

Trappers, Traders, and Trailblazers: Mountain Men in the Rocky Mountain West

Buffalo Bill Center of the West
Skype in the Classroom Lesson Resource



Image 1: 19.98.1

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Note: The images and content in this resource are also presented and summarized in the presentation provided in the research section of our Skype in the Classroom page. This PowerPoint is appropriate to share with students to introduce content and ask thought-provoking and engaging questions.

Introduction: The Mountain Men

The words *mountain men* bring to mind the strong, rugged, independent adventurers of the vast Rocky Mountain wilderness. Mountain men lived a hard life, often struggling for survival.

The story of the mountain men began in 1804 when the Lewis and Clark Expedition set out. The United States had recently acquired the Louisiana Purchase. This territory was 800,000 square miles of mostly uncharted land west of the Mississippi River. President Thomas Jefferson named Captain Merriweather Lewis and Second Lieutenant William Clark the leaders of a Corps of Discovery. Their mission was to explore the portion of this territory along the Missouri River, looking for a navigable course to the Pacific Ocean. Lewis and Clark made careful notes about the plants and animals in the territory. They recorded information about the furbearers' valuable coats.

In the summer of 1806, the Lewis and Clark expedition headed home. John Colter, one of the members of the expedition, asked for and received an early discharge from the Corps of Discovery. He returned to the wilderness of the Rocky Mountains in what is now Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho to trap beaver for four more years. Colter explored country no white man had ever set foot upon and brought back stories of steamy geysers and boiling mud. Colter's contemporaries called this land "Colter's Hell". They did not believe such a place existed. More than fifteen years later, mountain man, Jim Bridger, also colorfully described this region, but many thought he was telling tales.

There were many hardships and dangers when traveling through this wilderness – the threat of attacks from Native Americans, the hazards of grizzly bears and quickly changing mountain weather,



Image 2: 3.78.19A

and the rugged mountain terrain. Early reports indicated that this wilderness was literally crawling with furbearing animals, especially beaver. These furs equaled money in the civilized world. For hundreds of years, well-to-do Europeans had made furs a part of their attire. Examples include: fur coats, cloaks, and robes; fur trim on dresses, collars, and bonnets; and men's top hats made from beaver fur. When Old World supplies of these furs depleted, Europeans looked to the North American continent for new sources. The French, and later the British, trapped beaver through areas of North America beginning in the 1600s. Their travels included:

- the northeast coast, into Hudson's Bay and the Great Lakes area; and
- across what is now the northern United States and southern Canada to the Pacific Ocean.

During this time, the Spanish ventured north from Mexico into what is now Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and California. The Russians crossed the Bering Strait to Alaska. The abundance of furs in these accessible areas left the more inaccessible center of the continent untapped until the United States acquired the land. American entrepreneurs were determined to capitalize on the furbearers.

Rumors of plentiful beaver, combined with initial reports by Lewis and Clark and the stories of John Colter, enticed more adventurers into the area. These early mountain men were self-sufficient for the following reasons:

- They could only take essential items that they were able to carry, and sometimes a packhorse or mule.
- They had to hunt for their food, build shelter, and repair their guns and traps.
- They had to mend and make their own clothes.
- They had to check their traps, prepare pelts daily, and haul the pelts out of the mountains.

Mountain men brought their pelts to St. Louis or one of the few trading posts along the Missouri River. Here they tried to sell enough pelts to outfit themselves for another year. However, all of this depended on their surviving the elements, the rugged terrain, wild animals, and relations with the American Indians. As many as one-fourth of the men who went into the mountains did not come out.

In 1822, the American fur trade changed drastically with the appearance of this advertisement in the February 13 *Missouri Gazette*:

To Enterprising Young Men. The subscriber wishes to engage ONE HUNDRED MEN, to ascend the river Missouri to its source, there to be employed for one, two, or three years.— For particulars, enquire of Major Andrew Henry, near the Lead Mines, in the County of Washington, (who will ascend with, and command the party) or to the subscriber at St. Louis.

Wm. H. Ashley.

