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Red River Revisited



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- foster the preservation of property relevant to an appreciation of the history of Manitoba
- assist in the formation and work of local historical societies in furthering the objectives of the Society throughout Manitoba

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Louis Riel and his councillors, circa 1869.

Source: University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, A13-5.

An early carte-de-visite photograph of Métis leader Louis Riel and members of his provisional government and other councillors, likely taken in 1869, recently returned to Winnipeg to be housed at the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections. The journey home was tortuous as the photo travelled from North America halfway around the world to Australia and back through auction and multiple dealers to Winnipeg. Considered one of the highest-quality copies of this famous photograph taken by photographer Ryder Larsen, it was part of a larger collection of photographs taken around the Red River settlement by James Penrose and Simon Duffin, among others. The photo returned just as the Federal Court has ruled that 200,000 Métis in Canada are “Indians” under the Constitution Act and fall under federal jurisdiction. This ruling will no doubt be the start of many years of negotiations. Louis Riel arrived just when he is needed.

Featured in the photo are: (back row, L-R) Pierre Delorme, Thomas Bunn, François-Xavier Pagé, André Beauchemin; (middle row) John Bruce, Louis Riel, William B. O'Donoghue; (front row) Hugh F. O'Lone, Paul Proulx.

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“Each generation must write its history for itself, and draw its own deductions from that already written; not because the conclusions of its predecessors are untrue, but for a practical reason. Different answers are required, because different questions are asked. Standing at a new point on the road, it finds that fresh ranges of the landscape come into view whose unfamiliar intricacies demand an amplification of traditional charts.”

Richard Henry “R. H.” Tawney (1880–1962)

Red River Revisited:

A Special Issue of *Manitoba History*

On 16 May 2012, the Manitoba Historical Society hosted a one-day symposium entitled “The Selkirk Settlement Revisited: 1812 as seen from 2012”. The symposium was organized to mark the bicentenary of the founding of the Red River Settlement near the Forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. Sponsored by the University of Manitoba’s Department of History, and its Canadian Research Chair in Western Canadian Social History; the Province of Manitoba; the Winnipeg Foundation; and members of the Manitoba Historical Society, the symposium was organized by Dr. Gerald Friesen and Dr. Adele Perry of the History Department at the University of Manitoba, Dr. Harry Duckworth and Dr. Gordon Goldsborough from the Manitoba Historical Society, and by Robert Coutts from Parks Canada.

After introductory remarks from Dr. Friesen, seven papers were presented at the symposium by scholars of Red River history. Talks focussed on a variety of topics from an analysis of the vernacular writings of early Red River historians, to the role of conservative visions of Christianity and community in the first decade of the settlement. The Metis buffalo hunt, the ocean crossings that helped supply the Hudson’s Bay Company and the colony, the role of First Nations leaders such as Peguis, Red River and HBC retrenchment in the West, and an analysis of Metis dress and visual culture, rounded out the day as scholars shared their knowledge of the factors that helped shape the history and culture of the old settlement. Six of these papers have been included in this issue. A seventh paper, one not given at the Symposium, provides readers with a synopsis of the holdings of the Manitoba Archives related to the history of the Red River Settlement. Five book reviews complete the issue.

A panel discussion with Dr. Jack Bumsted and Dr. Adele Perry closed out the day. Bumsted asked the question why the history of the Red River Settlement is not more prominent in Canadian historiography. As an answer, he suggested that Red River is often interpreted as simply the “Selkirk Settlement” with a brief and largely unsuccessful

existence, rather than portrayed as the multicultural, multilingual and multiconfessional society it became. He left the audience to reflect on a couple of additional questions: how would Canadian history have changed if Selkirk had not established the colony, and what might have happened in Red River had Canadians not arrived in 1870? The old colony was moving in interesting directions by that date, Bumsted argued, and it would have been fascinating to see where its distinctive and vibrant culture and politics would have taken it.



Archives of Manitoba, Humphrey Lloyd Hime 27, N9457.

John McKay was the Metis guide to H. L. Hind, a visitor to the Red River Settlement in September and October 1858.

Adele Perry, in looking at the conceptual and political baggage that has been part of the history of Red River, shifted the focus to the idea of the “settler” and how places like Red River were remade and restructured by Europeans. She called attention to the global character and influence of colonies, and how historians can rethink their approaches to the history of colonialism and community by placing issues such as women and gender, reproduction, marriage and family at the centre rather than at the margins of the colonial discourse.

In summary, Symposium papers and discussions spoke to the continuing centrality of indigenous people as kin, as labourers, and as consumers at the places that were colonized. Despite the arrival of Europeans and the opening of Red River to a global context, western territories remained indigenous

spaces where cultures and communities both developed and diverged. And if 2012 marked another anniversary in Canada, “The Selkirk Settlement Revisited: 1812 as seen from 2012” also showed us that not all significant historical events are military and that the past can be engaged and appreciated for more than revisionist political agendas.

Manitoba History would like to thank the authors who have contributed to this special publication and to the Bicentenary of the Red River Selkirk Committee for their generous financial support of this issue.

Robert Coutts
Editor-in-Chief

Red River's Vernacular Historians

by Lyle Dick
Vancouver, British Columbia

On the prairies and in other regions of Canada, students of historiography long assumed that the serious study of history began with the creation of the professional discipline around 1900. According to this scenario, as professionally-trained historians took positions in the region's new universities and began to write works of history, they superseded the non-professionals, who were thereafter characterized as "amateurs."¹ Though the post-1900 dominance of academic historical writing is undeniable, what has not been adequately acknowledged is that the serious study of history in Western Canada did not begin with the creation of the province of Manitoba and the founding of the academic discipline of history. Western Canada's historiography had earlier origins, in the period of the Red River settlement. The non-professionals of the 19th century were not inept partisans, as has sometimes been argued. Most of Red River's historians were not trained at universities but were nevertheless highly skilled at their craft and often motivated by a sense of civic duty to write on issues of pressing social, cultural and political importance to their community.

This article will focus on the work of five historians resident in Old Red River in the period between the arrival of the Selkirk settlers in 1812–1813 and the establishment of Manitoba in 1870. They include Pierre Falcon, Alexander Ross, the Reverend James Hunter, Joseph James Hargrave, and Donald Gunn. To facilitate the placement of these authors into appropriate historical contexts, their major historical works will be considered in the probable chronological order of composition. This article will seek to relate their works to larger forces influencing the community's economic, social and political dynamics, as well as intellectual currents informing the writers' assorted approaches to history. I call them "vernacular" historians, as they were not university-based professionals but nevertheless well prepared by virtue of a combination of book learning, oral tradition and direct experience or the "school of life."²

The only Red River historian whose work was taken seriously by most subsequent observers was Alexander Ross. W. L. Morton characterized Ross as a combination of Herodotus and Thucydides, the two dominant scholars of ancient Greece who have been credited with being the fathers of historiography. Morton wrote that Ross was: "at once the Herodotus and the Thucydides, inquirer and reporter, participant and critic, of history on both sides of the Rockies from 1810 to 1852." Morton held Ross's skills of ethnographic description in high regard; he wrote: "He learned by experience and by enquiry, he was concerned both to deliver a lively narrative and to get his facts straight; he is widely used as a source and even copied; his work is curiously general in that he raised historical themes, notably the contact of cultures and the origin of the state, which recur in later historiography."³

The views of Morton and most other post-1870 practitioners regarding Red River's historians were closely aligned to their attitudes towards Thomas Douglas, the Earl of Selkirk, a historical figure who looms large in this early period of Western Canadian history. Alexander Ross's admiration of Selkirk prepared the groundwork for the warm reception of his own book by the post-Confederation historians, who readily agreed with him that Selkirk was a suitable founding father for the region. Selkirk's heroic status was highlighted in the observances of the first centennial of the Red River Settlement of one hundred years ago. At that time Winnipeg's Canadian Industrial Exhibition organized and published a handsome booklet that celebrated Selkirk as a visionary and progenitor of the province's future economic development and progress.⁴

