

# History of Oregon Trail Discovered to Be Fascinating Subject

By LANCASTER POLLARD  
Oregon Historian

Some historical events never lose their interest to the "general public" as well as to historians.

The Oregon Trail is one of these, as was plainly shown by the excitement stirred by the Centennial Wagon Train not only along its route but to a surprising extent throughout the nation. However, most persons, even in Oregon, have only the haziest notion of the history of the Oregon Trail. It is a fascinating subject, beginning with its "discovery."

In fact that means the discovery of South Pass, the broad, low-level gap through the Continental Divide in southwestern Wyoming.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition missed that relatively easy way through the Rocky Mountains on both outward and return trips, using the difficult Lolo Pass in southwestern Montana. During the 1820s fur trappers and traders, the Mountain Men became familiar with the pass and used it constantly.



South Pass is a broad and low-level gap running through the great Continental Divide in southwestern Wyoming.

For 30 years or so afterwards it was generally assumed that some unnamed beaver hunter was the discoverer of South Pass.

The question should have been settled in 1856 when a letter written by Ramsay Crooks was published in the Detroit Free Press. At the time John C.

before Col. Fremont had attained a legal right to vote."

Then he tells his story. In June of 1812 a group of Astorians left to return with news of the Astor enterprise. On the trip to Astoria the Wilson Price Hunt party had suffered severe hardships in the mountains. The return party sought a less hazardous route. In November they came to the pass, spending several days going through it.

Crooks was right. There were seven in the group, of whom he was the lone survivor in 1856. The leader was Robert Stuart, long an officer in the American Fur Co. and later a prominent figure in Detroit. He died in 1848.

Now, here is one of those situations most exasperating to historians. Stuart wrote a journal of the trip through South Pass. It remained in the possession of his descendants, who played misce with it. A few copies were made, but their use was so restricted as to make them valueless to re-

searchers. Not until 1930 was the Stuart material made available, although a somewhat garbled version had been published in French in Paris in 1821. In 1935 the travel journal was published, with other pertinent material, expertly edited by Philip A. Rollins, under the title "The Discovery of the Oregon Trail."

More than 100 years was a long time to wait for a firsthand account of the discovery of the gateway that made the Oregon Trail a practicable route for the American migration to the Pacific Coast.

MARIANNE PELAGIE EMILIE PRATTE

Born: St. Louis, Missouri, December 25, 1806

Died: New York, New York, September 20, 1863

Daughter of Bernard Pratte, 1771-1836 and  
Emilie Sauveur Labbadie, 1778-1844

Sister of Bernard Pratte, Therese Pratte, Celeste  
Pratte, Pelagie Pratte, and Aimee Pratte

Married: Ramsay Crooks, 1787-1859, March 10, 1825  
at St. Louis, Missouri

Mother of Emilie Crooks, Margaret Crooks, Virginia  
Crooks, Ramsay Crooks, Bernard Crooks, William  
Crooks, Sylvester Crooks, Charles Crooks, and  
Julia Crooks (Mother Mary of 2nd Order of  
Dominicans)

Emilie Pratte was born on Christmas in St. Louis, Missouri, into an old, socially prominent family of French descent. Her father, Bernard Pratte, was a wealthy fur trader, and on her mother's side she was a great-granddaughter of Pierre Laclede Liguist, the founder of St. Louis. Also on her mother's side she was a granddaughter of Sylvestre Labbadie, another prominent fur trader. She was only eighteen when she married Ramsay Crooks, then thirty-six, who was a business associate of her father's and general manager of John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company. Emilie and Ramsay made their home in New York City, where she bore nine children. She is mentioned many times in Ramsay Crooks' biography, The Fist in the Wilderness by David Lavender, and a painting of her hangs in the Milwaukee County (Wisconsin) Historical Society, donated by Emilie's granddaughter, Marie Crooks Just. The painting is by the great French master, Jules Emile Saintin. He is famous for his work in depicting the folkways and customs of Indians.

## RAMSAY CROOKS

Born: Greenock, Scotland, January 2, 1787

Died: New York, New York, June 6, 1859

Son of William Crooks, D. 1796 and Margaret  
Ramsay, 1753-1827

Brother of Margaret Crooks, William Crooks (died  
an infant), William Crooks, James Crooks, Jean  
Crooks, Ann Crooks, Helen Crooks, John Crooks  
(died an infant), Elizabeth Crooks, Janet  
Crooks, Matthew Crooks, and John Crooks

Half-Brother of Francis Crooks and eight others

Married: Marianne Pelagie Emilie Pratte,  
March 10, 1825, at St. Louis, Missouri

Father of Emilie Crooks, Margaret Crooks,  
Virginia Crooks, Ramsay Crooks, Bernard Crooks,  
William Crooks, Sylvester Crooks, Charles  
Crooks, Julia Crooks (Mother Mary of 2nd Order  
of Dominicans)

Father of Hester Crooks (half-Indian)

Came to America 1803; met Lewis and Clark on  
Missouri 1806; with Wilson Price Hunt 1811--  
founding of Astoria; General Manager for John  
Jacob Astor; President, American Fur Company  
1834-42; President, Mohawk & Hudson Railroad;  
trustee, Astor Library; 1856 claimed to have  
discovered South Pass west to east in 1813.  
His name is in the Oregon State Senate.

Biography: The Fist in the Wilderness by David  
Lavender

Painting of Ramsay Crooks by Jules Emile Saintin  
in the Milwaukee County (Wisconsin) Historical  
Society.

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COPIED FROM OLD BIBLE of JAMES RAMSAY IN POSSESSION OF  
ALEXANDER D CROOKS, 84 Woodlawn Ave East, TORONTO

"JAMES RAMSAY, His Book, was born in Crouhall, in the parish of  
Dalmenie, the 2 day of November about five o'clock in the  
morning in the year 1720

MARGARET RAMSAY was born in Sawyers (may be Sanarzes) Close Cowgate  
Edinburgh, April 23rd, 1753.