Ashley and Henry brought the first large groups of trappers into the Rocky Mountains. They established forts for mountain men to sit out the winter months. The mountain men picked up supplies for each season's trapping and sold the previous season's pelts at these forts. In 1825, Ashley and Henry revolutionized the fur trade by bringing the market to the mountain men. That July, mountain men attended the first *rendezvous* on the Green River (Wyoming) in the heart of mountain man country. Trappers sold their furs, stocked up on the clothing, traded stories of adventures and new trapping grounds, and relaxed with their comrades. American Indians who had furs and hides to trade were also welcome at the rendezvous.

The year 1830 marked the decline of the mountain men. That summer William Sublette brought supplies to the rendezvous in wagons. These wagons had travelled into the supposedly impassable Rocky Mountains. Until this time, settlers made long sea voyages around the southern tip of South America to get to what is now Washington, Oregon, and California. If Sublette could get wagons through, so could settlers. Additionally, by the mid-1830s, silk top hats were replacing beaver felt top hats. Then, in 1837, a depression hit the nation. Most people were reluctant to spend money on luxury items like furs. Ultimately, the last rendezvous was in 1840.

The Rocky Mountain west was changing. A few mountain men stayed in the mountains and continued trapping. Others found new ways to earn a living by:

- hunting bigger game, such as buffalo, for hide coats and carriage robes;
- working as guides for scientific and military expeditions exploring and mapping the country where mountain men once trapped beaver;
- leading the wagon trains going West;

- establishing forts along the wagon roads, where they sold supplies, made repairs to damaged equipment, and provided safe shelter; and
- settling their own land and becoming farmers and ranchers.

The era of the mountain men lasted thirty-four years, with John Colter leading the way. In that time, the United States established its claim to nearly all land west of the Mississippi River. The mountain men have a legacy in this expansion and in what we learn about the West today. For example:

- Mountain men explored the Rocky Mountain area, as well as the southwest, which belonged to Spain at the time.
- The fur trade made St. Louis a major center of commerce.
- Restless settlers, lured by stories of rich farmland, followed the mountain men into the mountains and beyond.
- The stories the mountain men told of strange new sights, like the thermal features of Yellowstone and the Great Salt Lake, became part of American literature and art, as did the storytellers themselves.



Image 3: 5.71

Art of the Mountain Man

Artists have recorded the fascinating persona of the mountain man for years by transforming the hardy and uncivilized mountain men into daring and noble heroes. They emphasized a mountain man's willingness to face the unknown and his ability to self-sustain, despite the constant threat of danger. Artists depicted him as a free spirit, who lived according to his rules, while still vulnerable to the confines of nature. The laws of civilized life disenchanting people in the nineteenth century, so they admired these images of the mountain men. Many people from the East had never actually seen a mountain man. Artists created the following images of mountain men during the late nineteenth century and twentieth century. While each painting is unique, the paintings carry a single unifying theme of preserving the image of the mountain man.

Image 1



Frederic Remington completed this pen drawing, *French Trapper*, in 1891. Remington provided a detailed account of the mountain man's appearance in this drawing. For example, a mountain man always carried the necessary tools with him. These included his rifle, his tomahawk, and his **possibles bag**. A **possibles bag** carried the mountain man's necessities, such as knife and flint. In addition, the drawing illustrates how mountain men wore the clothing of the Native Americans. The mountain man in this image wore a warm fur hat that did not tear like the hats from the East. He wore a large coat made of skins, moccasins, and a belt around his waist to keep the coat from getting in his way. The mountain men carried several pairs because they were light and allowed him to change if one pair wore out. Mountain men often traded with Native Americans when his supplies were low. Although mountain men worked for fur companies from the East, they depended on the Native Americans for survival.

Image 4: 61.72

Image 2

The *Free Trapper*, painted by John Clymer in 1967, is a more modern painting looking back at the romantic image of the mountain man. The painting's title carries two messages: 1) this trapper was a free spirit; and 2) a "free trapper" was a trapper who worked for many fur companies. Clymer brings our attention to a man of nature, who is also a man with continued ties to civilization.



Image 5: 6.74

This painting shows the mountain man on horseback leading a packhorse. He was free to travel long distances with the help of the horse. The packhorse carried supplies and beaver pelts. Clymer tried to portray the mountain man as an explorer. The mountain man has turned his head to the mountainous landscape in the background. Clymer created depth within the frame using the strong diagonal lines made by the two fallen logs in the foreground. The angles that the mountain man and horses enter the scene form a diagonal line.

