

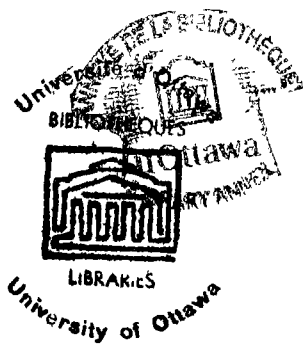
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UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA - ÉCOLE DES GRADUÉS

(FORT WILLIAM AND THE FUR TRADE)

by (John Stephenson)

Thesis presented to the Faculty of Arts
of the University of Ottawa through the
Department of History as partial ful-
fillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts.



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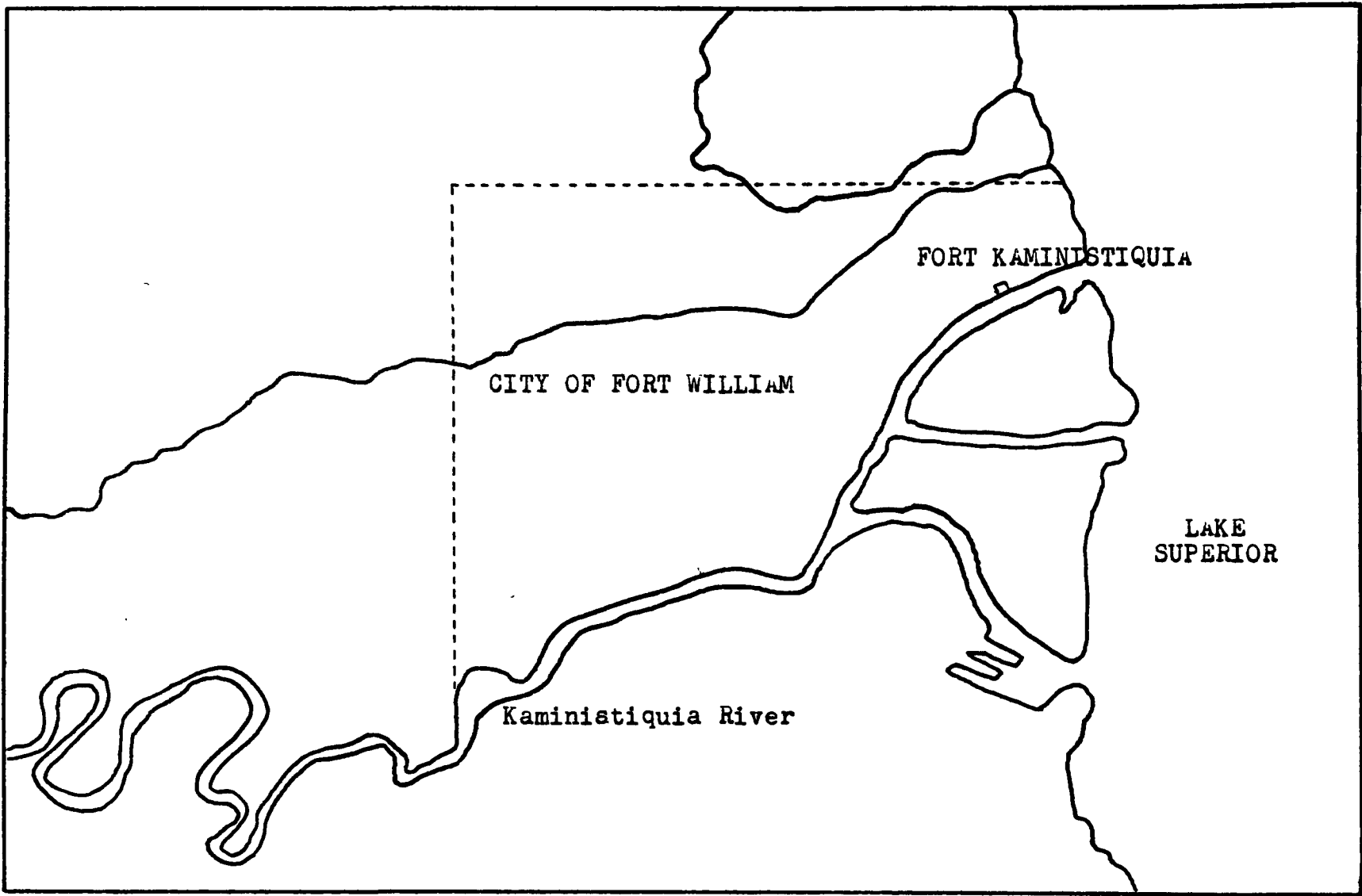
CHAPTER ONE

FORT WILLIAM UNDER THE FRENCH REGIME

Fort William, or Kaministiquia, as it was known under the French Regime, enjoyed two distinct phases of prosperity. It was, for a time, an important post in the network of French settlements for trading and exploration, and became for the North West Company of the English, a bastion in their efforts to maintain their ascendancy in the fur trade of the west against the competition of the Hudson's Bay Company. Its importance for both French and English resulted from the fact that it commanded the entrance to a water route to the west and to the furs of that region.

It seems probable that the first fort erected on the present site of Fort William was established by Greysolon Dulhut around 1678.¹ This fort, well-stocked and of considerable size, affected, to a certain extent, the English trade in Hudson Bay. Several nations of Indians found it to their advantage to travel to Lake Superior with their furs rather than to undertake the arduous journey to the

¹Pierre Margry, Découverts De Français Dans L'Ouest, 1614-1754, Paris, Maisonneuve et Le Clerc, 1888, Vol. VI, p.VII.



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English posts on Hudson Bay.¹

The water route to the west, on which the greater importance of Fort William depended, was first discovered by Jacques de Noyon in 1688. A description of the route, which took de Noyon up the Kaministiquia River and thence by a chain of lakes and rivers to Lake of The Woods is found in a memorandum attached to a letter from MM. de Vaudreuil et Bégon, addressed to the Duke of Orléans, dated February 13, 1717.²

According to the Indians of the area, a river which flowed from Lake of the Woods would carry de Noyon to the western sea.

French penetration into the western area of the Great Lakes was a result principally of two factors. Trade from the traditional areas north of the St. Lawrence River had declined to such an extent that new sources had to be found. Secondly, competition of the Iroquois with Indians friendly to the French led in time to open warfare, and the flight of the Hurons to the west in 1649-50. The French thus

¹Diary of Nicholas Garry, Proceedings and Transactions of The Royal Society of Canada, Toronto, Copp-Clark, 1900, Second Series, vol. 1, p. 316.

²Pierre Margry, Découverts De Français Dans L'Ouest, 1614-1754, vol. VI, p. 495.

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found themselves without middlemen to carry to them the furs from the trapping nations north and west of the Great Lakes. As a result, French traders were forced to penetrate the western reaches of the Great Lakes to search out the trade of that area.

In the years following the discovery of the Kaministiquia route until the Treaty of Utrecht in 1714, French activity in the western regions became sporadic and uncertain. It was subject to the vacillating attitude and divergent views of the officials in France and in Quebec. The hostility of the Iroquois continued and trade was harassed and disrupted. Competition from the English continued both south of the Great Lakes system and around Hudson and James Bays. In 1686, however, the French, under the leadership of Pierre, Sieur d'Iberville, re-established French supremacy in the latter region through the capture of all the English forts on James and Hudson Bays, except Fort Nelson. War broke out between France and England in 1689 and was extended to the colonies almost immediately. In 1696, traders in the western regions of Canada were withdrawn, and an attempt was made to concentrate trade at posts

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where military support could be offered.¹ The Treaty of Ryswick ended the conflict between England and France in 1697. The War of the Spanish Succession brought French and English into conflict once again both in Europe and in North America. Although the Treaty of Utrecht which closed the war reduced French territory in North America, and re-established the Hudson's Bay Company in the north, it did offer to the French in Canada a period of relative quiet, and the fur traders once again began to penetrate the wealthy regions to the west. The French government resumed their former system of issuing licences to traders, and by 1728, this system was fully restored.²

With conditions once again in their favour, the French Government in Canada and its officers continued to probe the reaches beyond Lake Superior with the three-fold purpose of the western advance-- the securing of the territory from the English, the search for the western sea, and the consolidation of the fur trading areas. According to Abbé G. Dugas,³

¹Donald Grant Creighton, Dominion of The North, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1944, p. 99.

²Harold A. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1956, p. 107.

³Abbé G. Dugas, The Canadian West, Montreal, Beauchemin, 1905, p. 35.

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M. de la Nouë was sent by the French authorities in 1717 to erect a fort at Kaministiquia. Apparently the fort established by Greysolon Dulhut had been abandoned and had fallen into a state of disrepair.

It was believed by MM. de Vaudreuil and Bégon that the establishment of the post at Kaministiquia, and two posts further west, one at Lac des Cristinaux (Lake of the Woods) and the other on Lac des Asinipoiles (Lake Winnipeg), would be advantageous in the search for the western sea. They argued further that the cost to the French Government would be negligible, since the districts concerned would, through the commerce available, indemnify the French Government. The Indians, they felt, would be eager to trade, since the French would be bringing the trading goods to them, whereas the Indians were forced to carry their furs to the forts along Hudson Bay when they were trading with the English.¹

M. de la Nouë, in a letter to his superiors, outlined the wealth of furs in the area adjacent to Kaministiquia, and revealed that, in his estimation,

¹ Lettre de MM. Vaudreuil et Bégon au Conseil de La Marine, quoted in Pierre Margry, Découverts De Français Dans L'Ouest, 1614-1754, vol. VI, p. 498-501.

