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MIGRATION ROUTES OF THE FUR-TRADERS AND VOYAGEURS THROUGH CANADA & THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST CORRIDOR (1497-1900 AD.)

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A. INTRODUCTION

No group is more responsible for foraging trails and expanding the West than the early immigrants that became fur-traders and voyageurs. Many were of French (France & Quebec) ancestry but not all as the fur trading companies had, later, an active part in hiring men from overseas to work in the New World, primarily from Scotland (the Orkney's), England, and Ireland.

In pursuit of furs, Europeans penetrated the rivers, the plains and the mountains of North America. Between 1530 and 1860 moving ever westward along some of the world's most spectacular waterways, they changed a continent, its people, and its wildlife forever.

Europeans proved woefully unprepared for survival in North America. The first 250 years of their contact with the North American native were fraught with disorientation, disaster and deprivation. Native North Americans provided guiding services, information, interpretation, clothing, medicine, and food, as well as wives and extended families. All of this was in addition to the prized furs that were the primary objects of early French and later British interests, after the cod fisheries.

Many of the earliest settlers into Quebec, Ontario, the Northwest Territories, the Pacific Coast and the Mississippi Valley, as well as elsewhere, were individuals connected in some way with the fur trade, and

many were of French or French-Canadian origin. Because they usually came as young unattached males, tracing their ancestry can be particularly challenging.

II. THE FRENCH RÉGIME

A. Beginning of the Fur Trade on the Atlantic Coast (1497-1600)

The fur trade in Canada began as an adjunct to the fishing industry. Early in the 16th century fishermen from NW Europe were taking rich catches of cod on the Grand Banks off Newfoundland and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, which was now being highly favoured by several southern European countries. Cod proved easy to fish, easy to keep and simple to ship back to their homelands. Drying their fish onshore, however, took several weeks, during which time good relations had to be maintained with the aboriginal peoples who were eager to obtain metal and cloth goods from the Europeans. All they had to offer in exchange were furs and fresh meat and this began in earnest in about 1534.

By 1545, the difficult climate, ignorance of the regions and its people and the hatred of the Iroquois towards the French convinced the French to end their first foray into the "new World" for a time. In addition, during this last half of the 16th century, the French court was focussed on other matters, including civil strife and wars with Spain. However, by the beginning of the 17th century they were back.

By now, the fishermen found an eager market in Europe for the abundant furs of North America and made high profits from them. When the wide-brimmed felt hat came into fashion later in the 16th century, the demand for beaver pelts increased tremendously. A flood of French Huguenot refugees had brought the art of hat-making to England and the rage in Stuart England was the beaver hat. To own a fine beaver hat was proof one's social standing. Thus, the large profits to be made in furs justified the French signing agreements that demanded the establishment of settlements in North America. Over the next 150 years, those two unsuitable partners - fur trade and settlement - would create a pattern of penetration of North America extending from Canada to Oregon and as far south as the Gulf of Mexico.

Unlike the Anglo-American occupation pattern of what is now the United States, which began with settlements on the Atlantic Coast and moved steadily from east to west in an irregular frontier of cleared land and almost continuous conflict with the original inhabitants, the French penetrated North America - both north and south of the 49th parallel - in a pattern that resembled the branches of a tree. Following the rivers and lakes, their forays inland began with the construction of a major post on a main river leading to the interior and continued with a series of smaller outposts on rivers that stretched far into the centre of the continent. Using Montréal on the St. Lawrence and New Orleans on the Mississippi, the French soon developed a network of trading posts that extended as far west as the plains of North and South Dakota and as far north as central Saskatchewan.

Unlike the English, the French, mainly, at least at first, were not interested in colonization. They recognized early that settlement and the fur trade business were diametrically opposed. Clear the land for agriculture and the animals disappear along with the forests. The French also realized that North American natives knew how to live and travel in their own lands and more rapidly than their British

counterparts. These attributes they, too, eagerly adopted and were also quick to learn new languages and marry into the local tribes, all unlike the English.

Great concern in both France and Québec soon arose. Rather than converting aboriginals to what they firmly believed was a superior culture and religion, the French found that a large proportion of their young men were instead adopting the ways of the people they came to convert. For a time, the missionaries tried to keep their charges apart, but this quickly failed, for the native North Americans were absolutely crucial to the trade in furs and everywhere the Récollets and later Jesuits established their missions, the traders built a fur post.

B. The Struggle for the Ottawa (1600-1663)

Early in the 17th century French traders established permanent shore bases in Acadia, a post at Tadoussac (Québec) in 1603 and in 1608 a base at Québec City to exploit the trade more effectively. The following year the Dutch began trading up the Hudson River (New York) and in 1614 established permanent trading posts at Manhattan and upriver at Orange (Albany). This activity marked the beginning of intense rivalry between two incipient commercial empires. During these years the number of traders flooding into the St. Lawrence region and cutthroat competition among them greatly reduced profits. In an attempt to impose order the French Crown granted monopolies of the trade to certain individuals. In return, these monopoly holders had to maintain French claims to the new lands and assist in the attempts of the Roman Catholic Church to convert the aboriginals to Christianity. Too, the aboriginals were not insensitive to the benefits of commerce and warred between each other for the status of "middlemen" with the French in this lucrative fur trade.

In 1627 Cardinal Richelieu, first minister of Louis XIII, organized the *Compagnie des Cent-associès* to put French territorial claims and the missionary drive on a firmer footing. Missionaries were sent out: in 1615, 4 Récollets, and in 1625 the first members of the powerful Society of Jesus (Jesuits) arrived at Québec. A mission base, Ste. Marie Among the Hurons, was established among the Huron near Georgian Bay, but the Huron were more interested in the trade goods of the French than in their religion. Yet it was fur-trade profits that sustained the missionaries and allowed the company to send hundreds of settlers to the colony.   In 1645 the company ceded control of the fur trade and colony's administration to the colonists. Unfortunately, they proved to be inept administrators and fur-trade returns fluctuated wildly as a result of an Iroquois blockage of the Ottawa River route to the West. Finally, after a desperate appeal by the colonial authorities to Louis XIV, in 1663 the Crown again took over the colony.