Introduction to Alfred Jacob Miller

Alfred Jacob Miller created many paintings reflecting the mountain man. Miller lived in the eastern United States. Captain William Drummond Stewart commissioned Miller during the late nineteenth century to travel west with him. Stewart felt it was necessary to record the mountain man's way of life pictorially before this adventurer was gone. Miller carefully studied and depicted the work, leisure, joys, and triumphs of the mountain man. He was the only artist ever to attend and depict a rendezvous. Miller was able to portray the mountain man in a way new to easterners.

Image 3

Image 6: 36.64



Alfred Jacob Miller completed *Louis—Rocky Mountain Trapper* in 1837. This watercolor is similar to Frederic Remington's drawing. They are both historical documentations of the mountain man's appearance. However, Miller's painting depicts a more personal account of a mountain man. This portrait reflects an acquaintance of Miller's, not a stereotypical mountain man. The man's foot is resting upon a buck, which represents his triumph over his kill. Mountain men depended on hunting for survival. Wild meat was often their only source of food. There is a strong triangular form created by Louis's stance, with the top of his hat at the top of the triangle. His legs create the sides of the triangle.

Image 4

Image 7: 11.70



Alfred Jacob Miller's original painting, *Our Camp*, depicts a rendezvous site in Wyoming. It is not a recreation of an event from a story told by someone else. The man in the foreground of the painting riding the white horse is Captain William Drummond Steward, a Scottish nobleman and adventurer who journeyed west with a caravan taking supplies to trappers. He brought Miller with him to document the trip. Alfred Jacob Miller made drawings and paintings, creating a record of the West at a time when few had seen it. This painting is in the Green River region of Wyoming. Rendezvous usually took

place in the summer on or around present day Green River, Wyoming, but there were others in Wyoming, Utah, and Idaho. Native Americans, suppliers, and trappers all attended the rendezvous. A mountain man could make anywhere from \$66 to over \$2,000 at a rendezvous. If they still lived back East they hoped to earn little more than \$1.50 a day.

Image 5

Alfred Jacob Miller painted *Trapper Saluting the Rocky Mountains* in 1864. Miller painted it when he returned home from the West. He depicted his memory of the West by presenting the awe and amazement a mountain man must have felt when encountering the grandeur of the Rocky Mountains for the first time. The figures seem small in the surrounding landscape. A subtle ray of light highlights the trappers as they pay a tribute to the Rocky Mountains. Miller shows the mountain man's respect for the wilderness and his knowledge of his natural place within it.



Image 8: 10.70

Image 6

Image 9: 18.77



W.H.D. Koerner created this painting, *Blackfoot Captive*, in 1931. It depicts the capture of a mountain man by warriors of the Blackfoot tribe. Some tribes, such as the Blackfeet, saw the mountain men as a threat to their way of life. They were prepared to do anything to protect this way of life. The Blackfeet captured mountain men, such as Jim Bridger and John Colter, both of whom escaped. Mountain men did make friends with many other American Indian tribes. They depended on these tribes for survival.

The winter season, as shown in this

painting, was the most important part of the mountain man's year because it was a good time to trap beaver.

Image 7



Harvey T. Dunn created *The Scout* in 1910. The painting gives a lasting impression of the nobility of the mountain man. After the beaver population drastically declined and their demand decreased, mountain men became guides or scouts for the traveling wagon trains heading to the West. The mountain man was the perfect candidate to lead the wagon trains to the best route to Oregon and California, because they had already explored its unknown territory and learned to survive in its hostile environment. *The Scout* shows the mountain man in the role of a scout. There is a wagon train behind the man and horse. The mountain man is turned in his saddle to look off in the distance. He holds his rifle up high, making a strong impression against the clear sky. His horse has its head down, creating an arching line from its head to its tail. The sun is behind the mountain man and the darkness of the form emphasizes the outline of this unique individual and courageous mountain man.

Image 10: 5.77

Beaver Trap

Blacksmiths in the eastern United States made *beaver traps* by hand. Traps were inexpensive to make, but in the mountains, they were worth as much as ten times their original cost. The mountain man took very good care of his traps, because they were expensive and vital to his livelihood. A mountain man usually owned six to eight traps, with each trap weighing up to ten pounds. He carried these with his other essential supplies.



Image 11

When a mountain man found a stream occupied by beavers, he took the following steps to set the trap.