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the area accounted for the commerce enjoyed by the English on Hudson Bay. To counteract this, he suggested the establishment of additional posts to the west.¹ In the same letter, dated 1721, M. de la Nouë revealed that his command at Kaministiquia lasted from 1717 to 1721 when he was relieved by M. Deschalions.

The importance of Kaministiquia as a fur-bearing area continued in the years which followed, but its advantage as the key to western travel was eclipsed by another water route from Lake Superior to the west about forty miles to the south and west of Thunder Bay. The existence of this alternative route was known as early as 1722, when it was described in a letter of M. Pachot. "Le plus beau chemin pour aller au prétendu établissement seroit par une petite rivière, nommée Nantokouagane, qui est à environ sept lieues de Kamanistigouyanque."²

It was not however, until the advent of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Vérendrye, that the

¹Lettre de la Nouë, Lieutenant des Troupes au Régent, Québec, le 15 octobre 1721, quoted in Pierre Margry, Découverts De Français Dans L'Ouest, 1614-1754, vol. VI, p. 512-513.

²Extract of a letter of M. Pachot quoted in Pierre Margry, Découvertes De Français Dans L'Ouest, 1614-1754, vol. VI, p. 516.

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water route through Kaministiquia was abandoned for the route further south, which was popularly called the Grand Portage Route. In 1730, La Vérendrye was stationed at Kaministiquia, and in the years which followed he carried out his explorations for a water route to the western sea. In 1731, La Vérendrye reached Grand Portage, where his nephew La Jemeraye continued over the portage route to Lac La Pluie. La Vérendrye wintered at Kaministiquia, and in 1732 he reached Rainy Lake over the same route followed by La Jemeraye. La Vérendrye in comparing the Grand Portage route with the Kaministiquia route noted that the former, although it had forty-two portages while the latter had only twenty-two, was preferable because it had no rapids and was straight and shorter, while the Kaministiquia route had twelve rapids, two of which were very long and shallow.¹ It appears that from the time La Vérendrye followed the Grand Portage route to the south, the Kaministiquia route was abandoned.²

Although Kaministiquia lost its importance as

¹Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier De Varennes De La Vérendrye And His Sons, Lawrence J. Burpee, ed., Toronto, Champlain Society, 1927, p. 54.

²Gordon Charles Davidson, The North West Company, Berkley, University of California Press, 1918, p. 54.

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the gateway to the west with the ascendancy of the route via Grand Portage and the Pigeon River, it continued as an important fur trading post until the withdrawal of the French from the western posts prior to the fall of New France in 1760. Ample evidence for the continuing activity at Kaministiquia during this period is found in Les Congés de Traite Conservés Aux Archives De La Province De Québec¹, in Les Congés et Permis Déposés ou Enregistrés a Montréal Sous Le Régime Français, par E-Z. Massicotte, Archiviste en Chef Du Palais De Justice, Montréal², and in La Répertoire Des Engagements Pour L'Ouest Conservés Dans Les Archives Judiciares De Montréal (1670-1778)³. The system of congés was established to stop or at least diminish abuses in the fur trade. The Congés were in reality permissions granted by the government to one or several individuals to trade in a specified area. Recipients of these trading privileges were forbidden to undertake trade in any other area.

This system of dividing the western country

¹Rapport De L'Archiviste De La Province De Québec, 1922-23, Québec, Proulx, 1923, p. 207-259.

²Ibid, 1921-22, p. 199-214.

³Rapport De L'Archiviste De La Province De Québec, 1929-1930, Québec, Proulx, 1930, p. 224-230.

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into districts and assigning individuals exclusive trading rights apparently worked towards the stabilizing of the fur trade. Further regulations were passed to control the trade with the leasing of posts to the highest bidder, the charge resulting in a direct tax carried by the trader. In 1744, Kaministiquia was leased for 3000 livres, and in 1758, for 4000 livres.¹

A unique organization, adapted to the peculiar requirements of the western trade, was developed during this period. Its essential aspects were continued by the English after the fall of New France, but without the relative tranquility that resulted from governmental supervision during the French Regime. Merchants in Quebec imported the necessary goods for the trade, which in turn were carried to their representatives in the interior. The representatives in the interior, with the lack of competition, became partners in a larger organization and shared the profits from the returns of their specified districts.²

Before the fall of New France to the British in the Seven Years' War, the French fur trading activity had been extended beyond the area of the Great

¹Ibid, 1923-1924, p. 52-54.

²Harold A. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 111-118.

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Lakes and into territory claimed by the British in the charter granted to the Hudson's Bay Company. This trade, although regulated rather strictly by the government, had developed into one of sizeable proportions. However, according to Harold A. Innis¹, the French fur traders had reached the economic limit of their trade with lengthening transportation lines, increasing opposition from the English in Hudson Bay and to the south, and resultant rising costs. But the basic techniques established by the French traders were adopted by the British traders after the fall of New France, and in time a highly effective organization was developed by the North West Company. Faced with the same disadvantages as the French, it was, through keen trading practices, generally successful up to the period in the nineteenth century when geographic limitations and increased opposition from the Hudson's Bay Company forced its amalgamation with that Company, which had the advantage of a water route within economic distance of the lengthening fur trade lines.

¹Ibid, p. 109.

CHAPTER TWO

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THE FUR TRADE UNDER THE ENGLISH REGIME

French fur trading activity north, south and west of the Great Lakes ceased with the withdrawal of troops from the inland posts to augment defences in the east with the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. When Montreal fell in 1760, the north and west were deserted except for a few stragglers who had chosen to remain and adopt the life of the Indian.

It was not long, however, after the conclusion of peace that English and Scottish merchants, who had moved into the colonies from the south, began to venture through the upper lakes. These men, eager to exploit the wealth of the fur empire, were guided by French voyageurs to the western limit of Lake Superior, and eventually by the Grand Portage route to the centre of the continent. As early as 1761 individuals began to move westward, and continued until 1763, when Indians captured Fort Michillimackinac, and attacked all the posts occupied by the English from Niagara to La Baye.¹

The English Government in Canada, after the

¹Sketch of The Fur Trade, Canadian Archives Photostat, (1809), p. 3.

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Treaty of Paris was signed in 1763, opened the fur trade to all British subjects, subject to a condition that they should not violate the territory claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company under its charter. Traders under these regulations were required to meet the Indians at a regular post and in no case go beyond or winter with the Indians. However, these regulations were not strictly enforced, and in 1768 the Indian trade was laid open to all without the necessity of licences, but was still restricted to territory not covered by the Hudson's Bay Company charter.¹ The opening of trade to all apparently was partially a result of complaints made by merchants and recorded by Mr. John Gray of Quebec.² In these complaints the merchants noted that, with the obstructions, the British faced the loss of the fur trade with the active competition of the French to the south, and the Hudson's Bay Company to the north. In addition, the merchants complained that public servants in charge of forts and garrisons prevented traders from leaving the establishments, while at the same time they allowed

¹Arthur S. Morton, A History of The Canadian West To 1870-1, Toronto, Nelson, 1939, p. 259-270.

²Hardwicke Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, part I, p. 356.

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their own friends to trade as they wished, thus bringing about the ruin of the other traders.

Trade of any appreciable amount did not commence until the year 1766,¹ when a number of individuals went as far as the western limits of Lake Superior. One trader, Thomas Curry, went to Kaministiquia, where he found the remains of the old French fort. His venture was successful, and in the following year a number of traders followed him there; but the majority went on to Grand Portage, which had become the principal rendezvous of the traders because it offered greater prospects for the trade. It appears that from this time onward the old French fort was abandoned, with its alternative water route to the west.²

The majority of these early trading ventures were undertaken by individuals who carried through to the Indians goods supplied by investors in Montreal. From time to time, groups of traders pooled their resources and worked together to combat better the

¹Alexander MacKenzie's Voyages, John W. Garvin, ed., Toronto, Radisson Society, 1927, p. 15.

²L. R. Masson, Les Bourgeois De La Compagnie Du Nord-Ouest, Esquisse Historique, Québec, Côté, 1889. vol. I, p. 13-14.

risks which accompanied the trade. Then in the spring, at Grand Portage, the furs were divided in proportion to the share of goods placed in the pool by each man. Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher, in a Memorial to General Haldimand, dated at Montreal, October 4, 1784,¹ mentioned a connection which they established with Messrs. Todd and McGill of Montreal to help alleviate the risk entailed in individual ventures. A number of similar short-term organizations were developed, but disappeared in time; and it was not until 1779, under the probable guidance of Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher, that a stable organization of any stature was concluded. This company, a sixteen share concern, included the following with two shares each: Todd and McGill; Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher; McGill and Paterson; McTavish and Co.; Holmes and Grant; Wadden and Co.; McBeath and Co.; and the following with one share each: Ross and Co.; and Oakes and Co.²

The agreement reached by the nine partners was renewed in 1780, with modifications, for a period of three years. At the end of two years the concern was

¹Colonial Office Records, Canadian Archives, Transcript, Series Q, vol. XXIV, part 2, p. 409-410.

²Haldimand Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, Series B, vol. XCIX, Letters and Papers Relating to The Upper Posts, 1778-1782, p. 115.

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discontinued and attempts were made to continue the trade with individual concerns. This apparently led to a renewal of the bitter rivalry which the original concern had, to a certain extent, diminished. A new agreement was reached in 1784 at Montreal, including all the principal traders of the area, who joined together for a period of five years under the title, the North West Company.¹ The North West Company, thus organized, continued in existence until its amalgamation with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. During this period of thirty-seven years, the original agreement underwent a number of changes; shares changed hands and rival companies were absorbed; but the outward character of the company remained almost unchanged.