WILLIAM CROOKS AND MARGARET RAMSAY were married December 14, 1772 at  
Kilmarnock

MARGARET CROOKS was born in Kilmarnock December 27th, 1773

WILLIAM CROOKS was born June 23rd 1775

Died Oct. 27, 1775

WILLIAM CROOKS was born August 6th 1776

JAMES CROOKS was born at Kilmarnock April 15, 1778

JEAN CROOKS was born December 27th, 1779

ANN CROOKS was born October 1, 1781

WILLIAM CROOKS was born July 14, 1783

Died June 5, 1786

JOHN CROOKS was born May 3rd, 1785

RAMSAY CROOKS was born in Greenock, January 2nd, 1787

ELIZABETH CROOKS was born in Greenock April 29, 1789

JANET CROOKS was born in Greenock June 2, 1791

MATTHEW CROOKS was born in Greenock March 6th, 1793

JOHN CROOKS was born in Greenock, December 21st, 1794

JAMES CROOKS sailed from Greenock April 19th, 1791

WILLIAM CROOKS sailed from Greenock April 3rd, 1792

both for their brother Francis Crooks in Niagara, North America  
provinces of Canada

RAMSAY CROOKS sailed from Greenock for North America, April 25, 1803

JAMES CROOKS AND JEAN CROOKS both sailed from Greenock for  
America March 18th 1804

MATTHEW CROOKS sailed from Ayr in the "Hapten" for America,  
June 26th, 1805

WILLIAM CROOKS died Feb. 20th 1796 at Paisley, Scotland, and was buried  
in the High Church near Paisley No. 65

MARGARET CROOKS died at Ancaster, district of Gore, Upper Canada Oct. 2, 1827  
and was buried at Grimsby.

NOTE made by Frances Crooks daughter of James Crooks

James Crooks' mother sailed with Ramsay from Greenock April 25, 1803

It is also stated that Margaret Ramsay Crooks, the mother, after the death of her husband, chartered a sailing vessel, to bring her numerous children out to Quebec, it being cheaper than paying first class passage money for each.

However the records show that the older children came one at a time

William Crooks the father of Ramsay Crooks was married twice, and had 22 children, thirteen of which were by the union with Margaret Ramsay

George Notman states he was told that William Crooks was a surveyor and laid out the new city of Edinburgh, and that John Finnie Street in Kilmarnock is named after John Finnie, a member of Parliament who married a Miss Crooks and lived in the still handsome house to which our greatgrandmother Crooks was taken as a bride.

For data regarding Ramsay Crooks family, see History of Niagara

by Janet Carmichael and data Niagara Hist Society

Greenock - 22 1/2 miles N. W. of  
Glasgow (over)

Ramsay Crooks born at Greenock  
Scotland January 2<sup>d</sup> 1787 -  
Died in New-York June 6. - 1859.

Born: Jan. 2, 1787 - Scotland.

<sup>2</sup>  
RAMSEY CROOKS  
Financier

Died: June 6, 1859

At sixteen he emigrated to Montreal and entered the fur trade at once. In the fall of 1807 he set out for the upper Missouri River. After numerous partnerships he became a partner in the American Fur Company and in 1817 was made its general manager. When Astor sold out his interests, Crooks bought the Northern Department - still carrying on the name of American Fur Company. He was also the First President of the Mohawk & Hudson Railroad Company.

He was a frail man and early hardships left him a legacy of ill health. Fair and honorable in all his dealings he was still a relentless enemy. His character was of the highest.

*From "Who's Who" don't know from which  
or who copied this - but it is a  
rather a long one -*



Mrs. Walter F. Just  
2231 North 85th Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53213  
July 15, 1963

Mr. David Lavender  
Thatcher School  
Ojai, California

Dear Mr. Lavender:

I am very much interested in your recent book -  
"The First in the Wilderness" - for two reasons - first, because of  
its content and secondly, for personal reasons.

Ramsay Crooks was my grandfather. I am the  
youngest daughter of Colonel William Crooks of St. Paul, Minnesota.  
My father was one of the family of nine children and was the only  
married son of Ramsay Crooks. I am the only living grandchild. I  
have always been very much interested in my grandfather's career and  
have in my possession some family records which may be of interest to  
you. These entries are copied from an old Bible of James Ramsay:

Margaret Ramsay, mother of Ramsay Crooks, was  
born in Sanyers, Close Cowgate, Edinburgh, on  
April 23, 1753.

William Crooks, father of Ramsay Crooks, and  
Margaret Ramsay were married on December 14,  
1772 at Kilmarnock.

William Crooks was twice married and had 22  
children in all, 13 of which were by his second  
wife, Margaret Ramsay.

Ramsay was born at Greenock, Scotland on January  
2, 1787, and died June 6, 1859 at New York.

It is stated that, "William Crooks was a surveyor  
and laid out the new city of Edinburgh".

William Crooks died February 20, 1796 at Paisley,  
Scotland.

After the death of her husband, Margaret Ramsay  
Crooks chartered a sailing vessel to bring some  
of her numerous children to America. Among these  
was Ramsay. They sailed from Greenock on April  
23, 1803 and landed at Quebec.

I have inherited the family portraits of my grand-  
father and grandmother Crooks, which were sent to us after the death of  
my grandmother. My father donated portraits of Ramsay Crooks to the  
Minnesota and Wisconsin Historical Societies, and one was donated by  
another member of the family to Mackinac Island.

Very truly yours

## **Ramsay Crooks**

My great, great, great grandfather Ramsay Crooks was born in Greenock, Scotland, January 2, 1787. He was the son of William and Margaret Crooks. His father was a surveyor who laid out the new city of Edinburgh, Scotland. After his father's death, his mother chartered a ship to bring some of her children to America. Ramsay was sixteen when the family arrived at Montreal, Canada, and immediately got involved in fur trading.