This exhibition also coincided with a revival of interest in the early history of Manitoba and what Jack Bumsted called "The Quest for a Usable Founder,"⁵ or what I call "The Cult of Selkirk." One of the definitions of a cult is "an instance of great veneration of a person, ideal, or thing, especially as manifested by a body of admirers," and this seems an apt depiction of the reception of Lord Selkirk by the early academic historians in Western Canada after 1870. For the 1912 centennial, Dr. George Bryce wrote an adulatory biography of Douglas, and he was similarly venerated by the scientific historian Chester Martin, whose *Lord Selkirk's Work in Canada* was published only four years later, in 1916.⁶

The 1912 Centennial booklet echoed the emerging post-1870 historiography in its relegation of Aboriginal peoples to the role of welcoming the Selkirk settlers to Red River. Having fulfilled their historical function of introducing this Great White Father to the prairies, the



Lyle Dick, the President of the Canadian Historical Association from 2011 to 2013, has written over 100 historical publications and delivered more than 100 presentations at universities, museums, libraries, and other venues across North America and Europe. In 2012, he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal by the Governor General.



Archives of Manitoba, H. L. Hind 18, N12555.

The continuing presence of Aboriginal peoples at Red River was later recorded by H. L. Hime in his photographs of 1858.

Aboriginal peoples then disappeared from this text just as they largely evaporated from Western Canadian historical discourse over the next 60 years. Of course, as we know, the Aboriginal peoples not only predated Selkirk and his agents but they also did not disappear, as they continued to live in Manitoba and the Northwest after the arrival of Douglas's colonists and throughout the history of Old Red River and the province of Manitoba, right up to the present day. This very fact of the continuing presence of First Nations and Métis peoples, and their status as founding peoples of Canada, require us to re-evaluate the historiography of Western Canada and the role of its constituent peoples in our histories.

[W. L.] Morton wrote that [Alexander] Ross was: "at once the Herodotus and the Thucydides, inquirer and reporter, participant and critic, of history on both sides of the Rockies from 1810 to 1852."

While textual representations of the past from the 19th and early 20th centuries generally omitted reference to Aboriginal peoples, the presence of First Nations people in the colony was extensively documented in visual representations, especially the remarkable collection of paintings of Red River life by the artists Peter Rindisbacher in the 1820s and Paul Kane in the 1840s. Long before

the collection of oral histories by archives and historical societies, both Rindisbacher and Kane recorded the material culture, economy and lifeways of plains First Nations cultures through numerous visual representations, as well as Kane's writings.⁷

In addition to the First Nations, the Métis comprised a major Aboriginal people documented by these observers and prominent throughout Red River history. Often descended from Québécois voyageurs and First Nations women, the Métis by the late 18th century developed a distinctive culture and language known as Michif,⁸ and had begun to settle in the areas of Pembina and Red River by the early 1800s. Prior to settling in the Red River region the Métis were closely associated with service with the Montreal-based companies in the fur trade, in particular, the North West Company. After the amalgamation of the HBC and NWC in 1821, many Métis based at Red River continued to work for the company on fur brigades and hunting for provisioning its posts.

The presence of Métis at Red River reminds us that from the outset the colony was multicultural and multilingual. Its constituent peoples included First Nations, Métis, Québécois, Scottish, Irish, and Swiss settlers, albeit that the Swiss departed following the flood of 1826. Beyond Aboriginal languages, its residents were roughly equally divided between anglophones and francophones during most of the colony's history. Following the influx of large numbers of Anglo-Canadians and other settlers to Manitoba after 1870, this linguistic balance was irrevocably lost and thereafter francophone perspectives were largely omitted in mainstream historical writing in Manitoba and across the West.⁹

At Pembina, Red River, and other localities across the Northwest the Métis developed a distinctive identity rooted in their vernacular culture and traditions, and disseminated primarily through oral transmission. Over many hundreds of years, the First Nations of the Northwest passed on their traditions orally, often from Elders to younger members of their communities.¹⁰ Québécois voyageurs – forerunners of the Métis – developed their own oral traditions, expressed in well-known paddling songs or ballads sung around the campfire and accompanied by the fiddle.¹¹ At Pembina, Red River, and other settlements, many of these songs were arranged as dances and incorporated into the fabric of social

Having fulfilled their historical function of introducing this Great White Father [Selkirk] to the prairies, the Aboriginal peoples then disappeared from this text just as they largely evaporated from Western Canadian historical discourse over the next 60 years.

life of the entire community. We should also not overlook the fact that several Métis residents of the Northwest, including Cuthbert Grant and Pierre Falcon, were schooled in Québec. After the establishment of Roman Catholic Missions in the Northwest beginning in the 1820s, other Métis students learned skills of reading and writing from priests in their native region. Several of these individuals were typically conversant in both oral and written culture, including historical writing, even during the initial phase of settlement.¹²

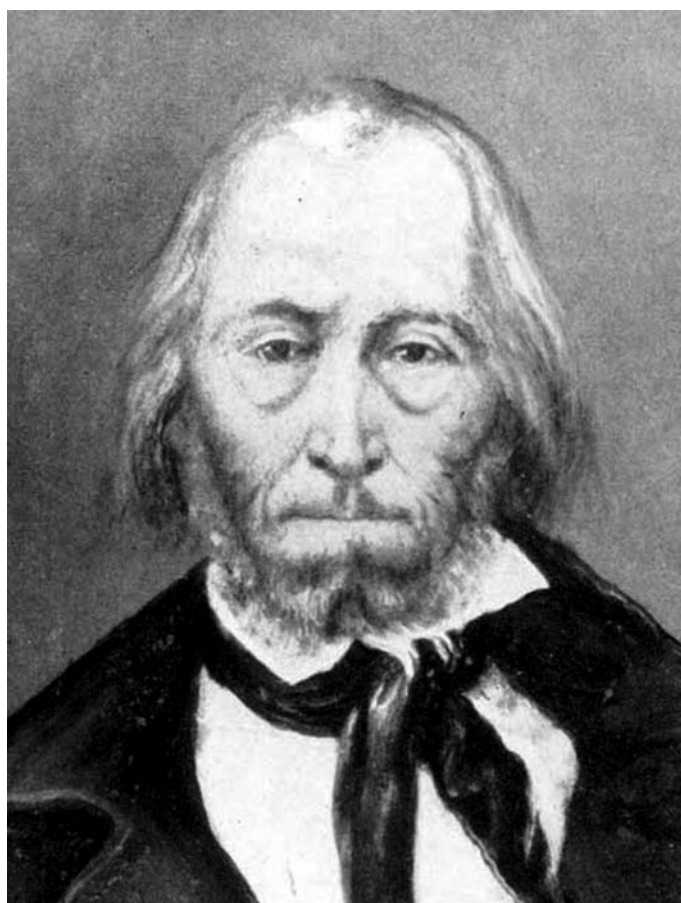
This brings us to the first of Red River's historians to be considered here – the Métis poet and songwriter Pierre Falcon. He was born at Indian Elbow on the upper Assiniboine in 1793, perhaps at Marlborough House, a North West Company fort established in that year. His father was Pierre Falcon senior, a clerk with the NWC and his mother belonged to a Plains First Nation from that area, perhaps of Cree origin. In 1799 Falcon's father brought him back to Québec to be educated at la Prairie, and he returned to the Northwest in 1808 at the age of 16. Following his marriage to Mary Grant, the daughter of Cuthbert Grant, Sr., he continued to work in the area of Fort Tremblant in the upper Assiniboine.¹³

Falcon's work emerged in the context of long-standing oral traditions of both sides of his family's lineage, both First Nations and Québécois. Falcon is best known for his "Chanson de la Grenouillère," said to have been composed by the poet on the evening following the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816. Various versions of the song, its lyrics and music, have been uncovered over the years, including several collected and transcribed by Abbé Picton, and now in the holdings of the Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface.¹⁴ Written in the satirical style that characterizes his other songs, Falcon's "Chanson de la