If the fledgling French colonies were to survive, the French court knew the funds had to come from the lucrative fur trade. As can be seen from this part excerpt from Charles Aubert de la Chesnaye to the French Court on the price of beaver in 1670 he writes. . .

> *"The only means of enabling the colony of Quebec in Canada to exist*
>
> *and thrive is to establish the beaver trade, its only source of income*
>
> *and money. Formerly, when the trade of this place was carried on by*
>
> *very few persons or by one company only, beaver was taken in payment,*

here, at the rate of 14 livres the pound, and in France was worth 201

and more. In the last 5 or 6 years, competition between the numerous

dealers has lowered the price to 41 the pound. . .The trade in all others

skins in Canada, such as elk, otter, marten, muskrat and fox would be

absolutely free, as only in the case of beaver is it necessary to centralize

the trade, so as to make it profitable. Otherwise, it is likely that the

colony of Canada will greatly suffer."

But the only people who could succeed in the trade in conditions that amounted to a blockade were those who knew the land intimately, who spoke native languages fluently and who could live like the North American native for months or even years at a time. Increasingly, these were French-Canadians, young men and independent free traders (*coureurs de bois*) of Breton or Norman stock, born in North America and at home in its untamed vastness. They were not, on the whole, the kind of men to whom New France granted its trading licenses and so an illicit trade soon grew-up.

By the mid-1600's there were problems with the English hat industry. It was dependent upon Russian furs and treatment techniques as well as Dutch control of the transportation routes to Russia. All of this changed with a fateful voyage by two disgruntled French adventurers. In 1666 the two *coureurs de bois*, Médard Chouart des Grosseilliers and Pierre Radisson, deserted New France with all its bureaucratic restrictions and made their way to London. On October 25th, they met with a very attentive Charles II and from that encounter flowed the royal prerogative that made possible the "*Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay*" - much better known as the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). A remarkable confluence of commercial and royal interests followed. For all intents and purposes, these mercantile concerns became English national interests and the HBC was an instrument of its foreign trade policy with London the epicentre of the fur trade. Its governors were the ultimate absentee landlords as for more than two centuries none of them travelled to North America to see the beaver that was the equivalent of gold until 1934.

C. The Struggle for the Great Lakes and Hudson Bay (1663-1713)

The main staple of the trade was still beaver for the hat industry. The French Ministry of Marine, responsible for colonial affairs, leased the West Indies trade, the African slave trade and the marketing of Canadian beaver and moose hides to the newly formed *Compangie des Indes Occidentales* - in reality a crown corporation. All permanent residents of the colony were permitted to trade for furs with the aboriginals but they had to sell the beaver and moose hides to the company at prices fixed by the Ministry of Marine. All other furs were traded on a free-market, thus the trade was not a monopoly, but the law of supply and demand had been suspended for beaver and moose hides.

Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the French Minister of Marine, hoped to see the Canadian economy diversified to produce raw materials for French industry, particularly timber, minerals and foodstuffs for the West

Indies plantations. Thousands of emigrants were shipped to Canada at the Crown's expense to bring the land into production. Colbert discovered that a sizeable proportion of the young men did not remain on the land but disappeared for years to trade with the aboriginals in their distant villages. The main reasons for this phenomenon were the assured profits in the trade and the imbalance of the sexes, which was so great that until about 1710 only about one man in seven could hope to find a wife - a necessity on a farm. In the interior, however, the traders quickly formed alliances with Indian women, whose economic skills facilitated adaptation by the French to wilderness life. By 1681 Colbert was forced to acknowledge the pull of the fur trade, and he inaugurated the *congé* system.   Each year up to twenty-five congés (licenses to trade) were to be issued by the governor and the intendant. Each congé allowed three men with one canoe to trade in the West. It was fondly hoped that the Canadians would wait their turn for a congé, thus leaving the colony only seventy-five men short each year.

The new system did little to reduce the number of men away from the settlements however (most of them illegally), and the amount of beaver pouring into Montréal continued to increase astronomically. By the 1690's the *Domaine de l'Occident* (Company of the Farm), which had been obliged to take over the beaver trade in 1674 from the defunct *Compagnie des Indes Occidentales*, was complaining of a huge glut. In 1696, in desperation, the Minister of Marine gave order to suspend the beaver trade, to stop the issuing of congés and to abandon all the French posts in the West, except Saint Louis des Illinois. This occurred while England and France were at war and the Canadians were engaged in a desperate struggle with the English colonies and their Iroquois allies. The governor and intendant at Québec protested vigorously, declaring that to abandon the posts meant abandoning the Indian allies, who would then go over the English. New France would be doomed. In addition, the English had been establishing since 1670 at posts on the Hudson Bay (HBC) and the western posts were essential to fend off that competition. The Minister of Marine was obliged to rescind his drastic orders and the beaver trade was resumed, for purely political reasons.

In 1700, on the eve of new hostilities, Louis XIV ordered the establishment of the new colony of Louisiana on the lower Mississippi River, settlement in the Illinois country and a garrisoned post at Detroit. The aim was to hem in the English colonies between the Allegheny Mountains and the Atlantic. This imperialist policy depended on the support of the Indian nations, and the fur trade was used to maintain their alliance.

D. The Expansion of Trade to the Saskatchewan and the Northwest (1713-1763)

In 1715 it was discovered that rodents and insects had consumed the glut of beaver fur in French warehouses. The market immediately revived. As an item on the balance sheet of French external trade, furs were minuscule, and their share was shrinking proportionately as trade in tropical produce and manufactured goods increased but it was the backbone of the Canadian economy.

Unlike the HBC with its monolithic structure, staffed by paid servants, in New France down to the early years of the 18th century the trade was carried on by scores of small partnerships. As the 18th century wore on and costs rose with distance, the trade came to be controlled by a small number of bourgeois, who hired hundreds of wage-earning voyageurs. Most companies consisted of 3 or 4 men who obtained from the authorities the lease on the trade at a specific post for 3 years; all members shared profits or losses proportional to the capital subscribed.