In 1810, he joined John Jacob Astor's fur trading company on its first trip west to establish a trading post on the Pacific. They were the first people to follow Lewis and Clark west across the continent. They discovered the Snake River in Idaho and Oregon and they almost died crossing Hell's Canyon, the deepest gorge in North America. Miraculously, they survived the dangerous journey.

Finally they reached the Pacific Ocean and Ramsay Crooks founded the town of Astoria where he set up fur trading posts. In fact, many beaver pelts were sent to China in exchange for money and rare Chinese goods including beautiful sets of china. My mom has a set that belonged to Ramsay Crooks's wife. Today Astoria is a thriving city.

On March 10, 1825, Ramsay Crooks married Marianne Pelagie Emilie Pratte. She was descended from Pierre Laclède who founded St. Louis, Missouri. Emilie and Ramsay were very happy together. They had many children including Williams Crooks who was named after his grandfather. William was the chief engineer for

his railroad company, the Great Northern Railway. In fact, the first locomotive west of the Mississippi River was named after William Crooks, as was the city of Crookston, Minnesota. William was my great, great grandfather.

Ramsay Crooks succeeded John Jacob Astor as president of the American Fur Company in 1834, and was the most powerful man in the American fur trade. He remained in the fur trade until he died on June 6, 1859 in New York City. He is buried at Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

Ramsay did other things as well. He was the first president of the Mohawk and Hudson Railroad Company. He also was a trustee of the Astor Library which became the New York Public Library, and of the Saint Andrew's Society. His good friend was Washington Irving. Irving wrote a book about his expedition to the Pacific called Astoria.

Ramsay was a self-educated man, but was very intelligent. He was hard working and a shrewd businessman.

Submitted by Elizabeth A. Newman  
February 1998

Mr. Steven R. Crooks,

In a conversation I recently had with Jeannine Windels, she informed me that there is a possibility that our City may be Host to yourself and other members of the Crook Family. I wish you could know what great news this is many of us here in Crookston.

Three years ago I had a booklet published, that I had written concerning the early history of Crookston. Naturally your grandparent, Col. Crooks, was written about. I am sorry that I do not have any copies of this book to send you, as I underestimated the demand, and the issue was sold out in six weeks. In lieu, I have enclosed two of the articles that I wrote concerning Col. Crooks and also the Col. Crooks Locomotive. I have enclosed copies of two pictures of the locomotive. You no doubt have both, but just in case I have included them. The closeup picture with the five gentlemen standing in front, was taken at Crookston. The gentleman in the middle was, of course, James Hill, president of the Railroad. I have no information on the names of the others. The second picture was taken near the rroundhouse in St. Paul, and you will note the two cars with the locomotive. The first car was the baggage car and the second the passenger car. These two cars with the locomotive was the usual makeup of the train.

Several years ago I was a member of the City Council, and was named to head a committee to try to bring the Locomotive to be stationed semi-permanently here in Crookston. Our plans at that time were to raise \$300,000 to build a structure alongside the main highway leading into Crookston. This structure was to have a huge glass front and lighted at night so that traffic coming into town would see the locomotive in all it's shiney brass and colorful paint. Unfortunately, Duluth either out bid us or had more political 'pull', and the locomotive ended up there. However, somehow, this story got to a resident of a Rest Home in Wisconsin, and later I received a letter from the, or one of the daughters of Col. Crooks. I submitted this letter to the Council and asked that the Mayor send a letter to her making her an Honorary Citizen of Crookston, and invite her to a yearly reunion Celebration we were having that year. This happened to be one of my last council meetings, as I was retiring, and I assumed someone would have this sent this letter. However, for some reason the letter was lost and never sent. Several months later I tried to get in contact with her, but she had passed away.

A few years ago I also found out that a granddaughter of Col. Crooks was living in Great Falls, Montana. I wrote her asking if she would be willing to give us any information that she had that would be of interest to us concerning Col. Crooks. If not, would she send me addresses of any living family descendants, so that I might contact them to find out more about Col. Crooks. She declined, and as far as I know, is still there in Great Falls.

You have no idea how exciting this is to make contact with descendants of our City's namesake. Jeannine Windels will be looking forward to hearing from you, and should you have the time I would certainly love to hear from you also.

*Very sincerely,  
Russell Sundet*

Mr. Russell Sundet

## The William Crooks Locomotive

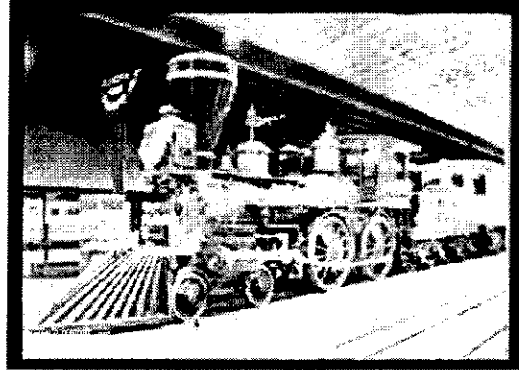
In my February column, I mentioned that I would write more about the interesting history of the William Crooks locomotive. This locomotive was named after Colonel William Crooks, the namesake of our city. It was built in 1861, and since it was a wood burner it was referred to as a 'Cabbage Stacker' due to its large flared smokestack. This locomotive, and all others like it, were listed as GENERAL class locomotives, and were the "hot rods" of that day! Some of you may recall an early Buster Keaton silent movie called THE GENERAL. The General in this case was a locomotive of the same type as the William Crooks. Since it was the first locomotive in Minnesota, it saw a lot of service and naturally in time was considered an "heirloom", to be eventually kept in a museum. I'm not sure if it made frequent trips to Crookston or not, but we do have a picture taken in 1913 in which the William Crooks is on display in front of the old Great Northern Depot. This picture is now on display here at the Golden Link, and after this showing will go to the Polk County Historical Museum on permanent display.