Grenouillère" documented a Métis perspective on the battle and also related certain basic facts about this incident, as they appeared to Métis witnesses. It is a legitimate and rare account by a Métis witness of that pivotal event in Red River history.¹⁵

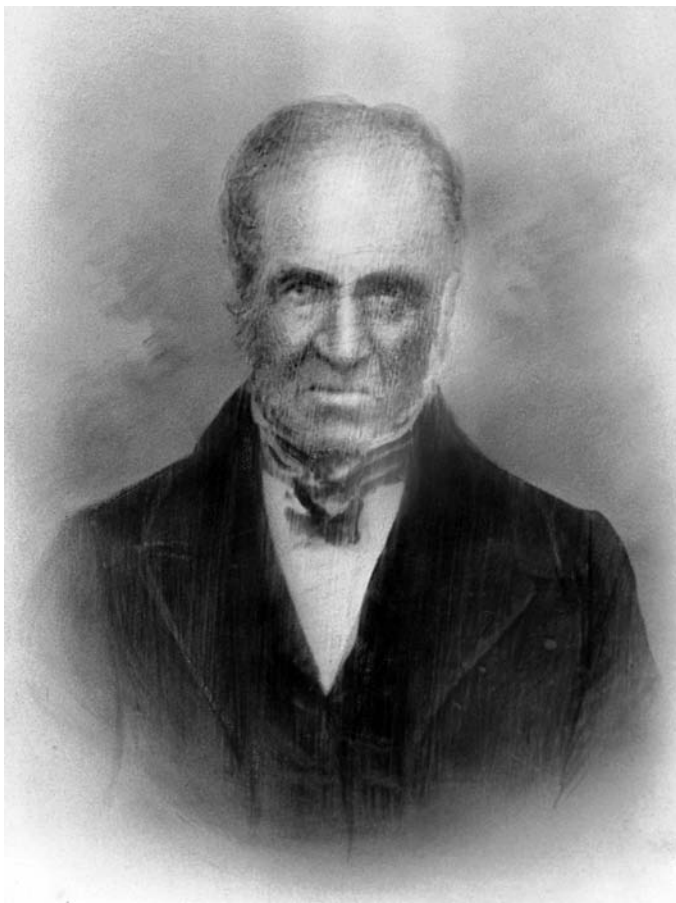
Lord Selkirk was the target of another of Falcon's songs. In "La Danse des Bois Brulés," the author mocked the Scottish earl's seizure of the North West Company's post at Fort William. Referring to both Selkirk and the leader of the Des Meurons mercenaries who took Fort William by force and arrested the NWC leaders, the song satirized the earl's appropriation of the fort and ensconcing himself as commander inside the palisades. Falcon imaginatively constructed a tableau of Selkirk as the host of a grand ball featuring music and dancing by his Métis guests.¹⁶

In 1869, 53 years after writing his "Chanson de la Grenouillère", the aged Pierre Falcon composed "Les Tribulations d'un Roi Malheureux" ("Misfortunes of an Unlucky King"). True to his satirical style, this song made fun of the hapless William McDougall, sent by Prime Minister John A. Macdonald to Red River to oversee the



Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface

Pierre Falcon (1793–1876) had a special talent in being able to take an event and describe it in song. During the victory celebrations that followed the Battle of Seven Oaks, it is said that he composed "Chanson de la Grenouillère," or the "Battle of Frog Plain." Métis sang the ballad in the west and as far east as the St. Lawrence River in their travels as voyageurs.



Archives of Manitoba, N21467.

Alexander Ross (1783–1856), Red River's first historian to publish a written history.

transfer of the region to Canada.¹⁷ Another probable Falcon song, named "The Buffalo Song," comes to us through the unlikely source of Agnes C. Laut's *Lords of the North*, as unpublished primary versions of it have not survived. This song captures both the drama and excitement of the chase and the importance of buffalo hunting to Métis culture and identity.¹⁸

The other major stream of historical transmission was through the writing and reading of historical prose. Three of the four prose writers considered here were born and schooled in Scotland or attended university in that country. Donald Gunn and Alexander Ross were raised on farms in northern Scotland. Joseph James Hargrave was born and raised at fur-trade posts in Rupert's Land managed by his father James Hargrave, but he was sent back to Scotland to be educated at the University of St. Andrew's. Important differences of class and identification among these writers seem to connect to their different socio-economic circumstances – the apparently humble origins of Gunn and Ross on small Scottish farms stand in contrast to Hargrave's more privileged upbringing as a member of an elite family of the Hudson's Bay Company.

In assessing the form and content of Red River historiography, it is important not to overlook the role of readers or audiences in helping shape the works of

these historians. Most of the potential readers at Red River were either HBC servants or Selkirk settlers hailing from Scotland, the Orkney Islands and the Hebrides although a minority came from communities in Ireland.¹⁹ Their emigration came just after the height of the remarkable intellectual phenomenon known as the Scottish Enlightenment. Scholarship on the Scottish Enlightenment traditionally stressed the role of leading thinkers in the large cities, especially Edinburgh and Glasgow. Recently, this emphasis has been revised to acknowledge a larger trend of education and learning across Scotland during that remarkable epoch.

By the 19th century, the Scots were regarded by contemporary British observers as more highly educated than their English compatriots in the United Kingdom, notwithstanding the marked poverty of Scotland.²⁰ The Scots' extensive reliance on books and libraries was documented in the remarkable multi-volume *Statistical Account of Scotland*, published in the 1790s. The *Statistical Account* documented the presence of numerous libraries across Scotland, including public libraries, church and school libraries, circulating and subscription libraries, and private book collections.²¹ Even in very humble surroundings, teachers and ministers disseminated learning and knowledge to students across the country.²² That the Scots brought their traditions of reading and book collecting to the Northwest has been well documented in a series of articles on libraries at fur trade posts in Rupert's Land as well as the Red River Library established in the colony in the mid-19th century.²³ Books and libraries were present throughout the history of Red River, beginning with the collections at Hudson's Bay Company posts and the libraries of the churches, beginning with the Roman Catholic establishment at St. Boniface, which reportedly lost a large collection in a fire at the bishop's house in 1860.²⁴ Books were also obtained by individuals through mail orders or purchase within the colony, as advertised by a bookseller operating near Fort Garry who advertised in the pages of the *Nor'Wester* in 1860.²⁵ These local libraries and book collections established a core of literacy at the heart of Red River society, providing models of writing influencing the works of the historians and also their reception by the settlement's residents. Indeed, works of both history and philosophy were strongly represented in the Red River Collection, especially after the books of Peter Fidler were integrated into the settlement's principal library.²⁶ The important point here is that we are dealing with a society in which literacy was present from the outset, at least for some members of the community, albeit that much of the community's knowledge was also disseminated by word of mouth.

Beyond book learning, the Scottish Selkirk settlers and other Scots serving in the fur trade were closely tied to the folk traditions of their native country, which were given impetus by such notable figures as James Macpherson, compiler of the poems of Ossian published in the 1760s, and the Bard of Scotland, Robert Burns, who composed his

poems in the Scottish vernacular.²⁷ Folk music accompanied by the fiddle was popular in 18th-century Scotland and was part of a broadly-based vernacular culture that encompassed ballads, tales, dancing and other face-to-face interactions, especially in the Highlands region.²⁸

At Red River and across the Northwest, distinctive economies, modes of production and lifeways established the material and social conditions enabling the production of vernacular history in the Northwest. One vernacular culture was rooted in a settled or sedentary agricultural economy in which both written and oral culture were prominent, while another was embedded in an itinerant economy based significantly on buffalo hunting, trading, and transport, in which oral forms of communication predominated. Further, a core of privileged residents, including HBC officers, the clergy and prominent businessmen, formed an elite whose socio-economic and political circumstances differed markedly from either the farmers or hunters. This group was most closely identified with the written forms of communication that came to dominate the affairs of Red River and Manitoba. These were not monolithic or mutually exclusive categories, as many Métis were farmers, and various anglophone residents of Red River were tied to the buffalo economy alongside other economic pursuits. These cultures emerged within different socio-economic structures and relationships and influenced the various writers' orientations towards history, although it must be recognized that each practitioner developed his own voice in relation to a unique positioning in time and space. Even within the small community of Red River, there co-existed several vernacular cultures that were sometimes simultaneously at play in the work of a single author.