Between 1715 and the *Seven Years War* (1756-1763) the fur trade expanded greatly and served a variety of purposes - economic, political and scientific. Commissions were granted to Frenchmen to discover that overland route. These men were given command of vast western regions (some of which overlapped territory claimed by the British), with sole right to the fur trade. Out of their profits they had to pay the expenses of maintaining their posts and sending exploration parties west along the Missouri and Saskatchewan rivers. The Crown thereby made the fur trade pay the costs of its pursuit of science, and also maintained control over its subjects in the wilderness and its alliances with the Indian nations to exclude the English.

Throughout this period there was keen competition between the French-Canadian traders and the English HBC, with the Canadians taking the lion's share of the trade. They had many advantages: they controlled the main waterways throughout the West; they had a supply of the birch bark needed for canoes (something that the Anglo-Americans and the HBC men both lacked); many of their trade goods were preferred by the Indians; and they had good relations with the Indians, with whom they had developed extensive kinship ties. As well, attempts by the English of the Thirteen American Colonies to obtain more land for settlement by any means angered the Indians. On the other hand, the French did not covet Indian lands, but were determined to deny them to the English.

HBC traders made no real attempt to push their trade inland. Instead, they waited in their posts for the Indians to come to them. The Indians were astute enough to play the English and French off against each other by trading with both. The French dared not try to prevent Indians from taking some furs to the bay, but made sure to obtain the choice furs, leaving only the bulky, poor-quality ones to their rivals. In the St. Lawrence region, New York and Pennsylvania traders made little attempt to compete with the Canadians. Instead, they purchased furs clandestinely from the Montréal merchants. The illicit trade between Montréal and Albany also removed any incentive the New York traders might have had to compete with the Canadians in the West.

When the *Seven Years' War* began, the fur trade continued out of Montréal. The Indian nations had to be kept supplied, but the volume of exported furs steadily declined. Within a year of the French capitulation at Montréal in September 1760, the trade began to revive, largely supported by British capital and Canadian labour. Refer to Figure I or a depiction of the fur trade up to 1760.
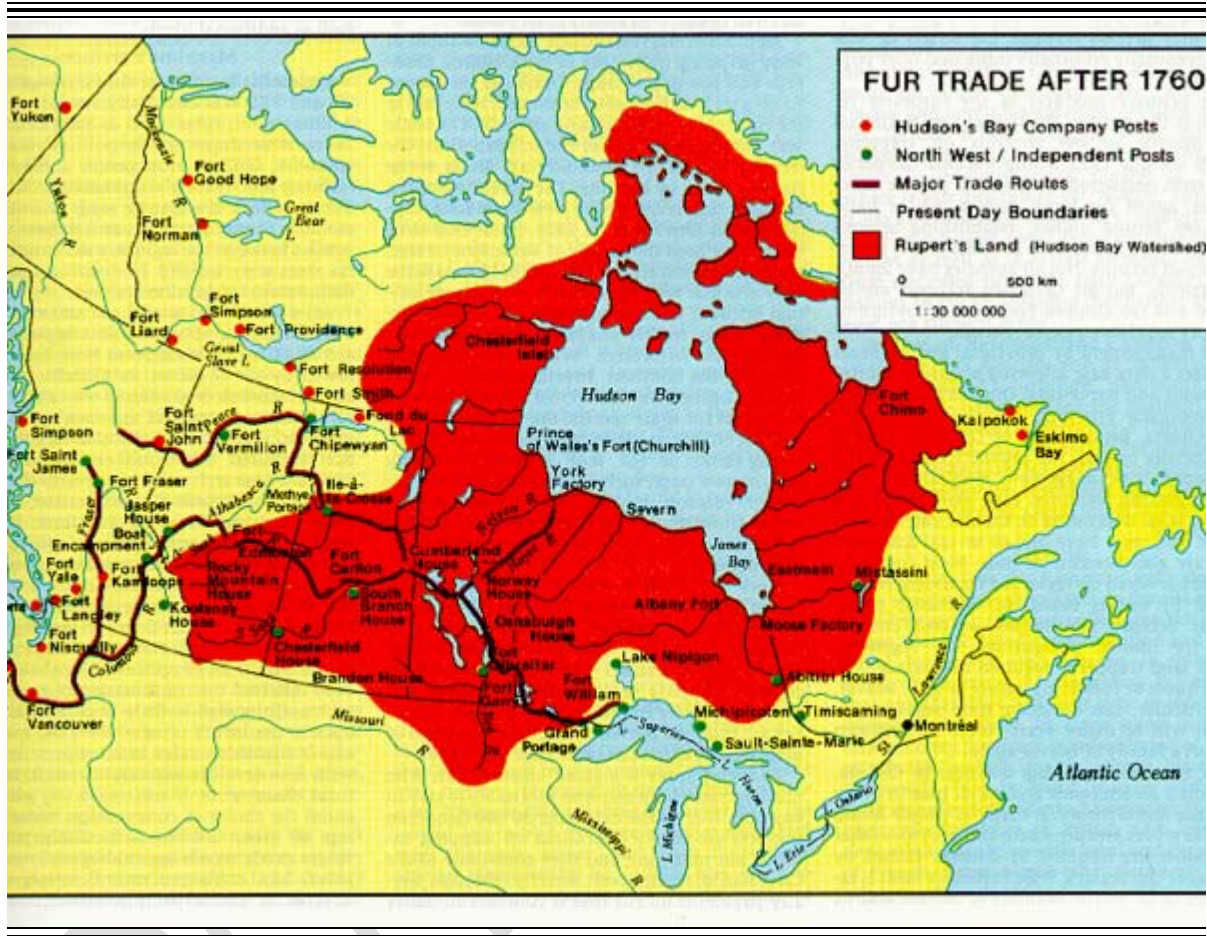
Figure 3 - The Fur Trade After 1760
from The Canadian Encyclopedia (Edmonton, AB: Hurtig Publishers, Ltd, 1985)

III. FUR TRADE AFTER 1760: FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC (1763-1821)

E. The Two Systems: St. Lawrence Drainage Basin versus Hudson Bay

At the time of the conquest, 1759-1760, two systems dominated the commercial fur trade of the northern half of the continent: the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes system, based at Montréal and extending to the upper reaches of the Mississippi River and its major northern tributaries, as well as to the prairies and the southern portion of the Canadian Shield; and the Rupert's Land system, which theoretically covered the whole region draining into Hudson and James bays. The St. Lawrence-Great Lakes system, developed by the French, had come to be served by the *en dérouine* (itinerant peddling) pattern of trade, a pattern in which the trade, dominated by many small partnerships, was conducted by parties of a few men sent out to do business with the Indians in their own territory. The Rupert's Land trading system, by contrast, had not evolved in the same manner; in 1760 the HBC's employees still followed the practice of remaining in their coastal "factories" (major trading posts), awaiting the arrival of Indians to trade.