The picture was taken by Harry Chesterman, one of the early photographers in Crookston. The Chesterman studio building on North Broadway was later taken over as the Houske Funeral Home. What is very unique about the picture is its size. Only 7 inches wide, but over 40 inches long. Henry Gredvig believes that the picture may have been taken with a camera that is now in the Polk County Historical Museum. Look for the Kiewel Brewery sign, the old waterworks building, and not seen, but behind the Mikado locomotive, was the Division Headquarters of the Great Northern Railroad.

Of other particular interest in this picture are the two persons visible. We believe that the man shown with the straw hat was known as Major Keeley, but would like to know more about him. Standing in the cab of the William Crooks locomotive is a young girl, and I believe that Emilie has a prize for anyone who can positively identify her. But please remember... "kids" under 60 needn't try... they're too young!!!

By the time of Crookston's 50th anniversary in 1929, the William Crooks was a museum piece and kept in the Great Northern Depot in St. Paul, and only brought out for special occasions such as our 50th anniversary and then again for our 75th in 1954. I vividly recall the 1929 showing and how beautiful the locomotive looked in its gold, red, and black colors. In the early 1970's it was decided to tear down the old depot in St. Paul and it appeared that the William Crooks would have no home. I was chairman of a Crookston Council committee that attempted to secure the locomotive as a museum piece for Crookston. It would have been a great tourist attraction and Crookston would have been extremely proud to be its home, but this wasn't to be! The locomotive ended up on a temporary loan to a train museum in Duluth. Perhaps, wishfully, at some future date we could be its home!!

# CROOKSTON 2000...



The William Crooks - Union Depot, Duluth, MN.

Newsletter II

North Royalton, Ohio

October, 1999

My Dear Friends and Family:

The last time I wrote, I was contemplating traveling to both Duluth and Crookston, Minnesota to investigate the area and the possibilities of having a Crooks Family Reunion in the setting of the famous Wm. Crooks locomotive and in the town of his namesake. I was planning to complete those travels during the last summer, however, a full work schedule and plenty of family obligations prevented that from materializing. Then it finally occurred to me while imitating the infamous "football couch potato" a couple weeks ago, that I had not fulfilled my commitment to all of you. That day, between football games, I just happened to glance at the Weather Channel on cable TV. Imagine my surprise when I saw that the temperatures were dropping quickly and snow would soon be falling in northern Minnesota. So I decided that I best get into gear and travel up to the great Northland to see what the two areas had to offer. I took a couple days off and made the appointed rounds as I had promised all of you. I'm now back in Ohio, and will try to update you all on what I discovered and some observations.

When I offered the suggestion of a Minnesota reunion in the year 2000, my idea was basically this. Not many in our family are aware of the great contribution to our country's history made by Colonel Wm. Crooks, son of Ramsey. What an opportunity, during the Millennium to venture to the State of Minnesota, relive the history of our forefathers, while once again getting the "clan" together to see one another. A trip to Duluth to see the engine, then on to Crookston, to partake in their yearly Ox Cart Days festival seemed to me to be a very unique opportunity to fulfill these goals. The following is what I discovered and some of my thoughts regarding a trip of this nature.

Duluth, Minnesota is truly a beautiful setting. Situated on a bluff overlooking Lake Superior, Duluth indeed has a personality of its own. The area is a major lakefront port, serving the ore industry, and the Great Lakes. Thanks to some of its city fathers, Duluth took the initiative years ago and pursued their goal of establishing a historical train museum that would reflect the railroad transportation history of Minnesota. As you all probably remember, the Wm. Crooks engine was in the Minneapolis - St. Paul area for

years. When their old train depot closed, Duluth pursued the locomotive and they won a bidding war to transport and house the engine in their newly created Lake Superior Railroad Museum. An interesting fact - the town of Crookston also tried to get the honor of displaying the engine, but the Minnesota Historical Society awarded the engine to Duluth because they had already established a museum to house the train and its related passenger cars. Meanwhile, Crookston had nothing constructed at the time. That is why the engine resides where it does today, in the City of Duluth.

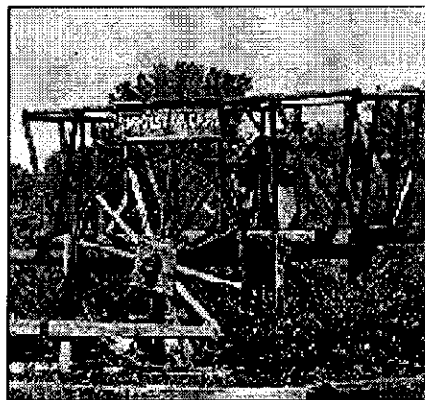
I met with the museum curator and had the opportunity to discuss our trip with him. He made some great suggestions for an activity which I will pass by all prospective attendees in a few paragraphs from now. Everyone on the staff was excited about the prospect of our family's visit. From the

museum I called on a couple hotels to check out their accommodations and then drove by some local golf courses to see what the area had to offer. That particular day I visited was cold and windy. Temperatures were in the low forties, and there were signs everywhere that winter was rapidly approaching this beautiful and remote state. After driving around Duluth for a few hours, I then left town westbound on Highway 2 to Crookston. I arrived there late in



the day ( a four hour drive) and enjoyed this quaint town named after our family. The drive over was nice. About half way in the trip along Highway 2 you cross the headwaters of the Mississippi River. Plenty of National Parks to pause and rest during the drive and to learn more about the area's history. There is waterfowl habitat everywhere one can see, but I was really surprised that I only saw one large flock of Canada's heading south, and not one "quacker" the entire trip. Perhaps the ducks had already departed the area via the Mississippi flyway.