The first and probably the best-known vernacular historian to write a history of Red River was Alexander Ross. Born in 1783 and raised on his father's farm in the parish of Dyke, near Inverness, Scotland, Ross left for Canada in 1804 and worked for a period as a schoolteacher in both Québec and Ontario. Later, while working for John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company, he participated in the founding of Fort Astoria on the Columbia River in 1811 before joining the North West Company, with which he served until the merger of the companies in 1821. In 1825, he obtained from Governor George Simpson a 100-acre tract of land at Red River. Settling near Point Douglas, Ross established a farm that he named Colony Gardens. His farm was located near Fort Garry, a logical extension of Ross's close connections to the hierarchy of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Ross's book *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress and Present State* appeared in 1856, the year of his death. Part history and part commentary on Red River society, it was the author's third book published by the London firm Smith Elder and Company. The publishers promoted this work in an advertisement in *The Publishers' Circular* with an excerpt from a review in the *Spectator*: "The subject is novel, curious, and not without interest, while a strong sense of the real obtains throughout. The story is that of a small colony some forty-five years old; including famine, frost,

snow, flood, the plague of birds, grasshoppers, or locusts, mice, with an attack of severe pestilence."²⁹

Ross's identification with the elite in the hierarchy of Red River immediately is suggested in the image he selected for the frontispiece. An engraving of Upper Fort Garry based on an 1840 sketch by Elizabeth Finlayson, spouse of a former chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, this image anticipated the privileged role occupied by the Company in his narrative. Ross's political sympathies could also be inferred from the larger structure of his book, which commenced with an account of the granting of the HBC charter to Prince Rupert and associates by King Charles II of England. Acknowledging disputes prompted by the HBC Charter, Ross invoked the authority of Earl Grey, former Secretary for the British Colonies, who in 1850 declared in favour of the company's authority over Rupert's Land.³⁰ It was one of the very few pieces of written evidence quoted by Ross but it served a critical role in his book, as it established the foundation for his entire approach to the colony's history, centred on the leading role of the HBC and its allies.



Archives of Manitoba, N10619.

James Hunter (1817–1881), shown here with his wife Jean, is now believed to have been the author of a history of the Red River Settlement previously attributed to journalist James Ross (1835–1871). Hunter, then the resident Anglican priest at St. Andrew's parish, had the requisite education, skills, and experience to compose such a history.

The hero of the first part of Ross's book was Lord Selkirk, whom he characterized as "a man of great mind and a good heart," whose "real object" was "the pious and philanthropic desire of instructing civilization into the wilderness." The valorization of Selkirk buttressed Ross's privileging of the role of the HBC and its attendant dominance over the political affairs of the settlement.

In terms of genre, Ross's book showed the strong influence of the picturesque history of the early 19th century, exemplified in the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott. Like Scott, Ross used the technique of developing characters for his book to represent different social classes and forces, personalizing history and presenting arresting tableaux to resonate with readers.³¹ Apart from the frontispiece, Ross did not rely on actual illustrations but instead sought to create vivid images of peoples and characters with words rather than pictures, including extensive accounts of Métis characters and life.

Ross provided an account of the hunting economy of the Métis, although his narrative evinced little sympathy for this people. His relentlessly negative treatment of the

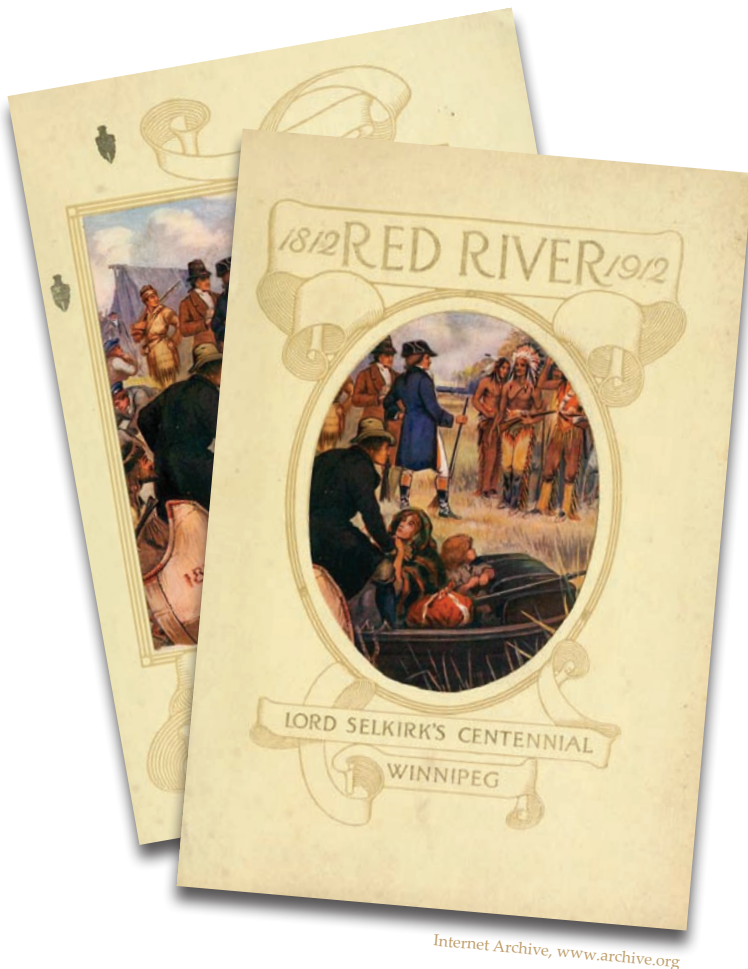
Métis in his book marked the beginning of a hundred years of stereotyping of Aboriginal peoples in Western Canadian historical discourse, as I argued in the article "The Seven Oaks Incident and the Construction of a Historical Tradition."³² For his treatments of the Métis and First Nations people, it is clear that Ross relied on second- or third-hand oral accounts for much of his information. As F. G. Roe showed so extensively in his magisterial *The North American Buffalo*, Ross's reliance on indirect information led him into error regarding the numbers of buffalo taken by Métis hunters and helped prompt his premature conclusions of wanton slaughter.³³

In his treatment of the Battle of Seven Oaks, Ross largely replicated the interpretations advanced in partisan pamphleteering by Selkirk's agents. He went so far as to assert that 26 of Semple's opponents at Seven Oaks subsequently came to a grisly early demise. He took their supposed fate as confirmation of a kind of divine retribution on sinners, an interpretation later endorsed by Joseph James Hargrave. There was little indication of erudition or the critical evaluation of sources in Ross's *The Red River Settlement*. Rather, the author seems to have been preoccupied with preparing a history whose conclusions were determined before he began writing his book.