After the Conquest, Anglo-Americans (sometimes referred to as Yankees, or Bastonnais), English and Highland Scots merchants supplanted the Canadian bourgeois and the agents of French merchants at Montréal. The success of its new rivals forced the company to alter its coast-factory trading policy, and in 1774 the HBC penetrated inland from the bay to found Cumberland House, close to the Saskatchewan River. For their part, the French pedlars learned that cooperation among themselves, rather than competition, was the road to commercial success. The resulting North West Company (NWC) rose rapidly to a position of dominance in the trade by gaining a *de facto* monopoly of the trade in the fur-rich area around Lake Athabasca.

To maintain its Athabasca monopoly the NWC competed, at a loss if necessary, with its opponents on the Saskatchewan River, around Lake Winnipeg and north of the Great Lakes. On the North Saskatchewan River, the rival companies leap-frogged westward past each other's posts in an attempt to gain a commercial advantage with the Indians. In all regions, small trading parties travelled inland to waylay Indians travelling to rivals' posts and, when necessary, to force them to trade. In this competition the HBC appeared disadvantaged in spite of its having a major *entrepôt* (depot), York Factory, on Hudson Bay, much closer to the fur-gathering areas than was the NWC's trans-shipment point of Montréal. The HBC lacked personnel and equipment equal to the task of inland travel and trade. Not until the 1790's did the HBC evolve the York boat brigade as an answer to its rival's partnerships'. Even then, improved equipment and personnel were not sufficient to turn the commercial tide in the company's favour.

Unlike the HBC, the NWC permitted all ranks to take Indian wives *(à la facon du pays)*, a policy that resulted in a certain stability and a sizeable Métis population by the early 19th century. However, it was the revitalization of the HBC, beginning in 1810, that ultimately defeated the NWC Figure 3 gives you some idea of the fur trade after 1760.

IV. FROM HUDSON BAY TO THE PACIFIC (1821-1869)

F. The Northern Department

By the turn of the 1800's the Canadian government passed legislation enabling it to offer an exclusive licence to trade for twenty-one years in those areas of British North America beyond settlement and outside Rupert's Land. In 1821 the two companies created the "Deed Poll," a document which outlined the terms of a coalition between the two companies, although what was a coalition in name became absorption by the HBC in fact when, in 1824, the board of management of NWC was eliminated. A majority of officers in the HBC after 1821 were former Nor'Westers.

The victorious HBC once again sought to increase its efficiency. Under the direction of Gov. George Simpson, then known as the "Little Emperor," the HBC achieved undreamed-of profits. In monitoring the costs of the trade, Simpson clearly saw the importance of providing support to the hunting and trapping Indians. In times of adversity the company offered medical services and sufficient supplies and provisions for the trapper and his family to survive. Yet in systematizing these services Simpson's policies led the Indians into an increasingly dependent relationship with the HBC. Simpson's reforms, however, allowed HBC expansion along the Pacific coast, northward to the Arctic and into the interior of previously largely ignored Labrador. Such a vast fur domain attracted rivals, however.
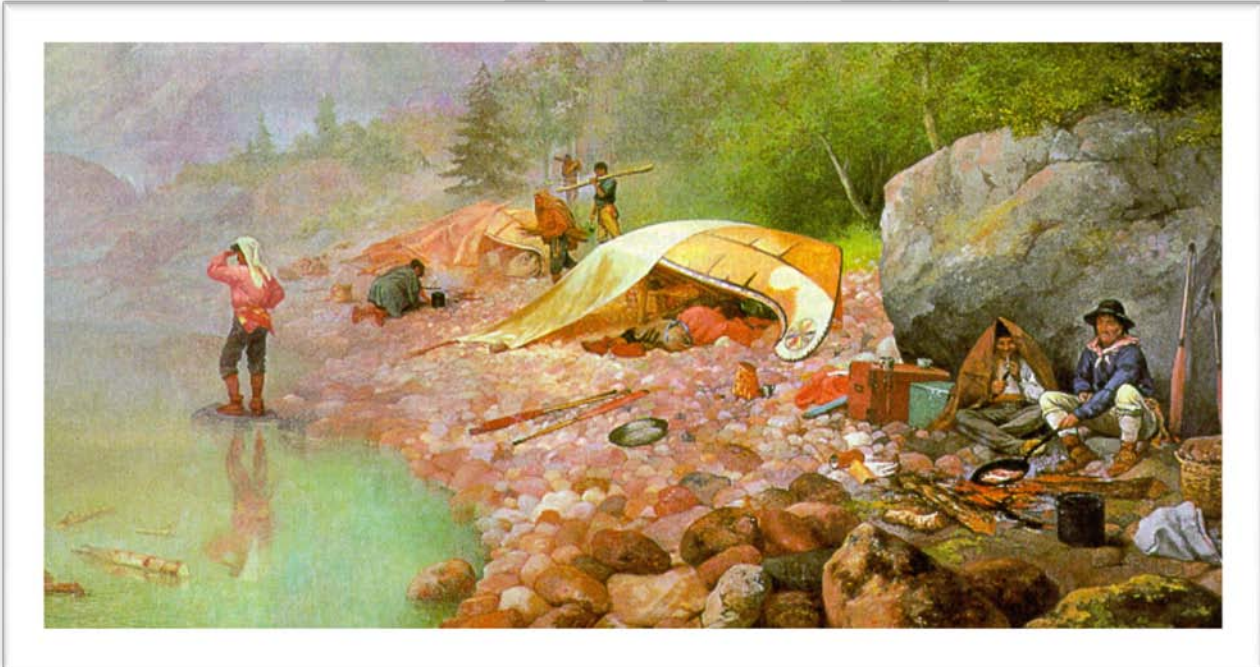

Figure 2 - Figure 12- Voyageurs at Dawn 1

Simpson's fundamental strategy was to meet competition in the frontier areas to preserve the trade of the interior and he could be ruthless as needed and vigorously pursued its competitors. Even when, in the 1830's, silk replaced felt as the favoured raw material in the manufacture of hats and beaver lost its value as a staple fur, the company maintained a profitable trade emphasizing fancy fur. Settlement, not commercial rivals, finally successfully challenged the company.