Crookston is located within a farming community which features beets, potatoes and sunflowers. The approximate population is 9,000 residents. I stayed the night and first thing the following morning, visited with the president of the local Crookston Chamber of Commerce. Once again everybody whom I had met gave me the same friendly Minnesota greeting that I had become accustomed to. They also expressed genuine excitement at the prospect of our family joining them for their Ox Cart Celebration in August. After a visit that was all too short, I departed for the Duluth area and my flight back to Cleveland.



Here's my thoughts and recommended suggestions regarding the trip for next year. Please understand, my intent is not to plan your trip and activities, but to offer a tentative itinerary as a guideline for all...

Wednesday, August 16, 2000

Arrival day for all in Duluth. Check with your favorite airline to see if they fly into town. I only saw two carriers, Northwest and American Eagle... Perhaps there are more...

Here's my first suggestion regarding traveling back to this area. You might want to consider flying into either Grand Forks, North Dakota or Duluth. Grand Forks is located only twenty-five miles northwest of Crookston. There are several major commuter airlines that serve Grand Forks. I would then suggest that you rent a car or van and drive to Duluth. Or, you can fly to Duluth. Here's my thinking behind this suggestion. My first thought was to suggest everyone fly to Duluth, then after a couple days there, charter a bus and drive over to Crookston. However, to my surprise, Crookston is a town with a large geographic layout and I don't think this would be practical with a lot of families attending with different interests. I recommend rental cars and/or vans for everyone. Either way it looks like everyone will have to make the drive back and forth regardless what city you choose as your arrival city. *One side note - for golfers or for other tourist activities, you might want to come in on Tuesday, giving you more time to venture about the area. I'm looking at a possible round of golf in Duluth that Wednesday for all those interested...*

I checked on a couple different hotels. My suggestion is that we stay at the Holiday Inn, located a block from the train museum in downtown Duluth. I've taken the liberty to reserve twenty-five rooms under the name of "The Crooks Family Reunion". When making your reservations, please identify our function so that you can get one of the rooms that has been blocked.

Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites  
200 West First Street  
Duluth, MN 55802-1952  
1-800-477-7089 or 218-722-1202

Also, I've booked a hospitality suite so that we will have a place to meet and gather while in Duluth. *(Note: During this week, there is also a planned Minnesota National Guard State Softball Tournament. I was told that rooms will go fast, so make your reservations early...)*

Wednesday will be a day to greet arriving family. Nothing special planned after our evening gathering at the Hospitality Suite.

Thursday, August 17th

10:00 AM Lake Superior Railroad Museum. We will visit the Wm. Crooks and tour the Museum. (1999 rates were \$8 for Adults). I've scheduled a photographer to be there to get not only our group picture, but individual family shots as well, if requested. This should take most the morning to explore this historical wonderland.

4:00 PM We will boarding the unique North Shore Scenic Railroad operating between Duluth and Two Harbors for a 2.5 hour train trip. (\$16 Adults) *Suggestion: Rent the dining car for \$400 (to be shared by all) and have hot Hors d'oeuvres served as we*



*travel. Cost per person for food would depend on number of attendees and the items ordered. They will supply a "No Host" cocktail bar at our request.*

Friday, August 18th

10:00 AM Check out of the Holiday Inn and head west to Crookston and Ox Cart Days. I also strongly recommend that you get reservations as early as possible in Crookston. My recommendation is that we stay at the AmericInn.

AmericInn  
1821 University Avenue  
Crookston, MN 56716  
1-800-634-3444 or 218-281-7800

There are only a few hotels in Crookston, and this is a very popular weekend. I was not able to block any rooms at the AmericInn. This is a newer hotel and the accommodations look great.

Friday night we will plan to participate in Ox Cart Days activities.

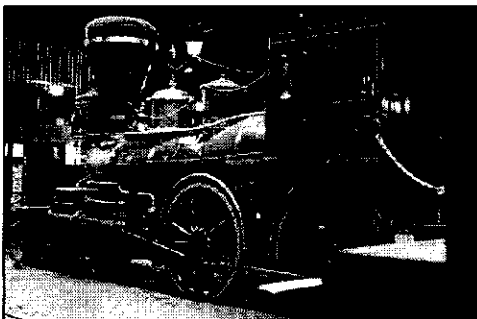
Saturday, August 19th

Again, we will participate in Ox Cart Days activities. *(Note: We've all been invited to participate in the evening's Trenchlight Parade. The City will provide some kind of transportation for us to ride the parade route. They are working on it at this time and awaiting a number of attendees so that they can plan accordingly. Also, at the suggestion of the City, I recommended that Bill Crooks serve as the Grand Marshal of the parade.)*

Sunday, August 20th

Depart for your home city at your leisure.

The overall impression of my brief trip was extremely favorable. A trip of this magnitude offers our family a unique opportunity to revive our interest and knowledge of our proud family history. My first sight of the Wm. Crooks was indeed profound. I took a moment and paused to view a significant symbol of history and our family's past. I don't think I shall ever forget my first sight of the engine - proudly perched on the rails for all to see and admire. It was quite a sight and hard for me to convey my feelings regarding that moment.



During the time we are on the trip, I would like to ask Jack Crooks, and any other interested individuals step-up and put on a presentation of Ramsey, William Crooks, and our entire family history to assist some of us "old-timers" and our new generation in the knowledge of these two great men of history.

It is now the time to pass the ball to all of you and your families. I would have to assume that you all

know by now my feelings and the tremendous educational benefit that this particular trip offers to all. On behalf of my family, I can say that we will all be there to relive our proud family heritage. If and when you make a decision, please drop me a note so that I can add your name to the mailing list. Also, please make copies of this letter and send along to all to read. I'll send out some more newsletters with additional trip information as we get closer to the trip and will also included the names of those that are planning to attend. Again, and I can not stress this enough, if you plan to attend, **make your reservations early**. If you will be arriving early in Duluth and would like to plan a round of golf, let me know so that I can make the appropriate reservations.