1. Prepared the trap by pressing or stepping on the side springs and opening the jaws of the trap.
2. Placed the trap in shallow water.
3. Waded into deeper water with a stake and attached it to the trap by a chain.
4. Secured the stake in the deeper water.
5. Baited the trap with a willow twig coated with castoreum, a strong scented substance obtained from glands near the beaver's tail.
6. Waited for a beaver to smell and investigate the oil soaked willow.
7. When the beaver stepped in the trap, it closed on his foot.
8. The chain kept the beaver from getting away, causing it to drown.

The mountain men trapped beaver in the fall and spring months, when their pelts were at their finest. Mountain men spent a lot of time wading in ice-cold water, and often complained of rheumatism in their legs and feet.

Image 12



Beaver Pelt

The beaver skin, often referred to as a *plew* (/ploʊ/) by the mountain men, was the money of the Rocky Mountains. Traders marked Hudson Bay Blankets with lines that indicated their worth. For example, four lines indicated that a blanket cost four plews.

A mountain man checked his traps every day. When a trap had a beaver in it, he pulled it to shore to retrieve the beaver and reset his trap. He took the following steps to prepare the fur for delivery to the rendezvous.

1. The mountain man removed the skin from the beaver and scraped any flesh and fat from the inside. He completed this task on the same day he released the beaver from the trap.
2. Then he tied the fur along the edges of a willow branch bent into a circle. This method stretched the hides while they dried, and ensured that that pelts were nearly round.
3. When the pelt was dry, the mountain man folded and packed it into a bundle with 50 to 100 other plews.
4. He then wrapped the bundle with deerskin to keep the pelts clean, and stored the completed bundle in a prepared hole in the ground until the rendezvous in the summer. A bundle of pelts could weigh up to 100 pounds and was worth up to \$600.

Manufacturers generally used the beaver pelts to make fashionable men's beaver felt top hats. The steps manufacturers followed during this process include:

1. Cutting the hair off the skin.
2. Mixing and compacting the fur into a felt.
3. Steaming and forming it into a hat of the desired shape.

Some manufactures tanned the pelts and used the whole pelt for coats and trim on clothing.

Image 13



Possibles Bag



Image 14

The mountain man carried a leather pouch called a possibles bag. A possibles bag contained everything a mountain man needed to survive in the wilderness. He usually bought his possibles bag before heading into the wilderness. A mountain man might have brought his possibles bag from home, because some gunsmiths provided a bag with their rifles. The mountain man added the supplies he needed including:

- a metal tobacco tin with a glass disk (started fires on a sunny day) to hold tobacco or the piece of flint and steel strikers used for starting fires
- a spoon made from cow or buffalo horn and a crude fork
- a few glass beads and other trinkets for trade with the American Indians

To start a fire with a flint and striker, the mountain man first prepared a nest of dry grass or other dry materials. He placed a piece of *charcloth* (partially burned or charred cloth), if it was available, at an angle to the flint to catch the spark. He then hit the edge of the flint nearest the charcloth with the striker. This created sparks that the charcloth or tinder nest caught. He then blew lightly on the sparks until the added tinder caught fire.



Image 15

Trade Goods

Mountain men frequently encountered American Indian tribes in their trapping areas. Friendly tribes were eager to acquire some of the *trade goods* the mountain men brought with them. The mountain men also wanted items, such as fur and new clothing, that the American Indians had available. New businesses supplied the mountain men with products the American Indians wanted. These companies imported glass beads from Italy. The beads were popular with the American Indians, because they came in colors they could not duplicate naturally. Brass bells and tin cones also made pretty and pleasant-sounding decorations on their clothing. Wool blankets came in vivid colors and were as warm as a heavy buffalo hide. Metal knives and tomahawks were better and easier to use than their stone counterparts. Cast iron cooking pots and brass pails were sturdier containers than the animal stomach pouches the American Indians used.



Image 16

Blanket Capote (ka-poat)

The Hudson's Bay or Whitney blanket was one of the more popular and functional trade items. Manufacturers made both of these blankets in England for the fur trade. American manufacturers tried to duplicate these blankets, but people generally considered their products inferior. Mountain men and American Indians both preferred the British blankets. These wool blankets were as warm as a buffalo robe and much lighter to carry.