Like Sir Walter Scott, whose books were enormously popular in this period,³⁴ Ross employed the narrative device of developing composite characters deemed to be representative of larger social groups. Unlike Scott's treatments, Ross's characters were one-dimensional depictions. One such example was his treatment of Baptiste L'Esprit, a fictional Métis resident intended, in Ross's words, to "serve as a portraiture of the whole class."³⁵ Ross presented Baptiste L'Esprit as an aimless wastrel, indolent, and lacking any plans for the future. He wrote:

Among the class illustrated by this character are to be seen many of the old voyageurs, and other waifs and strays of society, as well as the half-breeds, of which it is chiefly composed. They pretend to the character of civilized men, call themselves Christians, and occasionally frequent the church. In all else they are no better than vagrant savages.³⁶

Ross concluded his book with a tribute to his friend Andrew McDermot, a dynamic entrepreneur whose business acumen he regarded as an example of the spirit of free enterprise that would be the salvation of the colony. In introducing the theme of civilization versus savagery in the wilderness, Ross has been credited with defining the colony's identity and its historical role. Yet this imagined identity was achieved through marginalizing Aboriginal peoples in his text, as he constructed them as supposedly savage cultures in opposition to the presumed civilizing influences of European culture and the elite group to which Ross belonged. These assorted treatments served Ross's narrative purpose of supporting his advocacy of dispersing the Aboriginal residents of Red River and



Internet Archive, www.archive.org

A handsome booklet that celebrated Selkirk as a visionary and progenitor of the province's future economic development and progress was published in 1912 by Winnipeg's Canadian Industrial Exhibition as part of celebrations of the first centenary of the Red River Settlement.

transferring control by the HBC to a core of formally educated residents such as himself.³⁷ Notwithstanding the author's subjectivities, Ross's reported facts and interpretations proved to be enormously influential in post-1870 historiography and were embraced by such leading writers at George Bryce, George Stanley, Marcel Giraud and W. L. Morton.

In 1861, only five years after the publication of Ross's book, another vernacular history of the settlement appeared in 16 instalments in the pages of *The Nor'Wester*.³⁸ The colony's only newspaper, *The Nor'Wester* had been established just two years earlier but was already the major source of news and commentary on local affairs for the colonists. In his biography of James Ross in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, the late historian Bill Smith suggested that Ross himself authored the history published in his newspaper. Alternatively, Jack Bumsted has surmised that the author of the history was an Anglican priest. If so, the most likely candidate appears to be the Reverend James Hunter, then the resident Anglican priest at St. Andrew's Church at Little Britain. Of the pool of Anglican ministers at Red River, Hunter had the requisite education, skills and experience to compose such a history, so he seems a likely candidate.³⁹

At the time *The Nor'Wester* history was written, Hunter resided in the rectory at St. Andrew's, a large house but not the grand house he desired. Hunter instead aspired to Bishop's Court, the residence of the Bishop of Rupert's Land, as he hoped to succeed Bishop Anderson in that position, although Hunter's ambition was never realized.⁴⁰ While endorsing annexation to Canada, *The Nor'Wester* author was cool to the concept of an elected legislature. Trained in the feudal hierarchies of the Anglican Church, and aspiring to the Anglican bishop's seat on the Council of Assiniboia, Hunter thereby expressed his own hierarchical opposition to democracy for Red River. Limiting or halting the movement towards democracy was the main goal of his narrative.

Within a decade, another vernacular history of the colony was published by Joseph James Hargrave. The son of the HBC Chief factor James Hargrave and Letitia MacTavish, and the nephew of the future HBC governor William MacTavish, Hargrave was born into the privileged classes of the Northwest. Spending his early years at York Factory, the site of one of the best libraries in the Northwest, Hargrave was also exposed at an early age to reading by his father, who was an avid collector of books. While he was not born in Scotland, Hargrave's family ties to the ancestral homeland were strong and his father sent him back to Scotland to receive a classical education at the University of St. Andrew's.

In 1871, only a year after Manitoba joined Confederation, Hargrave published his book *Red River*, the first monograph on the settlement's society and history published within the new Dominion of Canada. Hargrave's attitudes and implied philosophy in this narrative suggested the influence of Thomas Babington Macaulay, the most widely-read



Archives of Manitoba, N20167.

Joseph James Hargrave (1841–1891) was private secretary to Governor William McTavish in 1869 and was thus perfectly placed to produce a pseudonymous series of letters on the Red River Rebellion, published in the *Montreal Herald* under the name “Red River.” In 1871 Hargrave published *Red River—A History of the Red River Settlement* based on his father's papers and his own recollections of the 1860s.

British historian of the mid-19th century. Macaulay was the quintessential Whig historian, devoted to charting the upward progress of the British Empire in politics, economics and society.⁴¹ Macaulay's *History* was a favourite of James Hargrave and prominent in the family's book collection,⁴² so the younger Hargrave would have grown up exposed to these works alongside other classics of history.

Underscoring his own commitment to progress and technological innovation, Hargrave commenced his book *The Red River* as a travel account of his 1861 voyage across the Atlantic in the *Hibernian*—a steam ship that superseded the age of sail, and by extension the era with which it was associated. Hargrave's valorization of modern technology continued in his account of a subsequent leg of his journey in the steamboat *International* that sailed up the Red River towards the forks of the Red and Assiniboine.⁴³ Having arrived, Hargrave became ensconced at Fort Garry along with other members of the Hudson's Bay Company elite.

Working as a journalist during the first Northwest Resistance of 1869–1870,⁴⁴ Hargrave applied his skills of

observation and on-the-spot reporting in developing a historical treatment of the community, combined with an account of its institutions and social mores. He described a wide range of activities he observed in and around Red River, including cross-cultural practices such as a First Nations dog feast, although his account was one of a detached rather than a sympathetic observer. Hargrave also commented on a wide variety of personalities that imbued his narrative with immediacy, including the Dakota leader Little Crow, who visited the settlement, the controversial figure of John Christian Schultz, future M.P. for Lisgar, and Hargrave's uncle HBC governor William MacTavish, whom he served as secretary at Fort Garry.

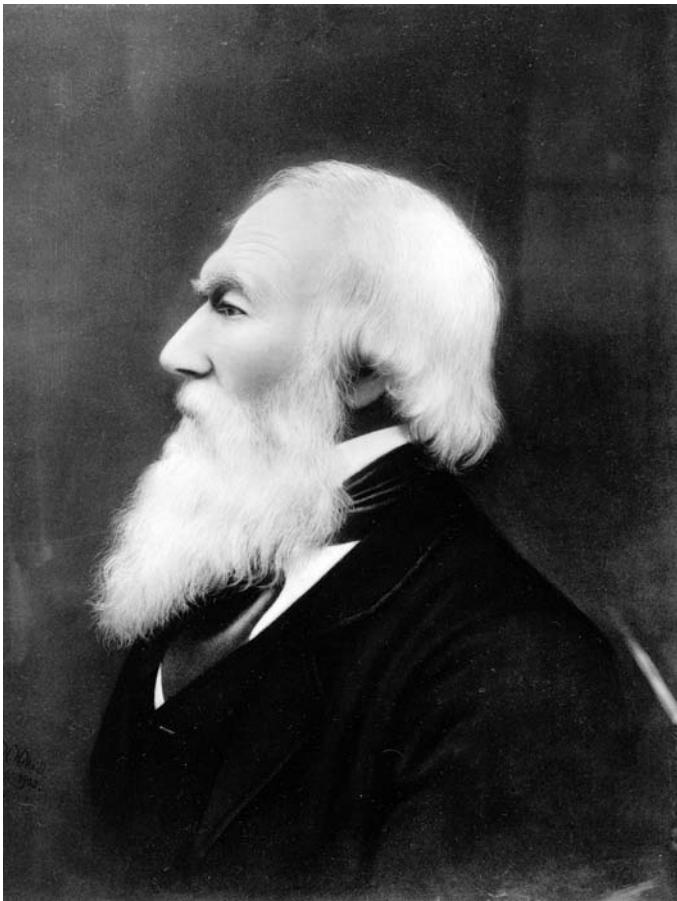
A revealing section of Hargrave's book was his recounting of a trip he made in 1861 to Lower Fort Garry with his colleague William McMurray, another avid reader, to see off the Company of Royal Canadian Rifles, who were departing for York Factory. At Lower Fort Garry, Hargrave and McMurray were hospitably received by Alexander Lillie, the post manager, in the officer's quarters. Hargrave seems to have limited his socializing to the company of other HBC officers at their comfortable lodgings within the stone fort. While at Lower Fort Garry he was very near

the farm and home of Donald Gunn, an Elder, custodian of the Red River Library and future historian of Red River, but there is no indication that he sought an interaction with Gunn on this or other occasions. At the conclusion of his journey, Hargrave returned to the Forks of the Red and Assiniboine to his comfortable refuge within the walls of the Upper Fort. From that vantage point, Hargrave looked forward to Manitoba's annexation to Canada and the business opportunities that would ensue from the province's membership in Confederation. His book was well structured to advance that position.

