

**FILSON CLUB PUBLICATIONS NO.13;
FIRST EXPLORATION OF KENTUCKY;
DOCTOR THOMAS WALKER'S
JOURNAL ALSO COLONEL
CHRISTOPHER GIST'S JOURNAL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649582938

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also Colonel Christopher Gist's Journal by Filson Club & J. Stoddard Johnston

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FILSON CLUB & J. STODDARD JOHNSTON

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First Explorations Of Kentucky

DOCTOR THOMAS WALKER'S JOURNAL

Of an Exploration of Kentucky in 1750, being the First Record of a White
Man's Visit to the Interior of that Territory, now first Published
Entire, with Notes and Biographical Sketch

ALSO

COLONEL CHRISTOPHER GIST'S JOURNAL

Of a Tour through Ohio and Kentucky in 1751, with Notes
and Sketch

BY

J. STODDARD JOHNSTON

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE FILSON CLUB



LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY
JOHN P. MORTON AND COMPANY
Printers to the Filson Club
1898

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1898

PREFACE.

WHEN explorations of the unknown wilderness west of the Alleghanies were begun a century and a half ago, it was customary for explorers to keep journals of what they saw and did. Some of these journals have been published, others remain in the original manuscripts, and yet others have perished. As a matter of course, where there are only the original manuscripts, they are not attainable except through the individual owners; and even of those that have been published, some have grown so scarce as to be practically inaccessible to the general reader. Some of these journals are too valuable as historic documents to continue of use to so few readers and to remain in such danger of being lost forever on account of their singleness or fewness of copies.

It is the purpose of The Filson Club to make selections from these journals, and from time to time to include them in its series of publications. Their appearance in this form will not only bring them within reach of the members of the Club and of the reading public, but will secure them against the destruction which has already overtaken many of them and which threatens the others with a like fate.

The earliest of these explorations, in what is now Kentucky, that are known to us by written records, were by Doctor Thomas Walker and Colonel Christopher Gist, about the middle of the last century. La Salle was probably the first white man to see this country, but he saw it from the Ohio River, which he conceived to be a trans-continental stream which might float him to the Pacific Ocean. He probably paid but little attention to the lands on either side of the river while descending it toward an imaginary China. His description of the Falls of the Ohio, which he reached in 1669, is sufficiently inaccurate to suggest that Kentucky lands were not of his seeking. Other explorers, as missionaries or traders, were on these rivers and lands before Walker and Gist, but they left no account of the country which has come down to us. Authoritative records of explorations in this region begin with the journal of Doctor Walker in 1750, and that of Colonel Gist in 1751. Walker went through the eastern part of what is now Kentucky, and Gist through the northeastern. Their combined explorations, therefore, acquaint us with a goodly portion of the State while in its original condition, inhabited only by savages and wild beasts. When these explorers were here, not a house had been built for habitation nor a field opened for cultivation by civilized man. The primeval forest, with its

mighty trees and awful shade, covered the whole land except where severed by rivers or interrupted by canebrakes and prairies. It is something to see this goodly land, wild, grand, and beautiful in its state of nature, and these journals are the medium through which the best view is to be had.

These journals have been edited for the thirteenth number of The Filson Club publications by Colonel J. Stoddard Johnston, Vice-President of the Club. His knowledge of the history of the country and his familiarity with its geography made him the man of all others for the work to be done. He had personally gone over parts of the routes of both Walker and Gist, and had familiarized himself with the records left by other explorers in the same country. He had left nothing undone to make himself master of his subject. As evidence of his exceptional qualifications as editor of these journals, it may be stated that in 1888 Mr. William C. Rives, a descendant of Doctor Walker, published a partial edition of his journal—partial because there were absent from it a number of pages of the original manuscript that could not then be found. In spite of these missing leaves, Colonel Johnston, with his superior knowledge of the country and its history, was able to follow the route of Doctor Walker through the State and supply missing names and facts. These

absent leaves have since been found, and confirm the route marked out by Colonel Johnston, as well as names and facts supplied by him. The Walker journal, as here published by The Filson Club, contains these missing leaves, and therefore for the first time appears in full as the author wrote it.

The foot-notes, the comments, and the appendices of Colonel Johnston will be found to be valuable additions to these journals. They explain much that the lapse of time and changes in the country had rendered obscure, and adapt the text of the eighteenth century to the readers of the nineteenth. It is believed that the reproduction of the journals of Walker and Gist as the thirteenth publication of The Filson Club will be accepted as a valuable contribution to our early knowledge of the country embraced, and especially of that part of it which has since become the State of Kentucky.

R. T. DURRETT,
President.

INTRODUCTION.

THE discovery of America four hundred years ago was an event not only remarkable for its influence upon human civilization, but also as indicating the ignorance of mankind, prior to that event, of the conformation of the globe and of the existence of so large a component of territory embraced in the Western Hemisphere. Grecian and Roman civilization had risen and perished; the Middle Ages had passed, and the revival of the arts and literature had set in; the empires of the East had become effete with age, and the wise men of the world believed that human knowledge had exhausted the field of inquiry, while yet the vast continents of America remained undiscovered. The event which brought them to light marked a new era in the world's history as distinct as the founding of Rome or the advent of the Christian era. The four centuries which have elapsed since Columbus sailed from Palos embrace a record in the progress of civilization before which all that preceded them appears as but the dawn of a brighter day. And yet, while the period during which this progress has reached the zenith of its present stage is small compared to the antecedent centuries, an analysis of the steps by which it has been attained will