

EVANS, JOHN (1770 - 1799), traveller and Spanish colonial agent

Name: John Evans
Date of birth: 1770
Date of death: 1799
Parent: Anne Evans (née Dafydd)
Parent: Thomas Evans
Gender: Male
Occupation: traveller and Spanish colonial agent
Area of activity: Travel and Exploration
Author: David Williams

Born at Waunfawr, Caernarfonshire (christened 14 April 1770), son of Thomas Evans, a Methodist exhorter, and Anne, daughter of Evan Dafydd, also a Methodist exhorter. In 1792 he agreed to accompany **Edward Williams** (Iolo Morganwg) on a journey to visit the so-called 'Welsh Indians' who were reputed to be inhabiting the upper reaches of the Missouri. On Iolo's withdrawal from the enterprise, Evans proceeded alone, reaching Baltimore on 10 October 1792. He set out for the Far West in February 1793 via Philadelphia and Fort Pitt, descending the Ohio and ascending the Mississippi as far as St. Louis. The Spanish governor of St. Louis, Don Zenon Trudeau, regarded him with suspicion and detained him in prison, but he was eventually released, and, in August 1795, he accompanied James Mackay on the third expedition sent by the Spanish 'Missouri Company' to explore the river and find a way through the mountains to the Pacific coast. They spent the winter with the Mahas, and on 21 November Evans accompanied his hosts on a twenty-five days' buffalo hunt.

Early in February 1796 Evans was sent on by Mackay to dislodge the French-Canadians of the North West Company who had established a post on the Missouri among the Mandan. After proceeding overland for 300 miles he was forced to return because of an encounter with the Sioux. He set out again on 8 June and reached the Mandans on 23 September. He drove out the French Canadians, lowered the Union Jack, and hoisted the flag of Spain. Apart from one hunter (Jacques d'Eglise) he was the first white man to ascend the Missouri 1,800 miles above its junction with the Mississippi. He prepared an elaborate map of the river. After spending the winter among the Mandans he was forced to abandon the post and returned to St. Louis on 15 July 1797. He remained in the service of the Spanish Government, but died at New Orleans in May 1799.

Authors

Emeritus Professor David Williams, (1900 - 1978)

Revised by the editorial team, 2024

Sources

David Williams, 'John Evans's Strange Journey, part I, The Welsh Indians,' *American Historical Review*, January 1949

part II, 'Following the Trail,' *American Historical Review* April 1949

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [John Evans](#)

Additional Links

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