Donald Gunn was the last of the major historians of Red River and the last to write a historical account during or near the time when the colony was in existence. Some other former residents of Red River, including R. G. Macbeth and A. C. Garrioch, subsequently wrote histories but did not publish them until later. Moreover, they did not deal substantively with governance and other critical issues; so they will not be treated here.⁴⁵ Gunn was 44 years older than J. J. Hargrave and his experiences stretched back to the early era of the Selkirk Settlement but he delayed writing his history until near the end of the period. His principal history did not appear until 1880, two years after his death. Gunn's place in Western Canadian historiography suffered in part from bad timing. His first foray into historical writing, a serialized history of the Red River colony, was cut short by the outbreak of the Red River Resistance, while his larger history was apparently incomplete at his death in 1878.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, Lewis G. Thomas, author of an article on Gunn in *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, expressed high praise for this author's historical work. He wrote: "Gunn disputes with Alexander Ross the title of father of the history of Canada's prairie west." Other observers have been less generous towards Gunn, as they have taken him to task, alternately, for his extended critique of Lord Selkirk, his apparent sympathy with the North West Company, and his criticism of the HBC.⁴⁷ There were other dimensions to Gunn that have not yet been adequately treated by historians. In several respects, he was the most expansive of Red River's historians in terms of the issues he was seeking to address and their implications for Western Canadian politics and society. Gunn has not yet been fully placed into appropriate historical contexts, so I will try to do that now.

Gunn grew up on a small farm in northern Scotland and was educated in the parish school of Halkirk. That was the extent of his formal education. At the age of 16, he accompanied the Selkirk settlers who sailed to Hudson Bay in 1813. After 10 years' service with the HBC at various posts, Gunn joined the ranks of several other retired HBC servants and settled at Red River in 1823. There, he developed a farm on the river at Little Britain, now the parish of St. Andrews. Gunn also assumed responsibility for the Church Missionary Society's parish school at St. Andrews, where he taught for 18 years. Following the establishment of the Red River Library in 1848, Gunn also



Archives of Manitoba, N9976.

A history of Red River colony, written by Donald Gunn (1797–1878) and published in installments in *The Nor'Wester* in 1869, was cut short by the outbreak of the Red River Resistance, and his larger history was apparently incomplete at his death.

assumed the role of custodian of this important collection. Many of its volumes were housed at his stone house at Little Britain.⁴⁸ The Red River Collection was well patronized and reading was reportedly a favoured pastime in the colony.

An early indication of Gunn's populist sympathies was evident in an 1861 exchange of letters to *The Nor'Wester* prompted by a petition dictated by the Ojibwa Chief Peguis to the Aborigines' Protection Society. Businessman Andrew McDermot had been dismissive of Peguis's claims but Gunn responded by providing historical perspectives challenging McDermot's assertions, including correcting the businessman's incorrect historical dates. He supported Peguis's position by referring to the Ojibwa chief's repeated complaint "of the action of the Company in occupying and selling their lands, without giving them any adequate compensation for the same."⁴⁹

Gunn has been given more credit for his contributions in the natural sciences than for his works in history. Characterizing him as "the Nestor of the settlement," the Reverend Dr. Bryce praised his work as a correspondent and collector of specimens for the Smithsonian Institution.⁵⁰ Yet, Gunn's approach to history was similarly scientific, less given to philosophizing than to documenting the past. As a long-term advocate of responsible government and sponsor of initiatives to bring democratic institutions to Red River,⁵¹ he was vitally interested in drawing lessons from history that he considered applicable to civic affairs in his own era. Rather than painting a picturesque portrait of the Red River Settlement in the manner of Ross, he sought to address such issues as models of governance, the role of individuals in history, and the moral requirements of leaders and citizens in Red River society.

Apart from Donald Gunn and Charles Tuttle's *History of Manitoba, ...*, the only other historical work by Gunn that I have been able to identify is his serialized history of Red River published in instalments in *The Nor'Wester* in 1869. In introducing the first article in the history, the editors of the journal stated: "...the name of its author, Donald Gunn, Esq. is a sufficient guarantee for its accuracy and reliability, and by giving it in continuous weekly parts, we will be able to present to the reader a vivid impression of the causes which led to the creation of the Red River Colony; and the chances that preserved it from being destroyed by the warring elements which surrounded it."⁵² This history was cut short by the seizure of *The Nor'Wester's* printing press by insurgents during the Red River Resistance in the fall of 1869.

Gunn's mature historical work was his *History of Manitoba from the Earliest Settlement to 1835*, published posthumously in 1880 as part of a longer narrative completed by Charles Tuttle, who covered the history of

the period between 1836 and 1870–1871. Unlike Ross, Gunn commenced his narrative well before the HBC charter and he placed Manitoba's history into the larger contexts of the exploration of the New World by figures such as Christopher Columbus, Jacques Cartier, and Samuel de Champlain. For his book, Gunn relied heavily on written evidence, especially in the early part of his manuscript devoted to the history of the Hudson's Bay Company, its conflicts with the North West Company, and the role of Lord Selkirk. Clearly, Gunn also drew upon oral evidence, especially the testimony of the Selkirk settlers for his accounts of the colony's early period. He nevertheless stressed the importance of collecting direct testimony from living witnesses rather than relying on hearsay.⁵³ For example, he devoted considerable attention to the hardships and suffering of the Selkirk settlers, beginning with their trans-Atlantic voyages in 1812 and 1813, and relied upon both his own experiences and first-person accounts by the settlers in narrating their difficulties.

Prominent in Gunn's book text were his treatments of three leaders of the Selkirk settlement—Miles Macdonell, Robert Semple, and Lord Selkirk himself, each of whom he saw as inclined to arbitrary action without regard for due process, consultation, and negotiation, as in the case of Macdonell's notorious

Pemmican Proclamation. Regarding the Battle of Seven Oaks of 1816, Gunn argued that Semple's decision to lead a party out to confront the Métis was intemperate and foolhardy. Gunn's treatment of Seven Oaks can fairly be judged the most balanced and dispassionate treatment of that violent episode produced by Red River's vernacular historians and indeed, was more judicious than any of the professional accounts produced in the English language between 1870 and 1970. It rivalled the report of Commissioner William Bachelor Coltman in its approach to weighing of the available evidence although there is no indication that Gunn referred to Coltman's report when he composed his own narrative.⁵⁴ What he did have access to was first-hand knowledge imparted over many decades of discussions with long-term residents of Red River, including both surviving witnesses and other individuals who were present in the colony at the time of Seven Oaks.

Gunn also provided an extended account of Lord Selkirk's engagement of the Des Meurons soldiers, a mercenary army and his extralegal occupation of Fort William, arrest of the NWC principals, and seizure of their property and documents. In Gunn's view, Selkirk further compounded his flouting of laws by illegally confining and transporting the NWC prisoners to Canada for trial, including William McGillivray.

