


919.

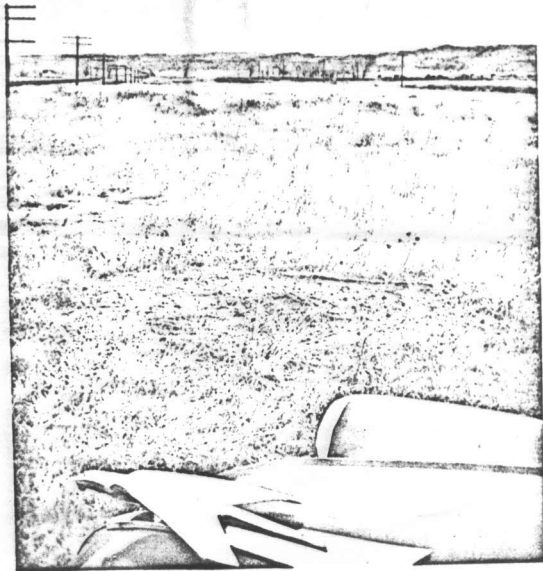
A SURVEY OF FORT VAN BUREN
(An early Montana trading post)

Ms., University of Montana Library, Missoula

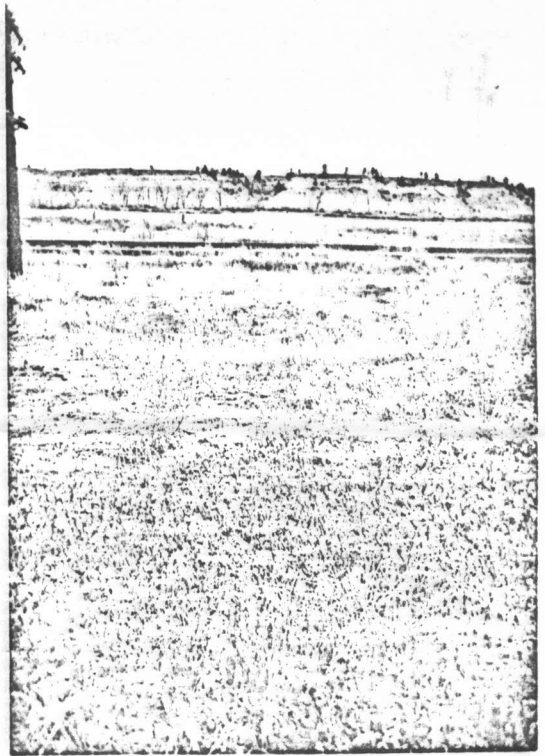
Fort Van Buren
(1835-1843)
Maynard Shumate

This American Fur Company post was built close to the south bank of the Yellowstone river, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles below the mouth of the Big Horn river. Today, the Yellowstone flows almost $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the north of it's former course, at the time of the fort's occupation. To reach the site of this fort drive $\frac{1}{2}$ mile down U.S. 10-12 toward Forsyth, from the town of Big Horn, Montana. When reaching a small R.R. overpass over a ditch proceed 150 feet northeast along the right of way, between the N. P. R.R. tracks and U.S. 10-12. At this point several depressions and a small mound will be noticed. This is a corner of Fort Van Buren all that is left, as the N.P. railroad tracks were built right through the fort. A number of seed beads were picked up on several ant hills inside of this corner. Test holes dug over the area around the depressions disclosed from 6 inches to 2 feet of a clay-like overburden. Beneath the latter was a burned fill in places and one hole was dug down to a depth of 5 feet, showing a very soft fill with large pieces of rotted wood and square cut nails. Found in the test holes dug were two antler horn tools and judging from their size they were probably prongs from an elk antler. One large obsidian side-scraper was found and a fragment from the bowl of a clay pipe. A few feet to the north from this corner of the fort the ground drops sharply about 6 feet, to the flood plain. Many fragments of adobe were found in the ground at this historic site. The condition of the adobe was very good still showing the impression of bark, wood grain, and imprint of logs. The adobe pieces were of a buff and grey colors and seemed to be almost as hard as concrete.


Seed beads found in ant hills at the site of Fort Van Buren



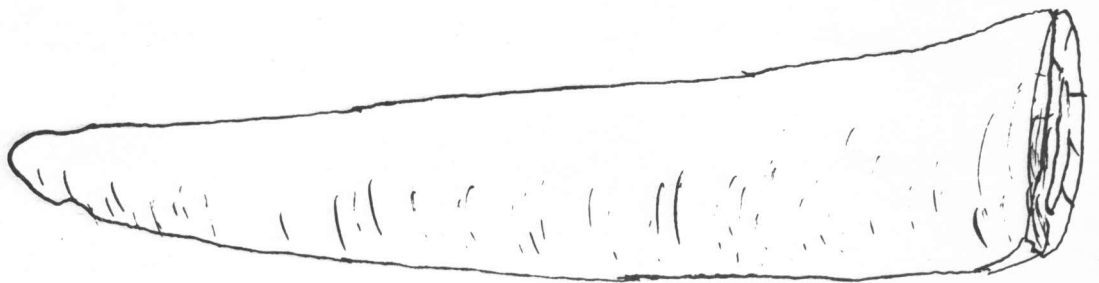
Northeast view of the Van Buren site from between the N.P. Ry. tracks and U.S. 10-12. An ant hill containing seed beads can be seen in the foreground.



North view of Van Buren. The depressions can be seen in front of the Ry. tracks and in the distance below the bluffs, flows the Yellowstone river.



fragment of pipe bowl



antler horn tool (actual size)