A certain number of the shares of the concern were held by the Company's agents in Montreal, who imported the necessary trading goods for each venture, stored them at Montreal, and prepared them for transportation through the Great Lakes. A commission was granted these agents for their services over and above the revenue which they received each year from the shares they held in the company. The remaining shares were held by the wintering partners of the concern,

¹Sketch of The Fur Trade, Canadian Archives Photostat, 1809, p. 5.

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who supervised and controlled the trade at the various posts in the interior. Each share carried a vote in the proceedings of the Company, and the shares held by the wintering partners were transferable only to persons who had served time in the trade of the Company.¹

The trading goods, packed in bundles of ninety pounds each, were transported by canoes, capable of carrying four tons, manned by eight to ten men, from Lachine via the Ottawa River and the Great Lakes to Grand Portage. Two sets of men were engaged in the transportation of goods and furs, one half of whom carried the trade goods to Grand Portage and the assembled furs from that post to Montreal. These men were known as "mangeurs de lard". The other half were engaged in carrying the trade goods from Grand Portage to the posts scattered throughout the west, and in transporting the furs to Grand Portage for the yearly rendezvous. Canoes used in this phase of the trade could carry approximately one and one half tons, and were manned by four or five men. The Winterers who handled these canoes were called "hommes du nord".

The canoes from Montreal set off early in May.

¹Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher's Memorial, Colonial Office Records, Canadian Archives, Transcript, Series Q, vol. XXIV, part 2, p. 413-415.

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picked up additional supplies of food for their crews and for the wintering canoes, and reached Grand Portage late in July. The canoes for the west, when they had received their trading goods and supplies, started back to their various posts, and the larger canoes carried the baled furs back to Montreal. The Winterers, unable to carry sufficient food along with the trading goods, were forced to supplement their supply from the Indians along their routes.¹

The North West Company's method of having its servants winter among the Indians, supplying them with trade goods, and purchasing their furs as close to their settlements as possible, was a practice carried over from the traders of the French regime. The Hudson's Bay Company, on the other hand, began its trading by establishing posts only on the shores of Hudson and James Bays, and waited for the Indians to come to their establishments to transact business. As the traders of the North West Company spread throughout the west, the Hudson's Bay Company found it necessary, in order to compete with the North West Company, to move inland and establish posts in the interior. According to

¹Colonial Office Records, Canadian Archives, Transcript, Series Q, vol. XXIV, part 2, p. 413-415.

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Lord Selkirk, in his Sketch of The British Fur Trade In North America¹, the constant presence of traders among them tempted the Indians to continue the hunt throughout the year, thus increasing the annual return of furs, but in his opinion, decreasing the commercial wealth of the west by cutting down the fur-bearing animals too rapidly without allowing time for reproduction.

A fairly clear picture of the trade undertaken by the North West Company can be gained from the Sketch of The Fur Trade². In the years from 1793 to 1798 inclusive an average of 9,600 gallons of rum and spirits were carried in annually for use of the members of the Company and for trade with the Indians. In the years from 1799 to 1804 inclusive an average of 12,340 gallons were consumed annually; and from 1805 to 1808 inclusive an average of 10,700 gallons were consumed annually. During this period, the posts of the North West Company extended from the Strait of Belle Isle on the eastern shores of Canada, throughout British territory including all the country north and west of a line drawn from the north-west corner of Lake of The Woods to a point where that line intersected the

¹The Earl of Selkirk, A Sketch of The British Fur Trade in North America, London, Ridgway, 1816, p. 23-26.

²Sketch of The Fur Trade, Canadian Archives, Photostat, 1809. p. 7-18.

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headwaters of the Mississippi, and thence west to the Rocky Mountains. Before the amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, the members of the North West Company had established posts beyond the Rocky Mountains and on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. The posts at this period numbered eighty-four. The value of the returns of the North West Company from the year 1784 to 1807 was the following: the year 1784 produced a return of 30,000 pounds sterling; the years 1785-6-7 produced an average of 30,000 pounds sterling; the year 1788 produced 40,000 pounds sterling; the year 1789 produced 53,000 pounds; the years 1790 to 1795 averaged 72,000 pounds; the years 1796 to 1799 produced 98,000 pounds; the years 1800 to 1804 produced 107,000 pounds; and the years 1805 to 1807 produced 140,000 pounds.

Robert McKenzie, in his work, Some Account of The North West Company,¹ gave the following report in connection with the returns of the various fur trading companies in Canada. The North West Company held about eleven fourteenths, the Hudson's Bay Company, one seventh, and the other opposition originating in Canada, one fourteenth.

¹Roderick McKenzie, Some Account of The North West Company, Canadian Archives, Transcript, 1795, p. 45.

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In a census of the year 1805, 1,000 men were reported in the employ of the North West Company, with 386 Indian wives and 569 children, while the major opposition from Canada, Alexander MacKenzie and Company, employed 520 men with 37 Indian wives and 31 half-breed children. For the same year, 2,332 packs of furs were receipted at Kaministiquia in the summer of 1806.¹

During the years from the early organization of the North West Company until 1801, the fort at Grand Portage was used as its dispersal depot, and the water route to the west which began at that point was used as a link between the Great Lakes system and the rivers which flow through western Canada to Hudson and James Bay, and to the Arctic Ocean. Grand Portage and the water route which it commanded constituted an indispensable link in the ever-expanding fur trade. This fort and the route which it commanded were held tenaciously by the North West Company as the sole factor which made the fur trade for them an economically worthwhile undertaking.

¹The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and of David Thompson, 1799-1814, Elliot Coues, ed., New York, Harper, 1897, vol. 1, p. 382.

CHAPTER THREE

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THE RE-DISCOVERY OF FORT WILLIAM

Once again, however, the vagaries of war and the resultant peace necessitated changes in the fur trade of the north west. The Treaty of Versailles of 1783, which concluded the War of American Independence, defined the boundary between British North America and the United States, but left the territory west of Lake Superior subject to controversy. The Definitive Treaty between Great Britain and the thirteen United States of America in 1783 gave the following as the boundary in that area between the two powers:

----thence through Lake Superior northward of Isles Royal and Philipeaux to the Long Lake; thence through the middle of said Long Lake and the water communication between it and the Lake of the Woods; thence through the said lake to the most north-western point thereof, and from thence on a due west course to the river Mississippi.¹

From the American standpoint that definitive line obviously cut in at the mouth of Pigeon River and followed the water route of the fur traders to Lake of The Woods. In demanding that, the Americans proposed to take over the fort at Grand Portage which lay some

¹Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation between His Britannic Majesty and The United States of America, (Jay's Treaty), Philadelphia, Tuckniss, 1795, p.61.

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fifteen miles to the south of the mouth of the Pigeon River. The first few miles of the Pigeon River were impossible to navigate, and the shores impossible for land transportation. As a result, the early traders had erected their fort to the south of the river's outlet. Goods were then transported over a nine-mile portage to a point above the rapids and falls in the river where water transportation was possible.

The Canadian fur traders, on the other hand, argued that no Long Lake, as expressed in the treaty, existed, pointing out that the only communication from Lake Superior was via Grand Portage to Pigeon River, along through a chain of lakes and rivers to Lac La Pluie. Since they were unable to know where the boundary was to be drawn, the Canadian fur traders asked for previous notice of intention so that they could withdraw their property and search for another passage if one existed. They further pointed out that they intended, if the British Government did not take action, to undertake to discover another passage within British territory at their own expense. They hoped that if one were discovered full rights to the route would be granted to them for a period of not less than seven years.¹

¹Haldimand Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, Series B, vol. LXXV, part 2, Letters to General Haldimand as Governor of Quebec 1784, p. 75-76.

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General Haldimand, The Governor of Canada, upon receipt of the various memorials from the members of the North West Company, informed them by letter, dated April 26, 1784, that the decision regarding the boundary would be a mutual undertaking of the governments of Great Britain and of the United States; that the Long Lake mentioned in the treaty was found in the best maps of the period; and that the chain of lakes mentioned by the memorialists was in reality the Long Lake agreed upon in the Treaty. The Governor further approved the plan for discovering another route entirely within British territory.¹

In a letter dated October 11, 1784, from E. Mathews to Benjamin Frobisher, it was revealed that the Governor did not have the authority himself to give a grant for a new passage if found, or an exclusive right to the trade.²

General Haldimand, however, in a letter dated March 16, 1785, addressed to Lord Sydney, pointed out the inherent advantages to Canada of the fur trade, and the advantages resulting from the discoveries which the

¹Haldimand Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, Series B, vol. LXIII, General Entries, 1783-1784, p. 246.

²Haldimand Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, Series B, vol. LXIV, Letters to Various Persons, 1784-1786, p. 331.

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merchants of the North West Company were constantly making. With these in mind, he suggested that serious consideration be given the traders' request for exclusive trading privileges by the route which they expected to discover.¹

The merchants of Montreal, in their attempt to hold Grand Portage, wrote John Graves Simcoe, Governor of Upper Canada, in a letter dated December 9, 1791, that negotiations should be instituted to obtain a new line of demarcation, along the lines of the one mentioned in the Quebec Act, which would carry the boundary along the existing boundary in eastern Canada through Lake Erie and from there across to the Ohio River and down that river to its junction with the Mississippi.² A settlement of that sort certainly would have solved one of the major problems of the North West Company.