To appreciate Gunn's intentions in highlighting the actions and roles of the colony's early leaders, I believe

As a long-term advocate of responsible government and sponsor of initiatives to bring democratic institutions to Red River, [Gunn] was vitally interested in drawing lessons from history that he considered applicable to civic affairs in his own era.

we need to look at probable intellectual influences on his writing. Unlike Ross and Hargave, whose approaches to history were distinctly of the 19th century, Gunn seems to have reached back to the 18th-century Scottish Enlightenment for inspiration, especially the work and concerns of the great historian and philosopher David Hume. According to several authorities, between the mid-18th and mid-19th centuries, Hume's *History of England* was "the most widely read and influential of the English histories,"⁵⁵ and this was certainly true within his native Scotland. Like Hume, Gunn was pre-occupied with studying and evaluating the specific actions of historical actors in light of the distinctive interplay of custom and experience. Rather than assert a putative human nature rooted in immutable essences, a notion common in the historiography of the 19th and 20th centuries, Gunn limited his discussion to the perceived behaviour of the players, their motives and the consequences of their actions. Similarly, in his *History of England*, Hume narrated British history through the lens of motives and actions of political leaders, especially the British monarchs around whom his narrative was constructed. He was especially concerned with the issue of how democracy could flourish or even survive in contexts of barbarism and lawlessness.⁵⁶ For Hume, a supreme example of lawlessness and the threat to democracy in British history was not posed by a monarch but rather by Oliver Cromwell, the 17th-century dictator of Britain who presided over the abolition of the monarchy, the regicide of Charles I, the dissolution of Parliament, and the bloody invasions and oppression of Scotland and Ireland.⁵⁷

We can establish that Hume's *History* and a published index to its volumes were present in the Red River Library when administered by Gunn in his own home, and so it is probable that he was intimately acquainted with this work and its author's philosophical admonitions and conclusions.⁵⁸ Gunn was also schooled in rural Scotland in a period in which the works of Hume and other major Scottish Enlightenment authors were widely disseminated through subscription libraries.⁵⁹ In an account with some affinities to Hume's dissection of Cromwell, Gunn provided an extended critique of Selkirk, another prince who took the law into his own hands by employing mercenaries in his occupation of Fort William, arrest of the principals of the Northwest Company, and appropriation of their property.⁶⁰

While focussing much of his narrative on Selkirk, in the last three pages of his narrative Gunn introduced what I believe was his overriding concern—the lack of democratic and representative political institutions in the Red River colony. He closed his narrative with an account and critique of the Council of Assiniboia, whose members were largely hand-picked by Governor George Simpson and his successors. Like Hargrave, then, Gunn supported the incorporation of Red River into the new Dominion of Canada, but for very different reasons.⁶¹ Where Hargrave saw business opportunities in Confederation,

Gunn looked forward at long last to the introduction of democratic institutions in the new province of Manitoba within an expanded Dominion that would supersede the old HBC autocracy. He had long been a leading advocate of responsible government for the colony and the author of petitions to the British and Canadian parliaments to promote democratic institutions.

Late in life, Gunn was at long last able to participate fully in the democratic governance he had advocated for nearly half a century. Defeated in an attempt to secure a seat in the provincial legislature in 1870, he was nevertheless appointed a member of Manitoba's Legislative Council, before he helped abolish the upper chamber in 1876. At his death, Gunn was an acknowledged sage in the community. In a biographical sketch, Frank Larned Hunt described the varied sources of his grass-roots approach to history:

In an intercourse of nearly twenty years we fail to recall other than the most genial and unaffected cordiality to all; superadded to this, his varied powers of conversation, replete with valuable material gathered from all sources, his sense of humor lighting up old Gaelic lore, the traditions of the Viking race from whom he sprung, the rough adventures and eccentricities of the hero worthies of 'the trade,' the early and chequered life in the settlement, with a vein of grounded culture running through all, made him to be one of the most companionable and instructive of men.⁶²

Gunn's *History* seems to have had little impact on subsequent historiography, perhaps due in part to its unfinished status and the fact that it was buried in the larger volume with Tuttle's text on the post-1835 era. As well, Gunn's critique of Selkirk held little appeal for the Anglo-Canadian newcomers from Ontario who were inclined to view the Scottish earl as a suitable founder-figure of the province.

When the Canadian Industrial Exhibition venerating Lord Selkirk during the first centennial observance of the Selkirk settlers, Gunn's grandson George H. Gunn was seeking to publish an edited version of his grandfather's manuscript as a stand-alone history of Manitoba to 1835. While apparently never published, this intended centennial project stood in marked contrast to its counterpart. In his Editor's preface, George Gunn explained some of the reasons why he held his father's *History* in such regard. He drew attention to the presence at Red River of several leading figures of the fur trade and the early period of the settlement, including the former chief factors James Sutherland and James Bird, and the historian Alexander Ross, among others, whom he described as a "veritable living archives." Noting that these individuals were the authors of the very fur-trade manuscripts on which academic historians were then beginning to rely, George Gunn wrote:

But these men did not lock up all their knowledge in these journals. The subject matter of these manuscripts represented largely their stock-in-trade of adventure and experience; and all the salient facts of this experience remained with them, and became, in the more leisurely and reminiscent days of their life in the Settlement, the staple of their conversation when, in neighbourly or public festive occasions, they foregathered with one another. In the midst of these associations, and in this atmosphere, Mr. Gunn lived and moved.⁶³

Gunn was the last of Red River's "homegrown" vernacular historians although vernacular traditions continued in historical writing well after Manitoba entered Confederation. Charles Napier Bell, who arrived in Red River as a 16-year-old bugler with the Wolseley Expedition in 1870, became a business executive, and helped found the Manitoba Historical Society, continued the grass-roots practice of history in various monographs based on textual and oral research. An example was Bell's pamphlet *The Selkirk Settlement and the Settlers*, for which he carried out both documentary research and oral history interviews with several surviving residents of early Red River. One of his informants was the then-elderly Donald Murray, a member of a family with the Selkirk settlers, who was present in Red River during the Battle of Seven Oaks. The testimony of Murray and other witnesses presented a more sympathetic picture of Cuthbert Grant and the Métis than the version that was emerging in the professional historiography on the incident.⁶⁴

Bell's more pluralistic approach was also reflected in his essay published in a pamphlet issued by the Manitoba Historical Society in 1891 to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of Seven Oaks.⁶⁵ His text shared space in the pamphlet with an essay by the Reverend George Bryce, often credited with being the father of academic history in Western Canada. In contrast, Bryce relied heavily on written sources, which were by then heavily weighted to the representation of Seven Oaks as a massacre, and the interpretation of Semple and his party as innocent victims. Bryce's ascendancy brought to an end the more pluralistic approaches to history of the Red River era and the inauguration of a new order supporting the claims to dominance of the Anglo-Canadian settlement group he represented.⁶⁶

W. L. Morton's comparison of Alexander Ross to Herodotus and Thucydides referenced at the beginning of this article may open a useful way of thinking about the character and significance of Red River's vernacular histories. Obviously none of the colony's writers exerted an influence on world historiography in the manner of the Greek masters, but they fulfilled similar foundational roles within their chosen locality, in a region with little prior recorded historiography. With the important caveat that Red River's historians apparently drew upon oral and literate cultures of the 18th or 19th centuries more than on

the works of antiquity, we may nevertheless discern some parallels between their work and ancient precursors.⁶⁷

In Pierre Falcon, Bard of the Métis, we can discern something of the strains of Homer. Blending history and legend, both poets wrote foundational texts expressing the military victories and aspirations of their peoples, whether the ancient Greeks or the Métis Nation. Alexander Ross belongs to a different tradition more closely aligned to Herodotus. Both writers left wide-ranging accounts based heavily on oral sources, in which they sought to represent comprehensively the peoples they were writing about. Both apparently relied heavily on local knowledge although Ross structured his narrative to serve partisan purposes in a manner that would have been anathema to Herodotus.

For the nearest parallel to Thucydides, the founder of scientific history, I find far greater affinities in the work of Donald Gunn than in Alexander Ross. Like Thucydides, Gunn relied on both written and oral information but he placed a particular emphasis on verifying his sources, referencing thereby only oral informants who directly witnessed the events they were asked to comment upon. Further, he applied critical judgement in evaluating the veracity of his informants.