When a mountain man's store-bought coat wore out, he or an American Indian made a new coat, called a *capote*, out of a blanket. The mountain man used the "tails" on the hood for decoration as well as a tie to secure the hood under his chin and to protect his neck from the cold. The mountain man wore his regular belt over the capote. This kept his knife and tomahawk accessible, even when he was bundled up against the winter weather.

The capote was also the mountain man's blanket when he slept. Additionally, he used blankets for rifle covers, hats, and sometimes pant legs. Wool cloth dried much faster than leather after a mountain man waded through a mountain stream. The short black stripes on the edge of the blanket indicated how many beaver pelts they could trade for that blanket – four strips meant the blanket was worth four beaver skins.



Image 17: NA.202.449



Image 18: NA.202.481

Clothing

The mountain man wore clothing that was similar to what men wore in the United States at that time. For example, they wore cloth shirts of muslin, calico, or homespun materials; cloth pants; and leather shoes or boots. When these clothes wore out, the mountain man used his old clothes for a pattern to make new garments out of the tanned hides of the deer, elk, moose, and buffalo he hunted. He might also have enlisted the help of an American Indian woman to make his clothes. Occasionally a mountain man adopted the loose buckskin shirt, leggings, and breechcloth of the American Indians. However, most mountain men preferred the tailored clothing they were used to wearing. Boots were impossible to duplicate so the mountain man adopted the soft buckskin *moccasins* of the American Indians. Moccasins were easy to make, comfortable to wear, and lightweight to carry. Often, a mountain man packed a spare pair to change into after setting his traps in the cold streams.



Image 19: NA.202.588v2



Image 20 : NA.202.590

Knives

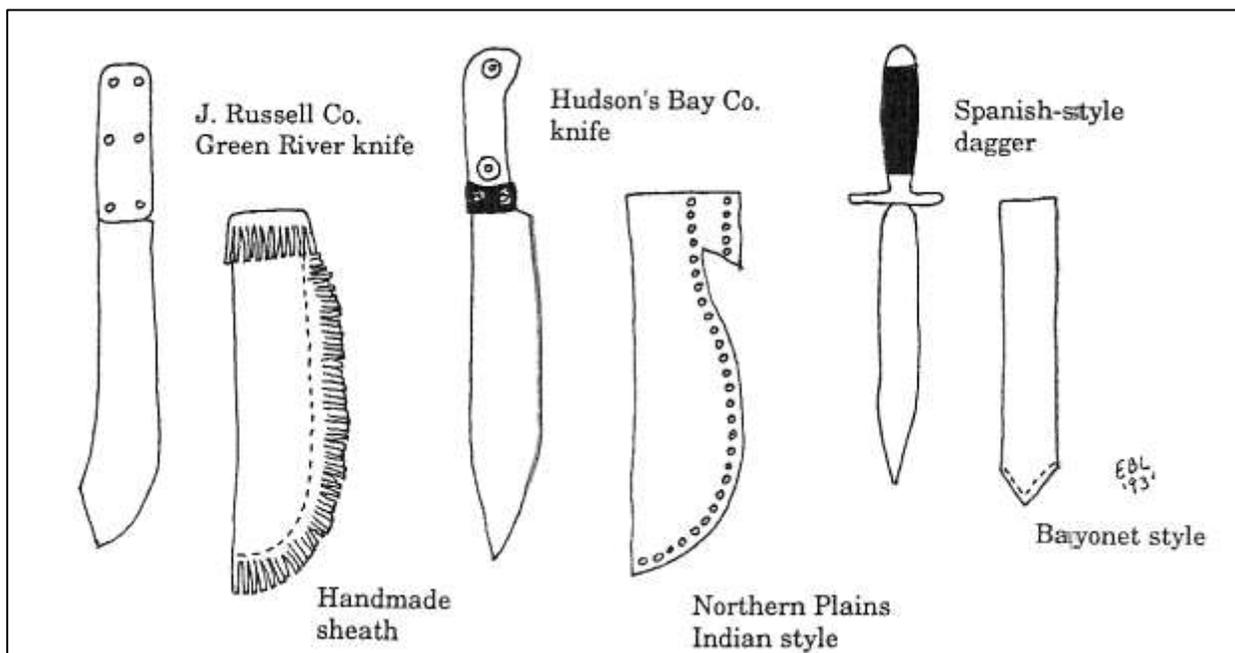
One or more knives were a vital part of the mountain man's essential gear. He used his knives for skinning beavers, cutting meat, and defending himself. His knife was especially useful in battle because his flintlock rifle only allowed one shot, making it a complicated process to reload and shoot his rifle.