In closing, if you have any specific suggestions or comments regarding the gathering, send them along to me. I look forward to once again, "lighting the reunion lamp" in Duluth and Crookston, Minnesota - See you all in August, 2000...

Steve and Susan Crooks  
8151 Lakeview Court  
North Royalton, OH 44133-1212  
440-582-8918

E-Mail:  
Work: crookssr@bp.com  
Home: duckswa@gateway.net

**The Crooks Family Reunion**  
**August 16 - 20, 2000**  
**Crookston - Duluth, MN.**

**Stephen R. Crooks**  
Real Estate Governmental Affairs

**BP Amoco**  
Midwest Business Center  
4850 East 49<sup>th</sup> Street: MBC1-J  
Cuyahoga Hts., OH 44125

Phone: (216)271-8837  
Fax: (216)271-8244  
Internet: crookssr@bp.com

January 17, 2000

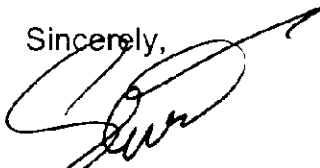
Wayne Knauf  
1714 Willow Point Court  
Lodi, CA 95242

RE: **Crooks Family Reunion**  
**August 16 - 20<sup>th</sup>, 2000**

Dear Wayne:

My Dad asked me to pass on this trip information to you. If you've got any questions, please feel free to drop me a note. Hope you can arrange your schedule to join us...

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Crooks', with a large, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the signature.

S. R. Crooks

**Wayne Knauf**

---

**From:** Crooks, Stephen R <CrooksSR@BP.COM>  
**To:** 'Wayne Knauf' <wknauf@lodinet.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 31, 2000 11:54 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Crookston

Wayne: The address I have for Jack is as follows:

Jack Crooks  
3933 E. Burnside Street  
Portland, OR 97216  
Steve  
4850 East 49th Street MBC1-J  
Cuyahoga Hts., OH. 44125  
Phone: 216-271-8837  
Fax: 216-271-8244

> \_\_\_\_\_  
> **From:** Wayne Knauf[SMTP:wknauf@lodinet.com]  
> **Sent:** Monday, January 31, 2000 12:46 PM  
> **To:** Crooks, Stephen R  
> **Cc:** Charles Crooks  
> **Subject:** Re: Crookston  
>  
> Steve would it be possible to correspond with the Crook's historian? WK  
> — Original Message —  
> **From:** Crooks, Stephen R <CrooksSR@BP.COM>  
> **To:** <wknauf@lodinet.com>  
> **Cc:** 'E-Mail: Dad' <chasret@webtv.net>  
> **Sent:** Monday, January 31, 2000 3:36 AM  
> **Subject:** Crookston  
>  
>  
> > Wayne: Thanks for the thoughtful note... Look forward to seeing you  
> this  
> > summer in Minnesota...  
> > Steve  
> > 4850 East 49th Street MBC1-J  
> > Cuyahoga Hts., OH. 44125  
> > Phone: 216-271-8837  
> > Fax: 216-271-8244  
>

**BP Amoco**



13 1/2 X 8 base  
18" high  
diag 16"  
C H. VALTOM.

**PUTNAM  
INVESTMENTS**



Mr. Russell Sunder  
320 Gorgas Avenue  
Crookston, MN 56716-1852

RE Crooks Family Reunion  
Crookston, MN

Dear Russell:

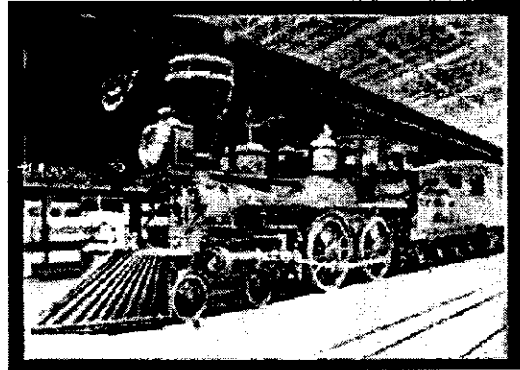
What a wonderful surprise it was to receive your letter. When I traveled to Crookston last year for my first visit, everyone was so nice, your letter only re-enforces my initial discovery about folks in the Red River Valley. Can't wait until it's time to return with our family to see and learn more about your great part of Minnesota.

Jeannine Windels recently sent me an e-mail asking if our family still intends to travel to Crookston as part of our family reunion in August. I wrote and told her that, yes, we are coming to share in Crookston's celebration and Ox Cart Days. In recommending this trip to our family, I came to the sad conclusion that I had never seen the *Wm. Crooks* locomotive in Duluth. In addition, a great majority of our family had never visited Crookston, William Crooks' namesake. What a great opportunity a trip of this magnitude presented. Many of our family still resides in the Great Pacific Northwest, and other places throughout the west coast. Travel will be difficult for many, but the opportunity to relive our proud heritage has been warmly received by our entire family.

I've forwarded a copy of your kind letter to our unofficial family historian, Jack Crooks in Portland, Oregon. I know that he and my father Charles Crooks of Sacramento, along with many other family members would treasure the opportunity to meet and visit with you during our trip. Again, thank you for your correspondence - See you in Crookston...

Sincerely,

# CROOKSTON 2000...



The William Crooks - Union Depot, Duluth, MN.

Newsletter III

North Royalton, Ohio

April, 2000

My Dear Friends and Family:

April is here and it's time for another Reunion Update...

## **Reservations...**

Please, if you are planning to attend the Crookston 2000 Reunion, make your hotel reservations now... I checked last week and the rooms are almost gone at both the recommended hotels. When making reservations, tell the operator that you are attending the Crooks Family Reunion. We were not able to block any rooms due to the many events that are planned in these areas for August.