In the following year, the merchants of Montreal appealed again to Governor Simcoe in a letter dated April 23, 1792. They asked that, for the

¹Colonial Office Records, Canadian Archives, Transcript, Series Q, vol. XXV, Miscellaneous Correspondence, Quebec, 1785, p. 298.

²The Correspondence of Lieut-Governor John Graves Simcoe, With Allied Documents, Brigadier-General E. A. Cruickshank, ed., Toronto, Historical Society, 1923, vol. 1, p. 92.

preservation of the north-west trade, Grand Portage be given to them or at least considered as an open highway for both nations, with each having the right of erecting buildings necessary for trade, since, according to the treaty, Grand Portage lay fifteen miles within American territory. They pointed out once again the impossibility of access to the interior either by the mouth of the Pigeon River or by a portage on the Canadian side.¹

Faced with the inevitable, the North West Company, during the years of this feverish correspondence, dispatched an expedition in June of 1783, under the direction of Edward Umfreville, to probe the possibility of a feasible route through Lake Nipigon and thence westward to Lake Winnipeg. Umfreville was successful in his attempt and observed that the new route which he had opened was not only practicable but also preferable to the route through Grand Portage. He observed further that a good guide could complete the journey in three weeks, that fishing places were numerous, and that no carrying places were excessively difficult.²

¹Ibid., vol. I, p. 135.

²Edward Umfreville, Journal of a Passage in a Canoe from Païs Plat in Lake Superior to Portage de L'Isle in Rivière Ouinipique, 1784, Canadian Archives Transcript, p. 55.

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Joseph Frobisher, in a letter to John Brickwood Esq., dated at Montreal June 30, 1788¹ revealed that, in his opinion, if the post at Grand Portage were surrendered, the North West Company would suffer no great injury. He felt that the Nipigon Route, as mapped out by Edward Umfreville, would prove practicable.

However, the merchants of Montreal in their appeal to Governor Simcoe in a letter dated April 23, 1792 stated that the Nipigon route explored by Edward Umfreville was impracticable.²

Lawrence J. Burpee in his book, The Search for the Western Sea,³ noted that the Kaministiquia route used by the French traders was marked on Peter Pond's map of 1789 along with the Grand Portage route. In his opinion, Pond was not on good terms with the partners of the North West Company at that time, and the map was never actually examined by them. In any case, the Kaministiquia route remained unknown to them for approximately another ten years.

¹Letter Book of Joseph Frobisher, 1787-1788, Canadian Archives, Transcript, p. 60.

²The Correspondence of Lieut-Governor John Graves Simcoe, With Allied Documents, Brigadier-General E. A. Cruickshank, vol. I, p. 135.

³Lawrence J. Burpee, The Search for The Western Sea, Toronto, Musson, 1908, p. 342.

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It is also interesting to note that on a map entitled A Map of Canada and the North Part of Louisiana With Adjacent Countrys, published by Thomas Jeffreys, London, in 1762, both the Pigeon River and the Kaministiquia River are shown, both with easy access to the chain of lakes and rivers which connect Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg.

Jay's Treaty of 1794, which ruled in favour of American claims in the disputed territory west of Lake Superior, and called for the complete evacuation of posts within the United States, left the North West Company with little hope of continuing its profitable trade via Grand Portage. Article 2 of the Treaty required the removal of all troops and garrisons within the territory, on or before June 1, 1796. All traders and settlers within the jurisdiction of established posts were allowed possession of their property, and given permission either to remain there or to remove or sell their property at their discretion. One year was granted the settlers and traders to decide between British and United States citizenship, and those people remaining for one complete year after June 1, 1796 were considered as having elected to become citizens of the United States.¹

¹Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation between His Britannic Majesty and the United States of America, (Jay's Treaty), Philadelphia, Tuckniss, 1795, Article 2, p. 6-7

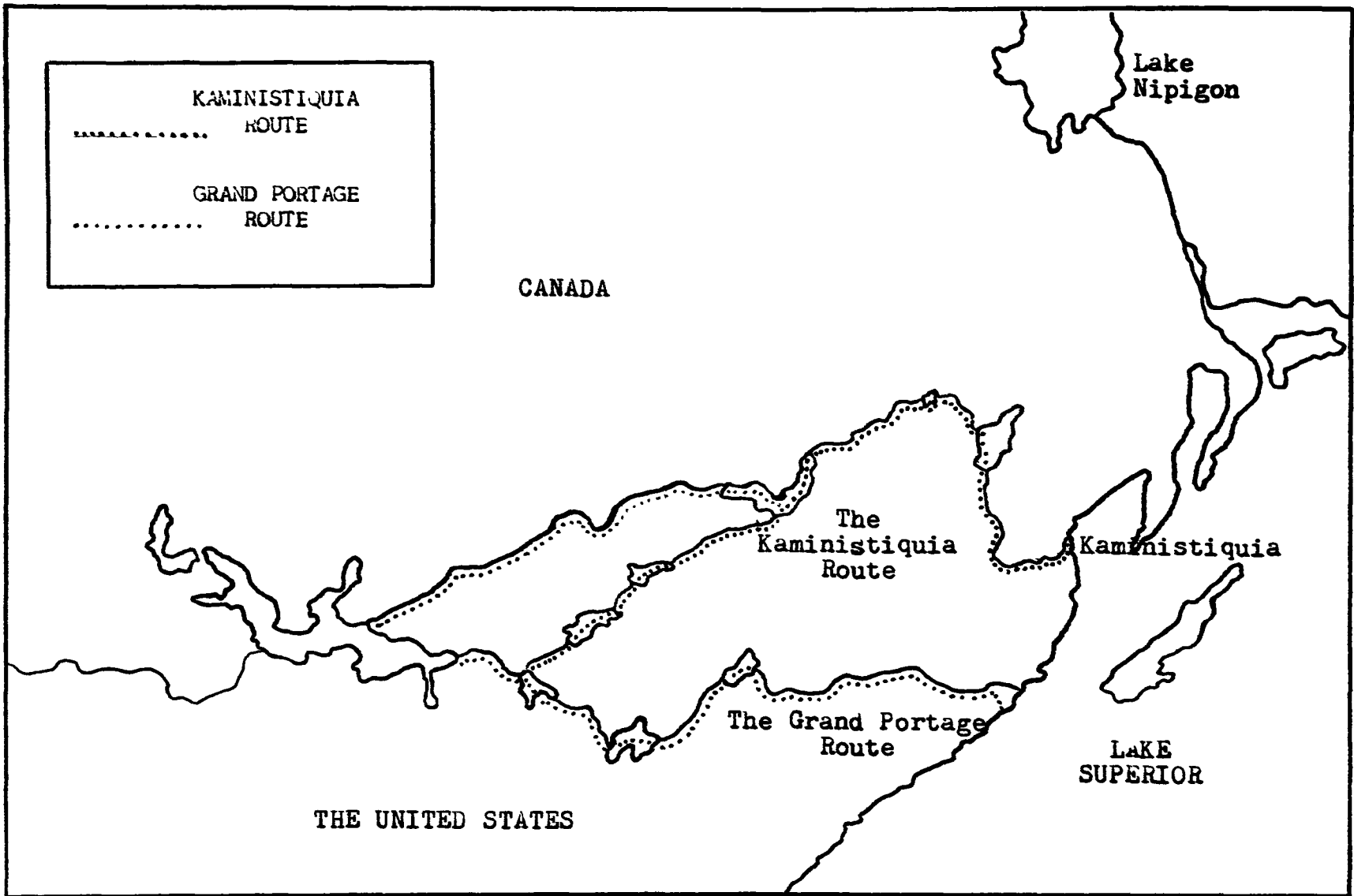
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With the promulgation of this treaty the traders of the North West Company faced the inevitable. One alternative remained for them--establishing new headquarters at the mouth of the Nipigon River and mapping out a new route through Lake Nipigon and westward to Lake Winnipeg.

Fate dealt kindly with the Northwesters. Roderick McKenzie, on a trip from Grand Portage to Rainy Lake in the year 1798, met a family of Indians at the height of land. From these natives he learned of the old route which connected at that point with the Grand Portage route. With the assistance of a guide, McKenzie worked his way to the mouth of the Kaministiquia River, where he found the remains of French habitation deserted for some fifty years. It was astonishing to Roderick McKenzie that his partners had not heard of this route before his re-discovery of it. He also revealed in his writings that the Nipigon Route explored by Umfreville had proved impracticable after further surveys, and that with the promulgation of Jay's Treaty the North West Company was left without an opening for their trade until his discovery.¹

¹Memoirs of McKenzie, 1785-1820, Masson Collection, Canadian Archives, p. 89-90.



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Forthwith, preparations were begun for the evacuation of Grand Portage, and for the establishment of a new post at Kaministiquia. The North West Company purchased from the natives in the area tracts of land on both sides of the river, and by early 1802 had a party of men at work raising stockades and constructing buildings within them.¹ The last general meeting of the North West Company at Grand Portage was held in July of 1802. The following year the meeting was held at Kaministiquia.² The fort was completed in 1804 at a cost of ten thousand pounds sterling. At the outset, the original name used by the French and derived from the river at the mouth of which the fort was situated, was retained. However, at the annual meeting in July 1807, the name was changed to Fort William³ in honour of William McGillivray, the leading partner of the Company.