There were numerous American and European knife makers at this time. The Hudson's Bay Company in Canada, an old fur trading business, had their own style of knife that was popular with trappers and American Indians. In the United States, John Russell's Green River knife factory in Massachusetts produced a popular knife towards the end of the mountain man era.

A mountain man chose a knife based on personal preferences. He brought knives with him from home, picked up new knives at forts and rendezvous, and traded with American Indians for knives they obtained from Canadians and Mexicans. It was possible that one man carried a Hudson's Bay knife from Canada, a Russell Company Green River knife from Massachusetts, and a Spanish-style dagger from far to the south.

Besides a wide variety of knives, there was also a selection of *sheaths*. Some knives came with factory-made leather sheaths. A mountain man also made his own sheaths in a style that suited him. American Indian-made sheaths were also popular. They decorated their sheaths with glass beads or brass tacks obtained from white traders.

Images 21 and 22



Tomahawks

Tomahawks were an essential supply for the mountain man. These small axes or hatchets were also popular trade items with the American Indians. Mountain men used the blade for chopping wood for fires and shelter, and for defense. The back of the head served as a hammer for pounding a stake that secured the chain on the beaver trap. The mountain man slipped the tomahawk's wood handle under the belt at their back. The tomahawk was out of the way but still accessible.

Many makers, including blacksmiths, in the United States and other countries made different styles of tomahawk heads. A mountain man might bring his own tomahawk from home, buy one at a trading post or at the rendezvous, or trade for one with the American Indians. For many years, the American Indians obtained various styles of tomahawks in trade from the French, British, and Spanish.



Image 23



Image 24

Flintlock Rifle

Local gunsmiths made guns by hand during the time of the mountain men. Each mountain man usually carried a gun of his choice. Later, guns were available at the rendezvous with one or two types of manufactured guns.

Many mountain men used the flintlock rifle, which only allowed one shot at a time. The process of using this rifle included the following steps:

1. The mountain man poured gunpowder from a horn flask down the rifle's barrel.
2. He placed a cloth patch containing a lead ball into the barrel and pushed it to the bottom with the ramrod.
3. He poured a small amount of gunpowder into a small pan on the side of the lock when he was ready to fire.
4. He lowered the steel striking plate over the pan.
5. He pulled the hammer back and squeezed the trigger.

The piece of flint in the hammer's jaws created sparks as it hit the steel plate over the pan.* One of these sparks ignited the powder in the pan. This spark travelled through a small hole in the lock plate, igniting the powder in the barrel. It exploded and shot the ball out of the barrel. It was extremely important that the mountain man keep his gunpowder dry, because wet gunpowder does not ignite.

The mountain man also carried the tools and supplies to keep his rifle working. **Powder horns** held gunpowder and kept it dry. Mountain men melted bars of lead over a fire in a special ladle. They then poured it into a small mold to make a rifle's balls. A blanket or deerskin cover kept their rifles protected. They kept extra flints handy if one broke or wore down.