Please do not assume that rooms have been reserved for you. The dates targeted are Wednesday, August 16<sup>th</sup> arrival date in Duluth. Depart on Friday, August 18<sup>th</sup> for Crookston. Again, the hotels are:

Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites  
200 West First Street  
Duluth, MN 55802-1952  
1-800-477-7089 or 218-722-1202

AmericInn  
1821 University Avenue  
Crookston, MN 56716  
1-800-634-3444 or 218-281-7800

## **Crookston Chamber of Commerce**

The theme of this year's Ox Cart Day's will be "We Are Family". Jeannine Windels, President of the Crookston Chamber of Commerce writes in a recent e-mail:

*...We have selected "We Are Family"... in recognition of the Crooks Family. The parade is Saturday evening at 7:30 PM and we would be honored to have*

*William Crooks as the Grand Marshall. We can also provide a flatbed or wagon if the whole family would like to make a float and be part of the parade.*



### **Reunion Update...**

First let me personally extend my sincere thanks to Mary and Howard Forkash of Ashland, Oregon. Although they will not be able to attend the reunion in person, they forwarded a check in the amount of \$200 to help pay for chartering the dinning car on our train excursion in Duluth... Many thanks for your kindness. Mary and Howard we will miss you...

### **Contact with the Just Family**

News of our gathering has reached the Just Family. (My Grandfather Paul Crooks' sister was Marie Crooks Just). Per Jim Just of Vrona, Wisconsin perhaps some of his family members will be able to attend in Crookston. What an outstanding opportunity to re-establish contact with more members of our extended family...

### **Local Crookston Author Makes Contact**

I have received a letter from Russ Sundet of Crookston. He authored a booklet concerning the early history of Crookston. He states that he is extremely excited to say hello and visit while we are in town...

### **I Need Your Help...**

If you can, please make copies of this newsletter and forward to all the members of your family. Then, if you can drop me a note and let me know a count and names of those attending, it would assist me a great deal in making arrangements for our gathering. Without a final count, it will be difficult to prepare for our reunion. Thank You...

Any questions or suggestions, please forward them along with a count and names of those planning to attend. And please - don't forget to make your reservations as quickly as possible. I'll try to get out one more letter before August...

Steve and Susan Crooks  
8151 Lakeview Court  
North Royalton, OH 44133-1212  
440-582-8918  
E-Mail:  
Work: [crookssr@bp.com](mailto:crookssr@bp.com)  
Home: [duckswa@gateway.net](mailto:duckswa@gateway.net)

*The Crooks Family Reunion*

**August 19 - 22, 2000**

*Crookston - Duluth, MN.*

**Wayne Knauf**

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**From:** Chas Crooks <chasret@webtv.net>  
**To:** Wayne Knauf <wknauf@lodinet.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2000 9:16 AM  
**Subject:** Re: Travel next week to Vancouver

Received your E Mail OK Have a great trip to Vancouver sounds interesting Only name I CAN add is Gabriel Franchere He was also a member of the Astor group and a friend of me and your Grandfathers....I WAS also 3rd Officer On a Liberty ship that carries his name, sailed from Oregon ship yards on Dec 31 63' I also have been down with Rhumatoid Arthritis since my reurn from Portland , Ore. No relief as yet hands wrists.shoulder. ankles trying about everything. will keep you advised. Give mea call upon your return, HOPE YOU ARE DOING BETTER than I am in the Market. I dont look for much as long as Greenspab is in control of the Market. have a good trip and congratulations onthe new truck Ill be anxious to see it Regards Chas.

05/22/2000





## Book Review

David Lavendar, **Fist in the Wilderness**. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, reprint © 1998 (1964) paper, Bison Books, maps, index, Bibliography.

This is the story of the American Fur Company as told through the eyes of Ramsay Crooks. A very novel idea for writing history by David Lavendar. So it reads like an historical novel. Ramsay Crooks the young Scotsman began his trading career in 1805 at Michilimackinac [Mackinac] Island located in the narrow straight between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. Here trade goods made their way west while furs moved east. It was one of the battlefields of the War of 1812. From his duties as field manager, Ramsay would rise in 1834 to the presidency of John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company.

Another theme is the Indian problem which was woven into our national fabric. It had contradictory complexities. The slowness and labor intensive transportation and economy of goods from Britain to America and on to Indian territories was part of this matrix. Europeans provided a nearly naked people with guns and knives for hunting and warfare, cloth for convenience, silver ear lobes and blue beads for prestige, and whisky for euphoria.

Government roles and trade tugged from French Canadians (Montreal), to Hudson's Bay Company (British), to American (New York and later St. Louis). The War of 1812, import restrictions, tariff laws, the financial influence and backing of John Jacob Astor bore into the presidency of Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and the corresponding Congresses. Border disputes frequently arose in the frontier territories straining company, Indian, national and individual rights and lives.

Through the field work of Crooks, Astor was able to move vast concentrations of capital to expand and control economic ventures other men had opened. In this manner the American Fur Company became the strongest in the wilderness. When the northeast and midwest came under control and depleted of furs, William Ashley ventured up the Missouri in 1823. His party and future groups met fierce Indian opposition which was now well established in Indian folk lore by all of the previous years of negative interaction with the Europeans. Jedediah Smith pioneered the way west on land by re-discovery of South Pass from east to west. The pass had first been found by Ramsay Crooks 1812, during his eastbound return from the Columbia River (Astoria). The American Fur Company through the years under Ramsay Crooks and John Jacob Astor continued the economic pattern of small companies being overwhelmed by larger capital resources. The practice lasted into the 1830 decade.

David Lavendar has written serious, documented history in the manner of a novel. The story follows Ramsay Crooks and the many other notables who lived, trapped and forged their way onto the new frontier at a daring time against very difficult odds. It is a landmark document in the study of the fur trade era. A must read for scholars.

