



On the Upper Missouri: The Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz, 1851–1852

Rudolph Friederich Kurz, Carla Kelly

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In late 1846, Rudolph Friederich Kurz, a young and idealistic Swiss artist, came to the United States to study and paint American Indians. Because he also had to earn a living, he signed on with the Pierre Chouteau Jr. Company (commonly known as the American Fur Company) and traveled northward on the Missouri River to work as a clerk at Fort Berthold and Fort Union in present-day North Dakota. While living among fur traders and Indians of numerous tribes, Kurz filled a sketchbook and kept a detailed journal.

On the Upper Missouri, an abridged and annotated version of his journal, is an invaluable source for information about Fort Union, the fur trade industry, and Indians of the northern plains. For this edition, editor Carla Kelly has preserved Kurz's style but included only those portions of greatest interest to readers today: his lively and detailed observations of people and activities at the fort. The volume also features 97 black-and-white drawings from Kurz's sketchbook.

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