However, west of the Rocky Mountains, American settlers succeeded where their predecessors, the mountain men and the ships' captains, had failed. As a result of the Oregon Treaty of 1846 the HBC retreated north of the 49th parallel of latitude.

When the geographical isolation of the West was breached in the 1840's, metropolitan institutions other than the fur interests became involved in opening the vast wilderness. Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries who had appeared earlier now penetrated to the heart of the continent. They were followed by adventurers and government expeditions (e.g., the Palliser Expedition) seeking resources other than furs.

V. INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND THE FUR TRADE (1869-1929)

G. The Decline of a Monopoly

Simpson's death in 1860 and the sale in 1863 of the HBC to the International Financial Society, a British investment group that saw settlement as a source of profits, marked the beginning of the end of the historic fur trade. In 1870 the HBC's vast territory in the West was transferred to Canada, and what had been a trickle of settlers coming from Ontario soon became a flood. As settlement spread north and west, the HBC and rival free traders intensified the northward push of the trade, and eventually established enduring trading contacts with the Inuit.

In the face of competition and the presence of the Canadian government, the HBC reduced the support services that had been a part of its trading relationship with the Indians and had buffered the Indians against the swings of fur market demands in Western Europe. In the 20th century, fortunes in the fur trade came to reflect the swings of the market and the advent of fur farming. Increasingly the Indians looked to the missions and even more to the government for support in times of adversity.

Historically, however, the fur trade played a formative role in the creation of Canada. It provided the motive for the exploration of much of the country and remained the economic foundation for western Canada until about 1870. The fur trade also determined the relatively peaceful patterns of Indian-white relations in Canada. A central social aspect of this economic enterprise was extensive intermarriage between traders and native women, which gave rise to an indigenous fur-trade society that blended Indian and European customs and attitudes.

VI. MIGRATION ROUTES AND REASONS

Throughout the period of the historical fur trade, water routes were the natural "highways," and canoes (later boats - principally York boats) the vehicles. The placement of trading posts depended on the presence of numbers of Indians willing and able to trade, and on the ease of transportation to and from them. In the Atlantic region, the absence of a dominant river system resulted in only a localized traffic in furs; but the French tapped a vastly greater potential via the St. Lawrence River and its tributaries. Most important to the later trade was the route the French themselves developed to the west via the St.

Lawrence, Ottawa and French rivers; by the 1740's they had extended it to the head of Lake Superior and thence to the prairies from Fort William and beyond via Grand Portage to Lake Winnipeg, the two Saskatchewan Rivers and then through to Lake Athabasca. After the Conquest of 1759-1760 this route was adopted by Anglophone independent traders and then by the NWC.

