

Buffalo Bill Historical Center: A Scot in Wyoming: William Drummond Stewart Vignette, by Jeremy Johnston & Chris Dixon:

While many Scots came to America to begin a new life for themselves and their families, a few traveled to the West just for adventure and sport. Such was the case for William Drummond Stewart, who arrived in what is now Wyoming in 1833. When his father passed away, Stewart inherited £3,000; however, much to his frustration, his older brother was entrusted with the administration and distribution of his inheritance. Stewart's life also became more complicated when his liaison with a friend's servant girl resulted in the unplanned birth of his son George. He married the young lady and secured a residence for her and their son in Edinburgh, Scotland, occasionally visiting them between his various adventures.

Frustrated with his brother's control of his inheritance and the management of the family's estate, Stewart escaped across the Atlantic, where he discovered the exciting lifestyle of the American fur trader and encountered many noted frontiersmen including William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery. In 1833, Stewart paid \$500 to accompany the freighting firm of Sublette and Campbell in their delivery of goods to a site on the Green River in Wyoming for the annual rendezvous.

Dr. Benjamin Harrison, the son of future President of the United States William Henry Harrison—whose mother Elizabeth Ramsey Irwin was of Scots-Irish descent—also joined the entourage after his father encouraged him to seek adventure in the West in the hope that the trip would cure the younger Harrison's drinking problem. Stewart gained the respect of his fellow travelers despite donning formal hunting outfits that greatly amused the trappers.

In the next few years, Stewart found himself in the middle of a number of exciting and historical episodes in the West. First, at the 1833 Green River Rendezvous, a rabid dog bit one of his companions. Shortly after that, his party lost their horses and most of their equipment to a band of Crow raiders. He later met Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spaulding at another rendezvous, the first white women to cross South Pass, Wyoming, and travel overland to Oregon—an event then viewed as a significant landmark in opening emigration to Oregon Territory.

At yet another rendezvous, Stewart witnessed an operation conducted by Dr. Marcus Whitman to remove an imbedded Blackfoot arrowhead from the back of famed mountain man Jim Bridger. During the 1837 Rendezvous, Stewart presented Bridger with polished steel body armor and a plumed helmet, two elements of the uniform of the British Life Guards. Bridger put on the armor and helmet, and clanked around the rendezvous amusing his drunken companions and Alfred Jacob Miller, an artist in Stewart's employ, who sketched the unusual scene.

When he learned of his elder brother's death, Stewart returned to Scotland in 1839, but he was back in America in 1842 for a final get-together with his former rendezvous companions. Sir William Drummond Stewart spent the remainder of his life on his Scottish estate gazing upon the paintings of Alfred Jacob Miller and recalling his exciting days in Wyoming. He died in 1871.