Image 25

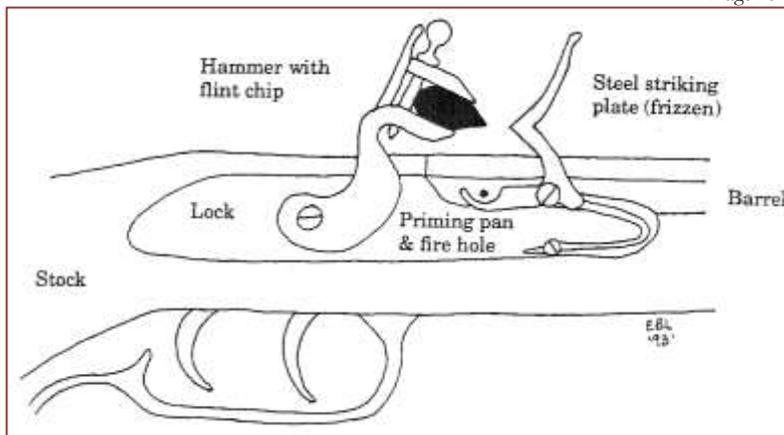


Image 26: 1.69.400.19



Hats

The mountain men brought their first hats from home, like much of their gear. These hats were straw or felt with wide brims protecting their heads from rain, snow, and sun. The hats wore out quickly, requiring the mountain men to make substitute headgear. One abundant raw material was animal skins. However, they rarely used the beaver because it was so valuable. The American Indians of the Rocky Mountain area often used animal skins as a head covering. Mountain men followed by making functional hats with a few cuts and quick stitches of tanned skunk, fox, raccoon, coyote, or a similar hide.



Image 27: 9.70

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The mountain man's life was a hard one, with danger always present. Yet, they learned to survive and grew to love the untamed country they called home.

Garst, Shannon. *Jim Bridger*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952.

Not recommended. Dated and inaccurate.

Kherdian, David. *Bridger: The Story of a Mountain Man*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1987.

This historical novel presents Jim Bridger's first two years as a mountain man. However, it does not mention Hugh Glass, the most important person in Bridger's life during those years. The short glossary is inadequate with some errors.

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A grizzly bear mauled and nearly killed Hugh Glass. His comrades left him alone to die. Glass survived, and went on to more adventures.

Paulson, Gary. *Hatchet*. New York: Macmillan, 1987.

Fiction. Thirteen-year-old Brian is on his way to visit his father in the Canadian wilderness when the small plane he is traveling on goes off course and crashes into a remote lake. He escapes from the sinking plane with the clothes he is wearing and a hatchet on his belt. Now, he must struggle to survive in this strange and dangerous environment.

Winders, Gertrude Hecker. *Jim Bridger, Mountain Boy*. Indianapolis & New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1955.

Not recommended. Dates and inaccurate.

Image Descriptions

Image 1: 19.98 – *Timber Jack Joe and His Fox* by James Bama

Image 2: 3.78.19A – Beaver Felt Hat

Image 3: 5.71 – *Mr. Mountain Man* by Richard V. Greeves

Image 4: 61.72 – *French Trapper* by Frederic Remington

Image 5: 6.74 – *The Free Trapper* by John Clymer

Image 6: 36.64 – *Louis—Rocky Mountain Trapper* by Alfred Jacob Miller

Image 7: 11.70 – *Our Camp* by Alfred Jacob Miller

Image 8: 10.70 – *Trapper Saluting the Rocky Mountains* by Alfred Jacob Miller

Image 9: 18.77 – *Blackfoot Captive* by W.H.D. Koerner

Image 10: 5.77 – *The Scout* by Harvey T. Dunn

Image 11: Beaver Trap

Image 12: Beaver Trap

Image 13: Beaver pelt or plew on willow branches bent in circle

Image 14: Possibles bag

Image 15: Tobacco tin, striker, and flint

Image 16: Trade goods (beads) from possibles bag

Image 17: NA.202.449 – Hudson Bay Four Point Blanket

Image 18: NA.202.481 – Capote

Image 19: NA.202.588v2 – Mountain man's shirt

Image 20: NA.202.590 – Mountain man's coat

Image 21: Mountain man's knife

Image 22: Sample illustrations of mountain men's knives

Image 23: Tomahawk

Image 24: Close up tomahawk blade

Image 25: Illustration of flintlock rifle's mechanism

Image 26: 1.69.400.19 – Powder horn

Image 27: 9.70 – *The Lost Greenhorn* by Alfred Jacob Miller

Glossary

Beaver traps: equipment used by mountain men to trap beaver

Capote: a mountain man's jacket made from a wool blanket

Charcloth: partially burned or charred cloth used by mountain men to help start a fire

Moccasins: soft buckskin shoes of the American Indians and adopted by the mountain men

Plew (/ploo/): word mountain men used to refer to a beaver skin

Possibles bag: carried the mountain man's necessities, such as a knife, flint, trade items, spoon, and fork

Powder horns: storage device for gunpowder

Rendezvous: gathering of mountain men, American Indians, fur companies, and suppliers in the summer

Sheaths: protective cases for knives

Tomahawks: small axes or hatchets used by the mountain men

Trade goods: the items that mountain men and American Indians exchanged with each other