The other major route was that of the London-based HBC through Hudson Bay. When that company began to move inland in 1774, with the construction of Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan River, most of its traffic inland was by the Hayes River from York Factory. In the direct competition that ensued between the HBC and other traders, the rivals paced one another westward across the prairies. Eventually the routes proceeded via the Howse, Athabasca and Yellowhead passes through the Rocky Mountains and down the Columbia River to the Pacific region. After 1814 HBC ships rounded Cape Horn to service Pacific posts by sea. As the more southerly trade declined, traders moved up the Mackenzie River into the western Arctic and from the east coast of Hudson Bay (East Main) further inland. Access to Fort Chimo and to other posts in Labrador was generally by sea. After the merger of the NWC and HBC in 1821, shipments through Montréal virtually ceased.
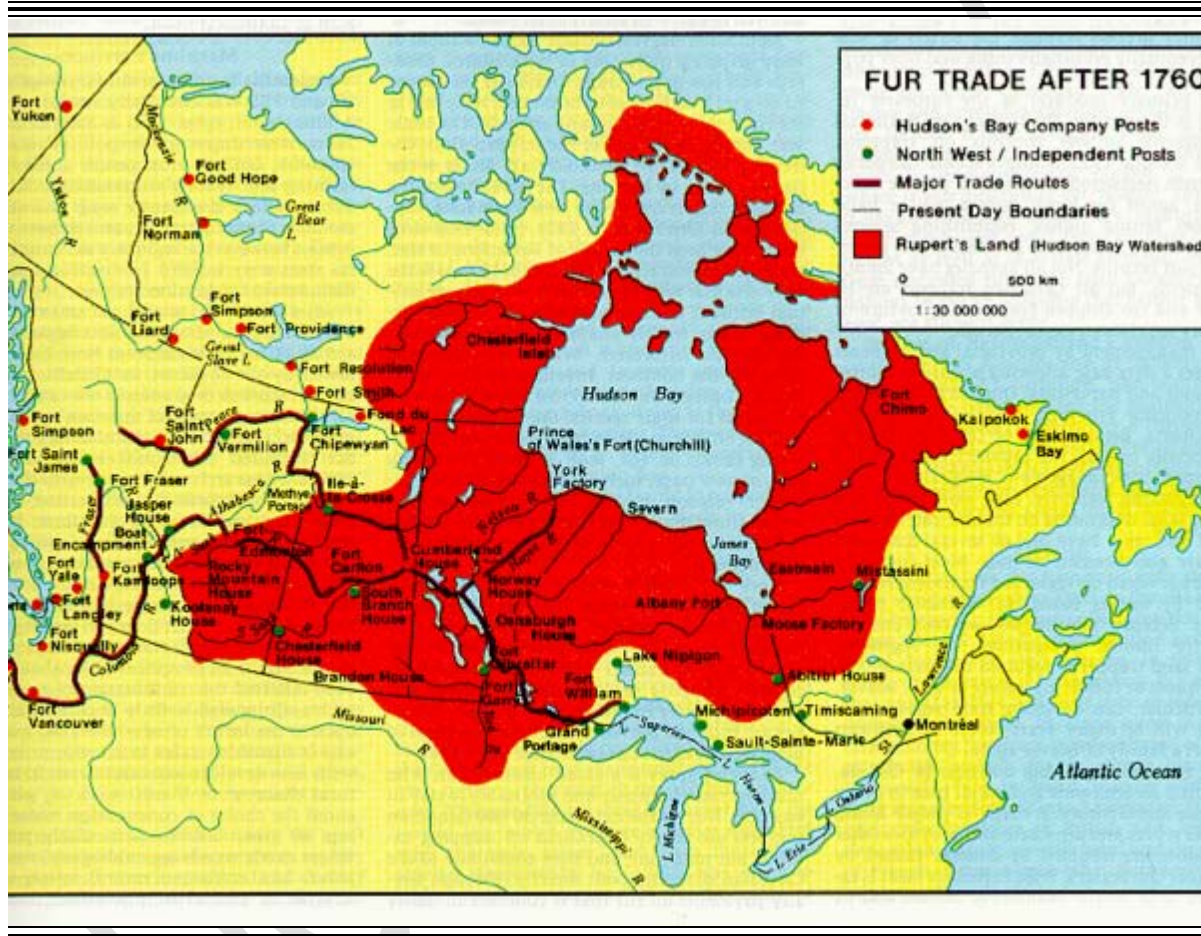
Figure 3 - The Fur Trade After 1760
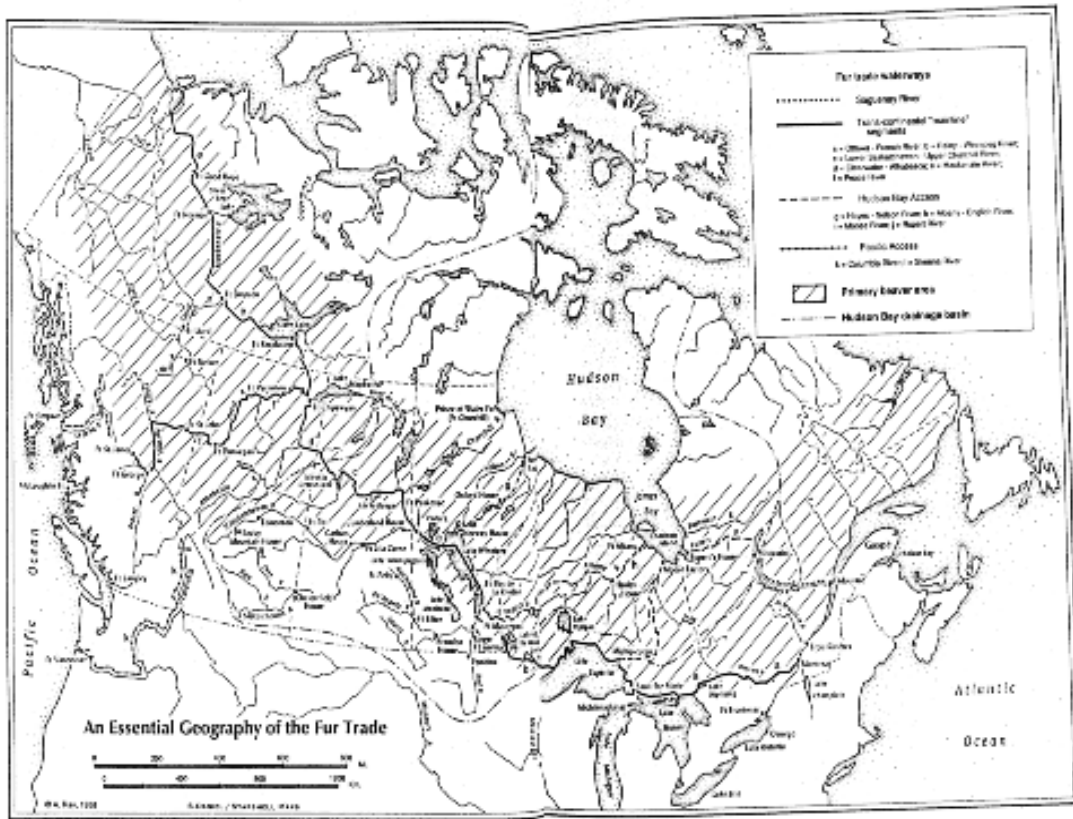*from The Canadian Encyclopedia (Edmonton, AB: Hurtig Publishers, Ltd, 1985)*

Figure 4 - Waterways and Geography of the Fur Trade

from The Fur Trade In Canada (Toronto: University Press, 1999)

VII. TERRITORIAL ISSUES AFFECTED BY INCURSIONS

Really, the fur-traders and voyageurs impacted all of North America where the river systems connected and could lead them. The best fur-trade activities occurred in the North, in Canada and its northern territories, because the cold weather simply produced better furs. However, as depiction of the scope of the territories affected refer to the following chart. It is important to note that most of these regions mentioned were visited by the French fur traders and voyageurs as early as the 1600's and it was later that the settlements became interconnected, the networks established by such important trading companies as the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), the North West Company (NWC) American Fur Company (AFC), the XY Company (XY), French Fur Company (FFC), Missouri Fur Company (MFC), Columbia Fur Company (CFC), Rocky Mountain Fur Company (RMFC), Pacific Fur Company (PFC), and the Lewis & Clark Expeditions (L&C).   The dates noted indicate the probable period of settlement, are only approximations, and not necessarily the dates of operation of any of the main fur trading companies noted as operating in Canada or the Upper Pacific Northwest:

Montreal to Sault Ste. Marie - Montreal (NWC - 1779)

Lachine (HBC - 1803)