Two excellent accounts of Fort William are extant. Gabriel Franchère described it as situated on

¹The North West 1800-1845, Canadian Archives, Transcript, Series C, vol. CCCLXIII, p. 9.

²The North West Company Minute Book 1801-1811 with a memorandum of 1825, Canadian Archives, Photostat, p. 10-11.

³Documents Relating To The North West Company, W. Stewart Wallace, ed., Toronto, Champlain Society, 1934, p. 249-250.

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deep river of easy access and offering a safe harbour for shipping. The surrounding marshes were drained, and a fort with a palisade of fifteen feet in height surrounded a group of substantial buildings. In the centre of the square stood a large wooden building, with a long portico raised about five feet from the ground, and surmounted by a balcony running the entire length of the building. In the centre of the building was a large hall, thirty feet by sixty feet, where the agents, partners, clerks, interpreters and guides ate; below were kitchens. On either side of this principal building stood two of similar size divided into bedrooms for the wintering partners and clerks. To the east of these buildings stood another large building, used as sleeping quarters for lesser employees of the Company, along with a large warehouse where furs were inspected and packed for the trip to Montreal. Behind these major buildings were situated the sleeping quarters of the guides, a second warehouse for furs, and a stone powder magazine. At the south-eastern corner was a tower used as a look-out. To the west of the main buildings was situated a group of buildings used for stores, workshops, equipment, fitting of canoes, and retail goods, with one for liquor and food. Behind the main buildings stood a counting-house, a store-house of stone, a jail, and various

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repair shops. At the entrance to the fort stood quarters for the fort physician and the chief clerk, and over the gate stood a guard-house.

Along the entire length of the fort on the river bank extended a wharf for the discharging and loading of furs and supplies. The land on the east, west and north sides of the fort was cleared, and was planted with barley, peas and oats. At the end of the clearing was a grave-yard. On the opposite shore, on what is now called Island Number One, was situated a group of log huts inhabited by retired voyageurs of the Company who had settled at Fort William and married Indian women. These families subsisted on what they could grow on their small plots and on fish from the lake.

To maintain the fort and the surrounding land, the North West Company inserted into the agreements of all canoe men a clause which forced them to work a stipulated number of days either on the fort or on the land. Once the days were worked the individuals were thereafter exempt from any tasks of this sort.¹

¹Gabriel Franchère, Narrative of a Voyage to The Northwest Coast of America, J. V. Huntington, tr., New York, Redfield, 1854, p. 338-344.

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Washington Irving's account of Fort William¹ is less detailed and informative, but it does contain a colourful description of the people who inhabited the fort and of their activities in it. He closed his account with a view of the empty halls and silent rooms of the fort after its decline.

Thus, the focal point of the fur trade was moved to Fort William. It became for the North West Company, as Grand Portage had been for so many years, the key to the western trade. To it came each year supplies and trading goods from the east to be transported by canoe to the farflung outposts of the fur empire. To it each year in the spring came the packs of furs for transshipment to Montreal and the markets of Europe. With it, the North West Company was able to hold the fur trade against competition from other fur ventures from Canada, and more especially against the competition of the Hudson's Bay Company, which had the advantage of a sea route close enough to the lengthening fur empire to make its commerce profitable. The North West Company in reaching farther and farther each year weakened its structure by creating a line too tenuous for continued economic prosperity.

¹Washington Irving, Astoria, New York, Crowell, (no date), p. 25-26.

CHAPTER FOUR

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THE NORTH WEST COMPANY AND CANADIAN OPPOSITION

The early years of the North West Company, during its tenure of Grand Portage, were not without competition from other fur trading interests originating in Montreal. Sporadic attempts by individual traders and organized groups to invade the precincts of the Company were met successfully in time, and quite frequently with violence.

The reorganization of the North West Company on the sixteen share basis in 1784 continued in force until 1787, when the Company was once again reorganized, this time with twenty shares, and concluded principally to include partners of serious competition. Included among the partners were the following: Simon McTavish with four shares; Joseph Frobisher with three; Patrick Small, Nicholas Montour, and Robert Grant, each with two shares; and George McBeath, Peter Pond, William Holmes, John Gregory, Norman McLeod, Peter Pangman and Alexander McKenzie with one share each.¹

Competition of a more serious nature, however,

¹Documents Relating To The North West Company, W. Stewart Wallace, ed., Toronto, Champlain Society, 1934, p. 13.

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began to appear in the 1780's--competition which had the backing of more powerful Montreal firms. These firms, principally Parker, Gerrard and Ogilvy, and Forsyth, Richardson and Company, which had previously undertaken trade in areas ceded to the United States after the Treaty of Versailles, had turned then to the British north west. Forsyth, Richardson and Company were reported to have been north of Lake Superior as early as 1793 trading in opposition to the North West Company.¹ According to W. Stewart Wallace, Forsyth, Richardson and Company were included in the North West Company agreement in 1795, and then appeared to be working alone again in 1798.² In the same decade Parker, Gerrard and Ogilvy were numbered among the opposition west of Lake Superior. By the turn of the century these two new companies were making appreciable inroads on the fur trade of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company.

Simon McTavish in a letter to Roderick McKenzie dated at Montreal June 22, 1799³, mentioned "a serious

¹Arthur S. Morton, A History of The Canadian West To 1870-71, Toronto, Nelson, 1939, p. 509.

²W. Stewart Wallace, The Pedlars from Quebec, and Other Papers on The Nor'Westers, Toronto, Ryerson, 1954, p. 55.

³Memoirs of McKenzie, 1785-1820, Masson Collection, Canadian Archives, (no page).

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attack" made upon the interests of the North West Company, and foresaw a coalition of the two rival interests. Indeed, in 1800, Forsyth, Richardson and Company, and Parker, Gerrard and Ogilvy joined forces to consolidate their capital and position in the west; they emerged as the New North West Company. Originally using Grand Portage as its headquarters, the new company continued its operations under the popular title of the X.Y. Company. X.Y. was a combination of letters used to distinguish the markings on the company's bales of furs from those of the original North West Company.

As early as 1800 there was some discussion regarding the amalgamation of the North West Company with the new concern. Angus MacIntosh wrote to Simon McTavish from Sandwich on May 18, 1800, referring to this possibility. He felt that the new concern with the inexperienced people in its employ would be unable to continue any powerful opposition.¹ In a subsequent letter to McTavish, Frobisher and Company, dated August 3, 1800, he referred again to the union of the two concerns, mentioning that the opposition had approached Mr. McGilivray but that the preliminary considerations could

¹Angus MacIntosh, Letter Book, 1798-1803, Canadian Archives, (no page).

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not be agreed upon. In a letter to Simon McTavish, dated May 19, 1800, Mr. MacIntosh referred to the withdrawal of Alexander MacKenzie from the North West Company, noting the fact that Alexander MacKenzie and Simon McTavish were unable to continue in harmonious relationship with each other. Indeed, Alexander MacKenzie had left the North West Company in the summer of 1799 and had sailed to England. Angus MacIntosh, in a letter to Simon McTavish, dated at Sandwich, January 30, 1801, mentioned that upon Alexander MacKenzie's return to Canada he had associated himself with the New North West Company¹, which was reorganized as the Sir Alexander MacKenzie and Company in 1803.²

The New North West Company, during the years prior to 1800 when it operated as separate interests, and during its years as an organized opposition to the North West Company, managed to construct along the narrow life-lines of the fur trade an imposing system of forts, in many cases on sites contiguous with those of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company. The competition which resulted in a number of the fur-

¹Angus MacIntosh, Letter Book, 1798-1803, Canadian Archives, (no page).

²W. Stewart Wallace, The Pedlars from Quebec and Other Papers of The Nor'Westers, p. 55.

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bearing regions was violent in many cases, and disastrous from an economic standpoint for both the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company.

In the summer of 1804, Simon McTavish, the leading partner of the North West Company, died. As it had been suggested that Sir Alexander MacKenzie's resignation from the North West Company in 1799 was the result of a policy clash with McTavish, the union of the North West Company and Sir Alexander MacKenzie and Company in 1804 seems to give some weight to this suggestion. Evidence is found in the Minute Book of the North West Company¹ that the opposition had caused serious disruption in the trade of the North West Company during the five years of its organized opposition, and along with "other causes" had seriously diminished the profits on shares. It was felt that retrenchment and a system of economy were necessary throughout the country.

As a result of these two considerations an agreement was reached in November of 1804 between the North West Company and Sir Alexander MacKenzie and Company in which the shares of the North West Company were increased to one hundred, seventy-five of which were

¹The North West Company Minute Book 1801-1811 with a memorandum of 1825, Canadian Archives, Photostat, p. 27.

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retained by the members of the North West Company, and twenty-five allotted to the members of the defunct Sir Alexander MacKenzie and Company. The financial establishments of Sir Alexander MacKenzie and Company in Montreal and London also shared in one quarter of the business of purchasing supplies and the disposal of furs. The amalgamation was to begin with the 1805 returns, and was to continue in force for a period of eighteen years, according to the agreement of 1802 of the North West Company.¹

¹L. R. Masson, Les Bougeois De La Compagnie Du Nord-Ouest, vol. II, p. 483-484.

CHAPTER FIVE

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THE NORTH WEST COMPANY AND BRITISH COMPETITION

Although with the agreement reached in 1804 all effective competition emanating from Montreal was submerged, the North West Company, in the years which followed, faced a situation which had plagued them with ever-increasing urgency since the early years of the Company. Competition from the Hudson's Bay Company, coupled with dwindling fur supplies and the problems of transporting furs and supplies to and from the ever-extending fur regions, eventually forced the North West Company to capitulate.