-Haworth Clover, Ed. D., reviewer

Charlie  
Have you seen this Book  
I am going to get a copy if  
you want I will get you one.  
I have another on Gabriel Franchère.  
I will bring it next time we get together.  
Lunch?  
WJ

OK AUG 03 2000

Jim Smith the Society wishes to thank you for all of your education and efforts in making this day and marker a reality. It is efforts such as yours that make our work possible in acknowledgment, education and making the public aware of the work of Jed and the Fur Trade Era in the opening of the west. We thank you for the time and interest that you have taken and are pleased to present to you the first Eager Beaver award of the 21st Century.

# 1209 339 0203

1. page

Fax Aug 5-00

Wayne thank you for the Fax on David Lavelar Book Review of First in the Wilderness - I had a copy of this book in 1964 In the process of our moving many times the book was lost. Yes I would like another copy, which I will reimburse you for.

As a matter of interest; when John C. Freemont the early Calif. Pioneer who was the First GOP candidate for President ran for OFFICE (was defeated) Claimed to have discovered the South Pass, It was proven that Ramsey Crooks discovered the Pass some 30 years earlier -

Also Gabriel Franchere who my great Grandfather hired, his name was carried by a Liberty Ship that was built at the Oregon Ship yards in 1943; I was appointed as 3rd OFFICER on this vessel, & took her out on her first cruise.

Give me a call when you return.

Regards

Chas  
4

**ERNST AND MATTISON**

DON A. ERNST  
RAYMOND E. MATTISON  
IDILIO A. "Ike" GONZALEZ  
CHRISTOPHER D. EDGINGTON

A LAW CORPORATION  
1020 Palm Street  
P. O. Box 1327  
San Luis Obispo, California 93406  
Tel: (805) 541-0300  
Fax: (805) 541-5168

Founded 1980

SENT VIA FAX AND U. S. MAIL  
(209) 339-0803

September 12, 2002

Mr. Wayne Knauf  
1714 Willow Point Court  
Lodi, CA 95242

**Re: Mr. Charles Crooks**

Dear Mr. Knauf:

It was a pleasure speaking with you on Wednesday, September 11, 2002.

As we discussed, you are aware of the condition of Mr. Crooks both before and after his accident that took place on November 23, 2001.

Would you be kind enough to place in a letter your observations of the physical and mental condition of Mr. Crooks before the accident and compare it to what it has been since the accident? I am also interested in the knowledge you have about Mr. Crooks and the length of time you have known him.

This will be very helpful in the resolution of Mr. Crooks' case. I appreciate your courtesy and cooperation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact this office.

Sincerely,



DON A. ERNST  
DAE/sr

Don A. Ernst  
A Law Corporation  
1020 Palm Street  
P.O. Box 1327  
San Louis Obispo, Ca. 93406

September 17, 2002

Re: Mr. Charles Crooks

Dear Mr. Ernst

I have known Charles and his brothers for over a forty-year period. The Crooks brothers built roads for my employers Georgia Pacific, Louisiana Pacific and P & M Cedar Products. As Vice President, I was directly responsible for the negotiation and administration of these projects. All contracts were completed as agreed and in a timely manner.

As well as working with Charles we became close friends. Enjoying a mutual interest in WW 11 history and early NW history. Charles great grandfather and my great-great grandmother's first husband were at Fort Astoria Oregon in 1811.

In our retirement years, Charles and I traveled together for recreation and business. Attending several Reno Air shows, traveling on the liberty ship Jeremiah O'Brien, Reviewing and consulting on various Forest Service road projects. These trips evolved a good deal of walking and change in elevation [up and down].

When I first saw Charles after the accident of November 23, 2001, I could not believe the physical deterioration and lack of mobility. This was not the man I had known before the accident. Just walking to my vehicle was a question as if he would make it, let alone get in. It has saddened me to see my good friend in such a state. Knowing that before I could call upon him to join me in a trip to a museum, Ship open house, or industry road problem.

If I can be of any further help, please let me know.

Wayne Knauf  
1714 Willow Pt Ct  
Lodi, Ca. 95242

 SEP 17 2002

**Wayne Knauf**

---

**m:** "W.R.Swagerty" <wswagerty@uop.edu>  
**re:** "Wayne Knauf" <wknauf@lodinet.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 13, 2003 2:39 PM  
**Subject:** Re: American Fur Company  
 Thanks Wayne for the cc/

Quite willing to communicate with Mr. Crooks on what I take to be his ancestor, Ramsay. I have quite a lot of information in my archives on Crooks taken from original sources in Canada and the U.S.

John Talbot is coming to my West class next Tuesday. We will finish Daniel Boone and move on to Lewis and Clark. I have 8 students, each doing two mountain man reports; one lucky chap has Jed Smith; another Kit Carson, yet another A. P. Chouteau. I did not select Bernard Pratte as a "trader," but could have. ....all interesting but these are probably the best.

Share with Mr. Crooks if you like.

Bill

W. R. Swagerty  
 Director  
 John Muir Center for Environmental Studies  
 University of the Pacific  
 Stockton, CA 95211  
 (209) 946-2527  
 FAX 2099462578  
 wswagerty@uop.edu

— Original Message —

**rom:** Wayne Knauf  
**To:** Charles Crooks  
**Cc:** W. R. Swagerty  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 13, 2003 1:54 PM  
**Subject:** American Fur Company

By ground mail I am forwarding you a copy of "Records of the American Fur Company: Assessment of the significance for Hudson's Bay Company Research". given by William R Swagerty at the Rupert's Colloquium 1988. I am not sure that Bill is aware of the arranged marriage between Ramsay and Marianne Pratte and the close family ties between the fur companies in St Louis and perhaps the HBC. "They did business the old fashioned way"

WK