The Ottawa River -   The Long Sault

Sainte Annes

Ottawa

Chats Falls (NWC - 1800)

The Chenaux (NWC - 1603)

Fort Coulonge (NWC - 1635)

Calument and Allumette

    Island (NWC - 1635)

The Upper Ottawa (NWC - 1610)

The Mattawa River (NWC - 1610)

Lake Nipissing (NWC - 1610)

La Vase Portage (NWC -1610)

The French River (NWC -1610)

Lake Huron (NWC - 1610)

Fort St. Joseph (NWC - 1796)

Sault Ste. Marie & St. Mary's River (NWC/XY - 1671)

Old Michigan -   St. Ignace (NWC -1680)

Fort Michilimackinac (NWC - 1714)

Fort Mackinac (Island) (AFC/NWC -1781)

North of Lake Superior -   Agawa Bay (NWC -1830)

Michipicoten (NWC -1725)

The Missinaibi River (NWC -1789)

Moose Factory (Fort) (HBC - 1672)

Lake Superior North Shore (NWC - 1678)

Lake Nipigon (HBC/NWC - 1727)

Thunder Bay (Fort William/Fort Kaministiquia) (NWC - 1678)

Kakabeka Falls (NWC - 1803)

Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg -   South of Lake Superior (NWC - 1659)

Snake River Post (NWC -1804)

Grand Portage (NWC - 1780's)

Fort Charlotte (NWC - 1780's)

The Boundary Waters (NWC - 1803)

International Falls (NWC/AFC -1688)

Fort Lac La Pluie (Fort Frances) (HBC - 1688)

Fort St. Pierre/Rainy Lake House (NWC - 1731)

Lake of the Woods - Fort St. Charles (NWC/HBC - 1732)

The Winnipeg River - Winnipeg River House #2 (NWC - 1799)

Winnipeg River House #3 (NWC -1804)
Fort Bas de La Riviere (NWC - 1792)
Otter Fort (NWC -1796)
Fort of Concern (NWC - 1795)

Fort Alexander (NWC - 1800)
Fort Maurepas (NWC - 1734)
Fort Coureurs de Bois (NWC - 1731)

Hudson Bay to Cumberland House - Cumberland House (NWC/HBC - 1774)

Prince of Wales Fort (HBC - 1717)

Fort Churchill (HBC - 1731)

York Factory (HBC - 1682)

New Severn House (HBC - 1710's)

Fort Albany (HBC - 1710's)

Moose Fort (HBC 1710's)

Fort Charles (HBC 1710's)

The Hayes River Route (HBC - 1770's)

Lake Winnipeg (NWC/HBC - 1680's)

Grand Rapids - Fort Bourbon (NWC/HBC - 1739)

Fort Dauphin (NWC/HBC/XY - 1741)

Swan River Valley (NWC/HBC - 1790's)

The Pas (HBC - 1690)

North to the Athabasca River - The Sturgeon-wier River (NWC - 1774)

The Upper Churchill River (NWC - 1774)

Methye Portage (Portage La Loche) (NWC - 1778)

Clearwater River (HBC - 1776)

Fort Chipewyan (NWC/XY/HBC - 1778)

The Saskatchewan River Route - Nipawin (NWC/HBC - 1748)

The Forks of the Saskatchewan River (HBC - 1753)

Fort Carlton (NWC/HBC - 1795)

The North Saskatchewan River -   Fort George

(NWC/HBC - 1792)

Fort Edmonton

(NWC/HBC - 1795)

Rocky Mountain

House(NWC/HBC -

1799)

Jasper House

(NWC/HBC - 1811)

South to the Plains -   Lower Fort Garry (HBC - 1831)

Four Forts at the Forks -   Fort Rouge (HBC - 1738)

Fort Gibralter (NWC/HBC -1806)

Fort Douglas (HBC -1813)

Upper Fort Garry (HBC - 1836)

Pembina Posts -   Fort Pambian/Pembina (NWC/XY/HBC
- 1797)

Fort La Reine

Fort des Epinettes (Pine Fort) (NWC –

1768)

Red River Trails (NWC/HBC - 1815)

Brandon -   Fort Assiniboine (NWC - 1793)

Brandon House (HBC - 1793)

The Qu'Appelle Valley -   Fort Esperance (NWC/XY - 1780's)

Fort Qu'Appelle (HBC -1853)

Fort John (NWC - 1810)

The Upper Assinibone -   Fort Pelly (HBC - 1824)

Fort Ellice (HBC - 1831)

The Missouri River Route -   Fort Pierre Chouteau (Fort Tecumseh) (FFC - 1832)

Fort William (Fort Laramie/Fort John/Fort Lucien)

(NWC/MFC -1834) - South of North Platte River

Knife River Villages - Fort Mandan (NWC/MFC/CFC - 1794)

Fort Clark (CFC - 1831)

Fort Union (AFC - 1828) - Yellowknife

Fort Pilgrim (MFC - 1830)

Fort Benton (Fort Clay)/Fort Lewis (AFC/NWC - 1846)

Fort Owen (AFC - 1841) - Montana

Rocky Mountain Fur Trade -   Fort Hall (RMFC - 1826)

Over the Shining Mountains -   Fort Dunvegan (NWC/HBC - 1805)

Fort St. James (NWC - 1806)

Rocky Mountain Portage (NWC - 1808)

Fort McLeod (NWC - 1807)

Fort George (Prince George (NWC - 1808)

Fort Okanagan (PFC/NWC - 1813)

The Columbia River Region -   Fort Astoria (Fort George) (AFC/NWC - 1811)

Fort Vancouver (HBC - 1825)

Fort Clatsop (L&C - 1805)

Fort Nisqually (HBC - 1833)

Fort Langley (HBC - 1827)

Fort Victoria (HBC - 1843)

VIII. GENEALOGICAL ISSUES, RESOURCES AND REPOSITORIES

Because the fur-traders and voyageurs travelled extensively throughout the North American continent via the waterways that would carry them, they could have migrated anywhere.