The Hudson's Bay Company, under the charter granted them in 1670, was given full rights to all lands drained by the rivers flowing into Hudson and James Bays. Friction resulted from this grant during the French Regime, as the French explorers and traders pushed further into the reaches of central and western Canada. After the fall of New France, a legacy of distrust and hatred developed between the traders from Canada who followed in the footsteps of the French voyageur, and the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company. The traders from Canada moved in swiftly, establishing posts west of Lake Superior, tapping reserves of the Hudson's Bay

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Company, and forcing its members to leave the shores of the bays and search out the furs as the Canadians were doing. Competition became keen and aggressive, and as the fur regions dwindled, the Canadian and the Hudson's Bay employee moved further west and eventually over the Rocky Mountains. But herein lay one major factor in the collapse of the North West Company. With their lines extended so far to the west, the fur trade via the water routes to Lake Superior and on to Montreal became uneconomic. The only solution lay in an outlet through Hudson or James Bay.

To remedy the situation, the North West Company made overtures as early as 1804 to the Hudson's Bay Company to reach some agreement regarding the passage of their furs through Hudson Bay. At the general meeting of the North West Company on July 5, 1805, the partners of the Company were informed that the Hudson's Bay Company refused the North West Company permission for transit of furs through the bays unless some indemnity were granted them. The partners thus empowered their agents to offer up to two thousand pounds sterling for transportation of furs via the Nelson or Hays Rivers. In addition, the North West Company proposed to withdraw their posts from the East Main and Moose Rivers, and to relinquish in the future all trade

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within the territory claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company.¹ This offer was refused consideration by the Hudson's Bay Company. Other subsequent attempts by the North West Company were also refused.²

The North West Company's problems were complicated still further when Lord Selkirk entered the picture. Termed a humanitarian by some and an obstructionist by others, Lord Selkirk instituted a number of schemes for settlement of poor Scottish and Irish farmers in Canada. In 1803, eight hundred settlers were sent to Prince Edward Island to land provided for them by Lord Selkirk. In 1810, he obtained a controlling interest of shares of the Hudson's Bay Company, and concluded an agreement with the Company, in which he was granted in perpetuity the territory on the Red River, and the land west and south of the Winnipeg River and Lake Winnipeg. This territory was to be colonized by Scottish settlers, with the stipulation that Lord Selkirk was to find two hundred men annually for the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and after the settlement was complete was to supply certain provisions to

¹The North West Company Minute Book, 1801-1811 with a memorandum of 1825, Canadian Archives, p. 36.

²Gordon Charles Davidson, The North West Company, p. 130-132.

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the Company yearly.¹

The North West Company, cognizant of Lord Selkirk's intention, made a vain attempt in 1811 to buy sufficient shares of the Hudson's Bay Company to thwart Lord Selkirk's plans. In all, they were able to buy only twenty-four thousand pounds of Hudson's Bay stock. One hundred and three thousand pounds of shares were issued; twenty-five thousand of these were held in trust, and the rest were controlled by Lord Selkirk and his interests.²

From the standpoint of the North West Company, the chief objection to the colony was that it constituted a direct attempt on the part of Lord Selkirk to destroy their trade by establishing settlement across their lines of communication from Fort William to the interior. The North West Company claimed, in addition, that they were the legitimate successors of the French traders who controlled that region during the period of the French Regime.³

¹Selkirk Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, vol. XXX, M Series, vol. DCCLXII, p. 9119.

²Selkirk Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, vol. XXX, M Series, vol. DCCLXII, p. 9116.

³Gordon Charles Davidson, The North West Company, p. 118-119.

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The urgency of the North West Company's position can be realized from the tenor of a letter from Simon McGillivray to the North West partners, dated at London, April 9, 1812.¹ In it, Mr. McGillivray referred to the Hudson's Bay Company as "a mere machine in the hands of Lord Selkirk". He felt that Lord Selkirk must "be driven to abandon his scheme of colonization, for his success would strike at the very existence of our trade".

Settlement in the disputed colony was begun in 1812; and subsequent groups of settlers followed in the years 1813, 1814, and 1815. Under the first governor of the colony, Miles MacDonnell, the Selkirk settlement was far from successful. Crop failures, difficulties arising from the treacherous overland route from Hudson Bay over which the settlers passed to reach the colony, and increasing disfavour with the North-westerners all contributed to the lack of success.

In an effort to secure as large a supply of food as possible for the colony, Governor MacDonnell instituted, in 1814, an embargo on the export of pemican from the settlement. MacDonnell felt that this measure was an absolute necessity for the successful

¹Selkirk Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, vol. XXX, M Series, vol. DCCLXII, p. 9109.

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survival of the colony; it has been suggested, however, that through the embargo he hoped to rid the area of Northwesters, who were wholly dependent on food produced there to maintain their lines from Lake Winnipeg to Lake Superior.¹

The servants of the North West Company ignored the order set forth by Governor MacDonnell and continued their routine activities in the area. Accordingly, Governor MacDonnell with the help of settlers from the area seized, in the spring of 1814, provisions of the North West Company which had been gathered the previous winter and left at the mouth of the Red River for the voyageurs from the west bound to Fort William. As a consequence, the furs were not taken out that year and supplies were held up.²

Retaliation on the part of the North West Company was forthcoming the following year. John McDonald, in a letter to Daniel McKenzie, dated at Alexandria, February 12, 1815, revealed the intention of some members of the North West Company to cause a disturbance in the colony that spring. In McDonald's opinion the

¹Arthur S. Morton, A History of The Canadian West to 1870-71, p. 558.

²S. McGillivray to Earl Bathurst, Montreal, June 19, 1815, Selkirk Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, vol. XXX, M Series, vol. DCCLXII, p. 9157-9158.

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governor of the colony, by seizing the supplies of the North West Company, had revealed the intention of the Hudson's Bay Company to effect a complete overthrow of the North West Company. McDonald felt that the governor's plan was premature and that he would meet more resistance than he had anticipated.¹

On June 7, 1815, the situation reached a climax; no real battle ensued, but the colonists were forced to flee the settlement, and Governor MacDonnell was taken prisoner on a warrant charging him with theft of pemmican from North West Company forts. MacDonnell was taken to Montreal and charged with theft, but he was never tried. This ended the first phase of the struggle between Lord Selkirk and the North West Company.

Seven days after the colonists were dispersed, Simon McGillivray, in a letter to Earl Bathurst, dated at Montreal, June 14, 1815, revealed his opinion that an attempt to establish a colony in the west would inevitably lead to bloodshed between the settlers and the Indians. He went on to state that he had done everything possible to discourage emigration from Scotland to the Selkirk Colony.²

¹Selkirk Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, vol. XXX, M Series, vol. DCCLXII, p. 9179.

²Selkirk Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, vol. XXX, M Series, vol. DCCLXII, p. 9160.

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Colin Robertson¹ felt, on the other hand, that the Indians were not opposed to the settlement at Red River, and that they regretted the destruction of the colony. The Northwesters alleged that the Indians and half-breeds who attacked the colony had done so because they were against settlement and feared the loss of their lands. Certainly the North West Company was correct in saying that the colony had been attacked by Indians and half-breeds, but by their own admission, these Indians and half-breeds were instigated by members of the North West Company.²

The Selkirk Colony was reorganized that fall by William Semple, the new governor of the settlement, who arrived in November with another group of settlers. Friction with servants of the North West Company subsided and the colonists spent a peaceful winter. Early in the spring of 1816, however, Colin Robertson instituted action against the North West Company, seized Fort Gibraltar, made prisoners of the inmates, and took the private papers of Duncan Cameron.³ This action proved ill-advised, as the Northwesters still had at

¹Colin Robertson, Journal, Selkirk Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, p. I7343.

²Charles McKenzie to John Severight, Selkirk Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, vol. XXVIII, M Series, vol. DCCLXX, p. 8536.

³Colin Robertson, Journal, Selkirk Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, p. I7492-3.

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their disposal half-breeds easily stirred up in any cause. A climax was reached on June 19th.¹ A pitched battle resulted at Seven Oaks in which twenty-two Selkirk colonists, including Governor Semple, were killed. This unprecedented bloodshed, committed by irresponsible half-breeds, but provoked directly by members of the North West Company, opened the last phase of the bitter struggle that ended with the submission of the once proud fur company of Montreal.²

Word of the massacre reached Lord Selkirk as he was proceeding to his colony by way of the Great Lakes, accompanied by a sizeable force of the disbanded De Meuron and De Watteville Regiments which had taken part in the War of 1812, and had volunteered to settle in the western Colony.³

Lord Selkirk immediately set out for Fort William with his soldier-settlers. He reached the fort in August and seized it in his capacity as Justice of

¹Robert Henry to Alexander Henry, Fort William, June 3, 1816, Selkirk Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, vol. XXIX, M Series, vol. DCCLXXI, p. 8727.

²John Rowan to Dr. Rowan, Selkirk Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, vol. XXVIII, M Series, vol. DCCLX, p. 8666.

³Representations by Lord Selkirk 1816-1820, Selkirk Papers, Canadian Archives, Transcript, vol. XLVII, M Series, vol. DCCLXXIX, p. 12612-12614.

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the Peace, a commission from Sir Gordon Drummond.¹ Prisoners taken at the Battle of Seven Oaks were released, the wintering partners of the Company were arrested with the exception of Daniel MacKenzie, and the business of the fort was halted.² The wintering partners, including William McGillivray, but excluding Daniel MacKenzie, were sent to Montreal as prisoners, along with a full account of the proceedings for Sir John Coape Sherbrooke, the Governor-General of Canada. Lord Selkirk then drew up an agreement to submit reciprocal injuries and losses to arbitration, and received the North West Company's approval through the signature of Daniel MacKenzie. In May of the same year Lord Selkirk left Fort William for his western settlement.

The partners of the North West Company, sent to Montreal as prisoners, readily gained their freedom in Lower Canada, where their cause was viewed with sympathy. They returned to Fort William and re-occupied their establishment in the summer of 1817.

Governor-General Sherbrooke, when he realized the serious nature of the situation, commissioned two

¹Ibid, p. 12615.

²Joseph Vandersluys, A Narrative of Occurrences in the Indian Countries of North America, Toronto, MacMillan, 1817, p. 76.

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men, Lieutenant-Colonel William Batchelor Coltman, and Major Fletcher, to leave for the northwest to investigate the occurrences and to establish law and order. They carried with them the revocation of all magisterial commissions west of Sault Sainte Marie. Governor-General Sherbrooke issued in the name of the Prince Regent a proclamation ordering both parties to discontinue hostilities, restore property, and cease obstructing transportation.¹

The struggle shifted to the west once again and resulted in intermittent warfare between the servants of the North West Company, and the Hudson's Bay Company and the Selkirk colonists on the other hand. Three years of reciprocal raiding followed the re-occupation of the North West Company's post at Fort William. But the great Company was beginning to totter, not only through the struggle it was waging with the Hudson's Bay Company and Lord Selkirk, but also from the ever-increasing geographic disadvantage under which the North West Company was operating. The tentacles of the great Company had reached so far into the expanding fur areas that it was weakened at the core.

The route through the Great Lakes to the

¹Gordon Charles Davidson, The North West Company, p. 150-1.

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distant reaches of the west was extended beyond an economical point; efforts to gain entry through Hudson Bay had failed, and financial difficulties, a result of this and the absence of a reserve fund began to be felt.¹

A letter from Simon McGillivray and Thomas Thain to Duncan Cameron bears out this fact when they reported that the trade of the North West Company had been unproductive for some years, pointing out that it had been unproductive for the agents as well as for the partners of the concern.² However, letters sent to the editor of The Canadian Courant by a creditor of the agents of the North West Company pointed out that in 1820 at Fort William an agreement was reached between the agents and some of the wintering partners of the North West Company to continue the existing agreement for a period of ten years, from 1822 to 1832. That writer felt that since an agreement was reached in 1820 to renew the concern, the North West Company was not ruined in 1820 as some people felt.³

¹Documents Relating To The North West Company, W. Stewart Wallace, ed., p. 27.

²Letter Book of Daniel Sutherland, Alexander MacKenzie and Company, Canadian Archives, Photostat, p. 116.

³Letters addressed to the Editor of The Canadian Courant by a creditor of the agents of the North West Company, 1830, Masson Collection, p. 10.

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Late in 1820, Simon McGillivray, apparently on his own initiative, entered into negotiations with the Hudson's Bay Company and an agreement to unite was reached on March 26, 1821.¹ Simon and William McGillivray, and Nicholas Garry, deputy Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, arrived in Fort William on July 21, 1821 to work out the agreement with the assembled partners of the North West Company. Apparently, only after much discussion and dispute, the McGillivrays succeeded in persuading the partners to agree to the covenant of the Hudson's Bay Company.²

An agreement reached at that time was to continue for a period of twenty-one years, commencing with the year 1821 and ending in 1842. The profits of the concern were divided into one hundred shares, sixty of which were assigned to the stockholders and forty assigned to the chief factors and traders. The forty shares assigned to the latter group were divided into eighty-five shares, fifty of which were assigned to twenty-five factors, each receiving two shares, twenty-eight assigned to the chief traders, and seven retained

¹Gordon Charles Davidson, The North West Company, p. 176.

²Diary of Nicholas Garry, Proceedings and Transactions of The Royal Society of Canada, Second Series, sec. 2, vol. VI, May 1900, Toronto, Copp-Clark, p. 178.

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for older servants for a period of seven years, after which they were to be assigned to senior clerks promoted to chief traders. Of the eighty-five shares assigned to the factors and traders, the partners of the North West Company received fifty, fifteen chief factors receiving thirty shares, seventeen traders receiving seventeen shares, with three retired shares assigned to that group.¹

In an effort to settle the difficulties which were in part responsible for the union of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, namely, the fierce competition and the resultant intermittent warfare, the government of Great Britain regulated the trade with "an Act for Regulating the Fur Trade, and establishing a Criminal and Civil Jurisdiction within certain parts of North America", July 2, 1821. With it, the Government granted to the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company an exclusive privilege to trade with the Indians within specified limits for a period of twenty-one years. This act was passed in the name of the Hudson's Bay Company.²

¹Selkirk Papers, Sir George Simpson's Proposals-1821, Canadian Archives, Transcript, vol. LXXII, p. 19005-6.

²Colonial Office Records, Canadian Archives, Transcript, Series G, vol. LX, Colonial Secretary to Maitland, 1821-1824, p. 11.

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Thus with the union of the two companies the *raison d'être* of Fort William ceased to exist. The long sought passage for furs of the North West Company through Hudson Bay had been realized with the amalgamation; Fort William, commanding the entrance to an intricate and costly route to the west, declined.

The route, however, had served its purpose during two distinct periods of Canadian history. In the French Regime it served the explorer and the trader, for a time, in their western advance. During the English period, although forgotten for a long period, it came into use again by chance when necessity demanded it. And in each case a fort was built at the mouth of that mighty river system to act as a port, a place of exchange, and a meeting place for the barons of the trade from Montreal. Those were the only reasons for the existence of a Fort William; and with the shift of the fur trade to the distant west, and with the use of the shorter route, Fort William began its swift decline.

Nicholas Garry, in a letter to Governor Williams of the Hudson's Bay Company, dated at Fort William, July 5, 1821, revealed that there was a large supply of goods in store at that fort, and suggested that, since the fur trade would be conducted in the future through Hudson Bay, the maintenance of such a

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large depot would be useless and would only entail expense and risk.¹ By the year 1828, the inventory of goods, the property of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort William, revealed the declining importance of that post. In all, there were goods held there, the value of which amounted to two-hundred and thirty-eight pounds, five shillings and eleven pence. Included in this inventory was a list of farm animals that still remained at the fort. Fort William continued as a minor post of the Hudson's Bay Company until it was closed in 1878, when John McIntyre, the last factor, retired.²

Nothing remains to-day of the extensive fort which existed on the present site of the City of Fort William. The railway reached Fort William in 1872, just at the time when the trade in that area was finished, and the remaining buildings of the post were dismantled to make way for rail and port facilities.

Within a short period of years, Fort William once again became an important link in the development of the Canadian west. To it began to flow a new product, wheat, for trans-shipment via the Great Lakes to eastern

¹Diary of Nicholas Garry, p. 178.

²W. Stewart Wallace, The Pedlars from Quebec and Other Papers on the Nor'Westers, p. 79.

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ports and thence to European markets. With the completion of the St. Lawrence Seaway, Fort William will undoubtedly gain added importance in the development of Canadian commerce and industry as the Canadian terminal of the inland waterway.

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Description de
La route qui mène du Lac Supérieur au Lac Des
 Assinibouels¹.

Sortant du Lac Supérieur, on entre dans la rivière de Gamanistigouen. On monte cette rivière pendant 10 lieues, après quoy il y a un portage d'environ 10 arpents, où l'on hisse les canots avec des lignes. Après ce portage il y a un rapide d'environ 2 lieues, et dudit rapide il y a portage d'un arpent; à 3 lieues dudit portage il s'en trouve un autre d'une lieue, nommé le portage du chien; après lequel portage l'on tombe dans un lac d'environ 3 lieues de long pour regagner la mesme rivière de Gaministigouen, que l'on suit pendant 15 lieues; ensuite de quoy l'on trouve un portage d'une lieue, et là il se trouve un lac qui n'a point de décharge, estant au milieu d'une savane. Ce lac a environ 10 arpents de traverse et est à la hauteur des terres. Au bout de ce lac l'on fait un portage dans une savane d'environ une lieue; ensuite l'on tombe dans une rivière qui a environ 10 lieues et qui descend dans un lac que l'on nomme le Lac au Canot, et l'on

¹Pierre Margry, Découverts De Français Dans L'Ouest, 1614-1754, Paris, Maisonneuve et Le Clerc, 1888, vol. VI, p 495-496.

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marche environ dans ce lac 6 lieues sur la droite, et on entre dans une anse, où l'on fait un portage dans une pointe de trembles, que l'on traverse d'environ 3 arpents, d'où l'on tombe dans une petite rivière remplie de folles avoines, dans laquelle l'on marche environ deux jours en canot, faisant environ 10 lieues par jour; après l'on trouve une chute, où l'on fait un portage d'environ un arpent, au bout duquel il se trouve un détroit de roches d'environ un arpent, qui tombe à l'embouchure du Lac des Crists ou Cristinaux, qui a environ 500 lieues de tour, que l'on suit en tirant sur la gauche pendant 8 lieues, au bout desquelles ce lac décharge et forme la rivière Takamaniouen autrement appelée par les Crists, Ouchichiq, laquelle rivière on descend pendant six jours, faisant au moins 80 lieues sans rapide. A 2 lieues, en entrant dans cette rivière, il se rencontre une chute, où l'on fait un petit portage d'environ demi-arpent. Il se rencontre encore dans cette rivière deux autres pareilles petites chutes d'où l'on fait les portages au-dessus desdites chutes; ensuite l'on tombe dans ce Lac aux Isles, autrement appelé les Assiniboiles ou Gens de la Pierre-Noire, qui a 500 lieues de tour. Ce lac, à gauche en y entrant, est bordé de pays pelés, et le costé de la main droite est fourni de toutes sortes de bois et rempli de quantité d'isles; du bout de ce lac

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il se trouve encore une rivière, qui tombe dans la mer
du Ouest, suivant le rapport des Sauvages.