Prior to 1763, you will virtually find little written record of these individual travellers as "fur-traders", as most simply did not know how to write and did not leave a great record in any other way. After 1763, you may find the odd journal of their travels. By in large, as a researcher you need to concentrate on the surviving records of the fur trading companies that they conducted commerce with or with the many Métis associations who may have them on record as a progenitor for some of their ancestral lines, for more in-depth information on these subjects.

Genealogically, records of these early travellers will be very difficult to establish, in particular those of the English, however, there are excellent collections which document some of them and which document their patterns of movement. For details on individual subjects, your search needs to focus on trader's travel journals; pay journals; outpost journals; diaries of operations; minutes of company meetings; records of the various outposts; copybooks of letters of correspondence between traders, outposts and head offices; etc. In addition, be aware that a large collective works of genealogies has also been compiled on many of these early French-Canadian fur-traders via such voluminous published works as those of Denissen, Jetté, Drouin, and Tanquay, all of which are listed in the bibliography.

As per the bibliography, there a are host of **General Works** by which one can consult for this research. For the period through 1730 the Jetté works effectively supersedes the other sources noted there. All can be very useful for determining the relative frequency and general geographic distribution of a particular family or surname. Guides like that by Christian Denissen for other major centres of early French-Canadian settlement would be highly desirable.

As for **Bibliographies & Guides**, the Bruce White works describes collections in a number of repositories in both Canada and the U.S., so it is useful for more than just Minnesota research. The researcher should also consult whatever bibliographies are available for the particular geographic area of interest. Although they tend to be somewhat selective, the bibliographies of both manuscript and printed materials in the individual volumes of the *Dictionary of Canadian Bibliography* are also very useful.

The items cited under **History of the Fur Trade** are only the basic sources in an immense literature collection on the fur trade. The researcher will also find it necessary to investigate materials on the history of the specific area in which the ancestors were active. Additional sources that can be very useful are the early histories of the appropriate provinces and states which often have extensive bibliographies that will lead the researcher to additional resources. In addition, the publication series of the various state and regional historical societies should be investigated. Many have extensive collections of published accounts and documents of the fur trade. Particularly noteworthy, for American resources, are the *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* (40 volumes, 1874-1929), the *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library* (38 volumes, 1903-1978), and the *Wisconsin Historical Collections* (21 volumes, 1855-1915).

There are numerous excellent **Church Record** works. In particular, the *Répertoire des actes. . .* includes all the church records for the French regime. The volumes published cover through 1765. With their completeness and excellent indexing they are a vitally important source. As well, Faribault-Beauregard provides an important supplement to the *Répertoire des actes. . .* in publishing the surviving church records of the western forts. The notes in Stuart's article provide a useful list of the dates and locations of the records of the western missions.

All of the various publications of **Notarial Records** tend to omit details of genealogical importance such as the residence of the individuals, witnesses and signature details. Therefore, they should be used principally as indexes to the original records. Also none of the publications gives complete coverage for a particular area or time period.

In addition to the published sources of **Native Indian Records**, the researcher will also need to use the major microfilm collections from the Indian Affairs of both Canada and the U.S. held in their national archives. Many more records such as annuity rolls, reserves files, etc. must be consulted there as well. Some of these additional records may be available at appropriate state/provincial historical agencies or state/provincial archives.

Lastly, an important biographic source thus far little used by genealogists is the substantial mass of **Fur-Trade Correspondence and Business Records** held by archival repositories in the U.S. and Canada. Because these collections are often immense, ill-organized, and non-indexed, they are not easily utilized.

There are a number of excellent repositories that may assist you with your search, the major ones involving Canada and the Pacific Northwest being some of the following, however any local archives may hold additional clues to the regions you are investigating:

1). Hudson's Bay Company Archives - Winnipeg, MB

    - Also houses the records of the North West Company

2). National Archives of Canada - Ottawa, ON

3). National Archives of United States - Washington, DC

4). North West Company Fur Post - Pine City, Minnesota

5). Oregon Historical Society - Portland, OR

6). Canadian Canoe Museum - Peterborough, Ontario

7). Minnesota's Voyageurs National Park - International Falls, MN

8). Minnesota Historical Society - Moorhead, MN

9). Museum of the Fur Trade - Chadron, NE

10). Missouri Historical Society - St. Louis, MO

11). State Historical Society of Wisconsin - Madison, WI

12). Provincial Archives for Each of the Canadian Provinces

13). State Archives/Museums for Each of the US States

14). National Historic Sites for each of the Outposts

IX. SUMMATION AND COMMENTARY

Firstly, it is wrong to assert that the fur trade was the underpinnings of exploration in North America, especially in Canada, for it was the cod fishery that was Canada's first staple export and the pursuit of it was the impetus that launched the fur trade. The fur industry, however, was the first European business venture to span the continent and draw the diverse regions into a single economic network, which in turn, was linked to the expanding world economic system centred in Western Europe.

The fur traders forged a transcontinental business however they, as entrepreneurs, faced overcoming the distances between European markets and the sources of trade goods. It was a fashion rage in Europe that brought about this turn of events. Felt hats had come into vogue there, and the subsequent rise of the hat-making industry created an increasing demand for the beaver pelts that furnished the raw material for high quality felt.

The ongoing struggle for control of the fur trade was influenced not only by geography, but also by aboriginal goals and strategies, mercantilist economic thought, European imperial struggles on a global scale, the changing economic and industrial fortunes of England and France, and Canadian entrepreneurship.

Fixed overhead costs formed a crucial ingredient in all of this. Competition added to the economic problems fur traders faced by increasing the prices they had to pay aboriginal suppliers and reducing the size of the allotments that were available to any individual or company.

Fur trade research repeatedly demonstrates that one of the keys to the Hudson's Bay Company's success in the eighteenth century was its canny ability to copy and improve on the quality of key trading goods initially offered by the French. There was a crucial economic component to diplomacy here. The maintenance of competitive exchange rates and the provision of quality goods were essential to sustain aboriginal alliances.

Native provisioning and trapping for the fur trade placed unsustainable demands on local ecosystems. But it was, finally, the introduction of the railways, steamboats, motorized craft of various sorts, the telegraph, and the shortwave radio which served to break the monopoly hold of the Hudson's Bay Company on the fur-trade.

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