Irving's Fort William¹

Fort William, the scene of this important annual meeting was a considerable village on the banks of Lake Superior. Here, in an immense wooden building, was the great council hall, as also the banqueting chamber, decorated with Indian arms and accoutrements, and the trophies of the fur trade. The house swarmed at this time with traders and voyageurs, some from Montreal, bound to the interior posts; some from the interior posts, bound to Montreal. The councils were held in great state, for every member felt as if sitting in parliament, and every retainer and dependent looked up to the assemblage with awe, as to the House of Lords. There was a vast deal of solemn deliberation, and hard Scottish reasoning, with an occasional swell of pompous declamation.

These grave and weighty councils were alternated by huge feasts and revels, like some of the feasts described in highland castles. The tables in the great banqueting-room groaned under the weight of game of all kinds; of venison from the woods, and fish from the

¹Washington Irving, Astoria, New York, Crowell, (n. d.), p. 25-26.

lakes, with hunters' delicacies, such as buffaloes' tongues, all served up by experienced cooks brought for the purpose. There was no stint of generous wine, for it was a hard-drinking period, a time of loyal toasts, and bacchanalian songs, and brimming bumpers.

While the chiefs thus revelled in the hall, and made the rafters resound with bursts of loyalty and old Scottish songs, chanted in voices cracked and sharpened by the northern blast, their merriment was echoed and prolonged by a mongrel legion of retainers, Canadian voyageurs, half breeds, Indian hunters, and vagabond-hangers-on, who feasted sumptuously without on the crumbs that fell from their table, and made the welkin ring with old French ditties, mingled with Indian yelps and yellings.

Such was the North-West Company in its powerful and prosperous days, when it held a kind of feudal sway over a vast domain of lake and forest. We are dwelling too long, perhaps, upon these individual pictures, endeared to us by the associations of early life, when, as yet a stripling youth, we have sat at the hospitable boards of the "Mighty Northwesters" then lords of the ascendant at Montreal, and gazed with wondering and inexperienced eye at their baronial was-sailing, and listened with astonished ear to their tales

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of hardship and adventures. It is one object of our task, however, to present scenes of the rough life of the wilderness, and we are tempted to fix these few memorials of a transient state of things fast passing into oblivion; for the feudal state of Fort William is at an end; its council chamber is silent and deserted; its banquet hall no longer echoes to the burst of loyalty, or the "auld world" ditty; the lords of the lakes and forests have passed away; and the hospitable magnates of Montreal--where are they!

Franchère's Account of Fort William¹

Fort William is situated on Lake Superior, at the mouth of the Kaministiquia River, about 45 miles north of old Grand Portage. It was built in 1805, when the two rival Canadian companies were united, and was named in honour of Mr. (now the Honourable) William McGillivray, principal agent of the Northwest Company. The proprietors, perceiving that the old fort of Grand Portage was on the territory claimed by the American government, resolved to demolish it and build another on the British territory. No site appeared more advantageous than the present for the purposes intended; the river is deep, of easy access, and offers a safe harbour for shipping. It is true they had to contend with all the difficulties consequent on a low and swampy soil; but by incredible labour and perseverance they succeeded in draining the marshes and reducing the loose and yielding soil to solidity.

Fort William has really the appearance of a fort, with its palisade fifteen feet high, and that of

¹Gabriel Franchère, Narrative of a Voyage to The Northwest Coast of America, J. V. Huntington, tr., New York, Redfield, 1854, p. 338-344.

a pretty village, from the number of edifices it encloses. In the middle of a spacious square rises a large building elegantly constructed, though of wood, with a long piazza or portico, raised about five feet from the ground, and surmounted by a balcony, extending along the whole front. In the centre is a saloon or hall, sixty feet in length by thirty in width, decorated with several pieces of painting, and some portraits of the leading partners. It is in this hall that the agents, partners and clerks, interpreters and guides take their meals together at different tables. At each extremity of the apartment are two rooms; two of these are destined for the two principal agents; the other two to the steward and his department. The kitchen and servants' rooms are in the basement. On either side of this edifice, is another of the same extent, but of less elevation; they are divided by a corridor running through its length, and contain each a dozen pretty bedrooms. One is destined for the wintering partners, the other for the clerks. On the east of the square is another building similar to the last two, and intended for the same use, and a warehouse where the furs are inspected and repacked for shipment. In the rear of these, are the lodging-house of the guides, another fur-warehouse, and finally a powder magazine. The last

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is of stone, and has a roof covered with tin. At the angle is a sort of bastion, or look-out place, commanding a view of the lake. On the west side is seen a range of buildings, some of which serve for stores, and others for workshops; there is one for the equipment of the men, another for the fitting out of the canoes, one for the retail of goods, another where they sell liquors, bread, pork, butter, etc., and where the treat is given to the travellers who arrive. This consists in a white loaf, half a pound of butter, and a gill of rum. The voyageurs give this tavern the name of Cantine Salope. Behind all this is another range, where we find the counting-house, a five square building and well-lighted; another storehouse of stone, tinroofed; and a jail, not less necessary than the rest. The Voyageurs give it the name of pot au beurre--the butter tub. Beyond these we discover the shops of the carpenter, the tinsmith, the blacksmith etc.; and spacious yards and sheds for the shelter, reparation, and construction of canoes. Near the gate of the fort, which is on the south, are the quarters of the physician, and those of the chief clerk. Over the gate is a guard-house.

As the river is deep at its entrance, the company has had a wharf constructed, extending the whole length of the fort, for the discharge of the vessels

which it keeps on Lake Superior, whether to transport its furs from Fort William to Sault Sainte Marie, or merchandise and provisions from Sault Sainte Marie to Fort William. The land behind the fort and on both sides of it, is cleared and under tillage. We saw barley, peas, and oats, which had a very fine appearance. At the end of the clearing is the burying-ground. There are also, on the opposite bank of the river, a certain number of log-houses, all inhabited by old Canadian Voyageurs, worn out in the service of the company, without having enriched themselves. Married to women of the country, and encumbered with large families of half-breed children, these men prefer to cultivate a little Indian corn and potatoes, and to fish for a subsistence, rather than return to their native districts, to give their relatives and former acquaintances certain proofs of their misconduct or their imprudence.

Fort William is the grand depot of the Northwest Company for their interior posts, and the general rendezvous of the partners. The agents from Montreal and the wintering partners assemble here every summer, to receive the returns of the respective outfits, prepare for the operations of the ensuing season, and discuss the general interests of their association. The greater part of them were assembled at the time of our arrival. The wintering hands who are to return

with their employers, pass also a great part of the summer here; they form a great encampment on the west side of the fort, outside the palisades. Those who engage at Montreal or Rainy Lake, and who do not winter, occupy yet another space, on the east side. The winterers or hivernants, give to these last the name of *Mangeurs de lard*, or pork-eaters. They are also called *comers* and *goers*. One perceives an astonishing difference between these two camps which are composed sometimes of three or four hundred men each; that of the pork-eaters is always dirty and disorderly, while that of the winterers is clean and neat.

To clear its land and improve its property, the company inserts a clause in the engagements of all who enter its service as canoe-men, that they shall work for a certain number of days during their stay at Fort William. It is thus that it has cleared and drained the environs of the fort, and has erected so many fine buildings. But when a hand has once worked the stipulated number of days, he is forever after exempt, even if he remains in the service twenty or thirty years, and should come down to the fort every summer.

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ABSTRACT OF
Fort William and The Fur Trade¹

Fort William, or Kaministiquia, as it was known during the French Regime, and the water route which it commanded from the Great Lakes to the western plains, played an important role in the development of the fur trade in Canada. It is the purpose of this thesis to illustrate the importance of Fort William during the period of the fur trade, and to show its importance in the development of that trade.

The first fort established at Fort William was erected by Greysolon Dulhut. Ten years later, in 1688, Jacques de Noyon discovered the Kaministiquia Route. This route was used by French traders and explorers until the Grand Portage Route, forty miles to the southwest, became the popular route westward.

After the conquest, the Grand Portage Route was used by the British traders until it was declared within the territorial limits of the United States. During this period the North West Company was organized

¹M. A. Thesis presented by John Stephenson, in 1959, to the Department of History of the University of Ottawa.

to combat better the risks of the trade and British opposition. The Kaministiquia Route was re-discovered by chance, just as the North West Company found itself without an economic route to the west. From that time, until the union of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821, it was used exclusively by the Canadian traders. But as the traders reached further westward the Kaministiquia Route became economically unsound. That factor, along with the dispute with the Hudson's Bay Company over the Red River Settlement, eventually forced the North West Company to abandon its Canadian character and seek union with the Hudson's Bay Company.

Fort William and the route which it commanded declined swiftly. Furs from that time onward were shipped through Hudson Bay to Europe. Thus the economic importance of Fort William was eclipsed until the advent of the railroad.