Gunn can also fairly be compared to Polybius, the final writer in the triumvirate of great ancient Greek historians. Like Polybius, Gunn sometimes adopted a harsh tone when discussing historical figures he judged to have acted against the public interest, as was evident in his treatment of Selkirk, a historical actor he held responsible for much of the suffering of the early colonists. Most importantly, Gunn followed Polybius in his emphasis on providing lessons for statecraft and in writing history to contribute directly to civic dialogue and to help develop sound and responsive political institutions.

In Gunn's case, his orientation towards political history was probably highly influenced by the work of the historians of the Scottish Enlightenment, especially David Hume, sometimes considered the Thucydides of his own era. Gunn emerges as the most philosophical of Red River's historians—a democrat who operated under a succession of authoritarian regimes, whether in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, or Red River society under the HBC-dominated Council of Assiniboia. Like Thucydides, he displayed his evidence for the scrutiny of his readers, and applied critical judgement to the evaluation of his sources. Like Polybius, Gunn produced history to contribute to notions of responsible citizenship and the critical issue of the relationships between governors and the governed. The fact that he may occasionally have fallen short of the objectivity to which he aspired should not overshadow his notable achievement.

A comparison of the form and content of the works of Red River's historians, then, suggests that the privileged position accorded Alexander Ross in subsequent historical writing is misplaced, and W. L. Morton's characterization of Ross as a combination of Herodotus and Thucydides seems only half-right. I am inclined to agree with Lewis G. Thomas

that Donald Gunn is perhaps a superior candidate to Ross for the title of father of Western Canadian historiography.⁶⁸

Whatever their diverse individual perspectives and methods, or strengths and weaknesses, each of Red River's historians made a distinctive contribution to the early historiography of Western Canada albeit that some practitioners were more closely connected to the grass roots than others. Notwithstanding his literary talents, Ross's ambivalence towards his own First Nations family relationships contributed to his prejudicial views of Aboriginal peoples and diminished the value of his work. Joseph Hargave's *Red River* added significantly to our historical knowledge of the colony although Hargrave could not separate himself from the elite status to which he was born and his work tended to reinforce class privilege. The Reverend James Hunter's history suffered from the author's hierarchical aspirations and incapacity to appreciate the importance of democratic institutions to the future of Manitoba. Generally, the works of Pierre Falcon, which constituted a founding narrative for one of the principal peoples of the West, and those of Donald Gunn, which introduced critical history into the region, resonate most strongly in light of the concerns of today. Their works bring us closer to the society that was Old Red River, providing a unique and indispensable window on a critical period in Western Canadian history, and its historiography. ❧

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. See for example Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing: 1900 to 1970*, Toronto: University of Toronto press, 1976; and M. Brook Taylor, *Promoters, Patriots, and Partisans: Historiography in Nineteenth-Century English Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989.
2. For an elaboration of the interpretive framework I am proposing for approaching vernacular history, see Lyle Dick, "Vernacular Currents in Western Canadian Historiography: The Passion and Prose of Katherine Hughes, F. G. Roe, and Roy Ito," in Sarah Carter, Alvin Finke, and Peter Fortna, eds., *The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined "Region"*, Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2010, pp. 13-46.
3. W. L. Morton, "The Historiography of the Great West," *Historical Papers / Communications Historiques* 1970, Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association / l'Association historique du Canada, 1970, p. 48.
4. *1812 Red River 1912: Lord Selkirk's Centennial*, Winnipeg: Canadian Industrial Exhibition, 1912; Jim Blanchard, *Winnipeg 1912*, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1912, pp. 135-160.
5. J. M. Bumsted, "The Quest for a Usable Founder: Lord Selkirk and Manitoba Historians, 1856-1923," *Manitoba History*, No. 2 (June 1981), pp. 2-7.

6. George Bryce, *The Life of Lord Selkirk: Coloniser of Western Canada*, Toronto: Musson Book Co., 1912; Chester Martin, *Lord Selkirk's Work in Canada*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1916.
7. Alvin M. Josephy, *The Artist was a Young Man: The Life Story of Peter Rindisbacher*, Fort Worth, Texas: Amon Carter Museum, 1970; Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America, From Canada to Vancouver's Island and Oregon, Through the Hudson's Bay Company's Territory and back Again*, London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1858.
8. On Michif as a culture and language, see Paul L. A. H. Chartrand, *Pierriche Falcon: The Michif Rhymster: Our Métis National Anthem: The Michif Version*, Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2008, p. 3.
9. Lyle Dick, "The Seven Oaks Incident and the Construction of a Historical Tradition, 1816-1970," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada* 1991, New Series, Vol. 2, pp. 91-113.
10. See the discussion of Elders and First Nations oral tradition in another region, in Julie Cruikshank, Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.
11. Donna Lowe, "Folk Music," in David J. Wishart, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004, p. 298.
12. See François Bruneau's account of his early education at Red River in *The Nor'Wester*, 28 April 1860, p. 3.
13. Margaret Arnett MacLeod, *Songs of Old Manitoba*, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1959, pp. 2-3.
14. Two of the earliest versions of Falcon's song appear to be (1) a handwritten version located among the papers seized by Selkirk at Fort William in 1816 and now found in Library and Archives Canada, Selkirk Papers, MG2, A1, Fols. 9207-08; and (2) another version published as part of an appendix in Joseph James Hargrave, *Red River*, Montréal: John Lovell, 1871, pp. 488-489.
15. For an interesting account of the efforts to recover Falcon's song on Seven Oaks, see Jacques Julien, "Pierre Falcon: Le Détournement littéraire d'une tradition orale" (première partie) *Francophonies*, No. 5 (1995), pp. 107-120.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-15.
17. Margaret Arnett MacLeod, "Songs of the Insurrection", *The Beaver*, Outfit 287 (Spring 1957), pp. 18-23.
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Ocean Crossings: Hudson's Bay Company Seafaring in a Northern North Atlantic World

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The maritime component of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), though fundamental to its trade, is an aspect of its influence in the North-West that is often overlooked, despite readily apparent clues. The Company's yearly outfit, for example, was set when ships were outfitted to voyage to Hudson Bay at the beginning of June. The posts built on the shores of Hudson and James bays were first of all ports—built by ships' crews and located where ships could go. "Ship time" marked the beginning of the trade season in the North-West. The master-servant relationship on shore was a reflection of a long-standing relation aboard ship, and, historically, masters ashore (at least those stationed bayside) were often mariners—people like Richard Norton, his son Moses Norton, and Joseph Isbister—as were Company founders and committee members such as Prince Rupert, Pierre-Esprit Radisson and Captain George Spurrell. Inland surveyors of renown were trained in mariner methods as well—from Henry Kelsey and Samuel Hearne to David Thompson.¹

The nature of HBC seafaring can be gleaned from ships' logs that indicate where ships were and what work was being done, from journals that impart glimpses of the social life aboard ship, and by comparing data—about ships, routes and sailors—with what is known about seafaring that took place elsewhere.² Surveying transatlantic shipping to Hudson Bay, from the late 1600s to the early 1900s, reveals that each voyage was unique in terms of conditions, a ship's complement, and encounters. Nevertheless, Company records show enough regularity to support a general description, broadly representative of HBC ocean crossings of the northernmost extent of the North Atlantic. Such a description follows: defining the Northern North



Archives of Manitoba, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, HBC Calendar Series, P-401, 1937.

Battle in the Bay, 1697. This painting by Norman Wilkinson was featured on a 1937 HBC calendar. It portrays a battle for fur trade supremacy between the French ship *Pelican* under the command of Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville and three British ships.

Atlantic as a distinct portion of the maritime world, then furnishing an unrealistically brief view of an ocean crossing, followed by a description of the ships that were workplaces and social spaces, and finishing with a mention of seafarers associated with Red River Settlement.

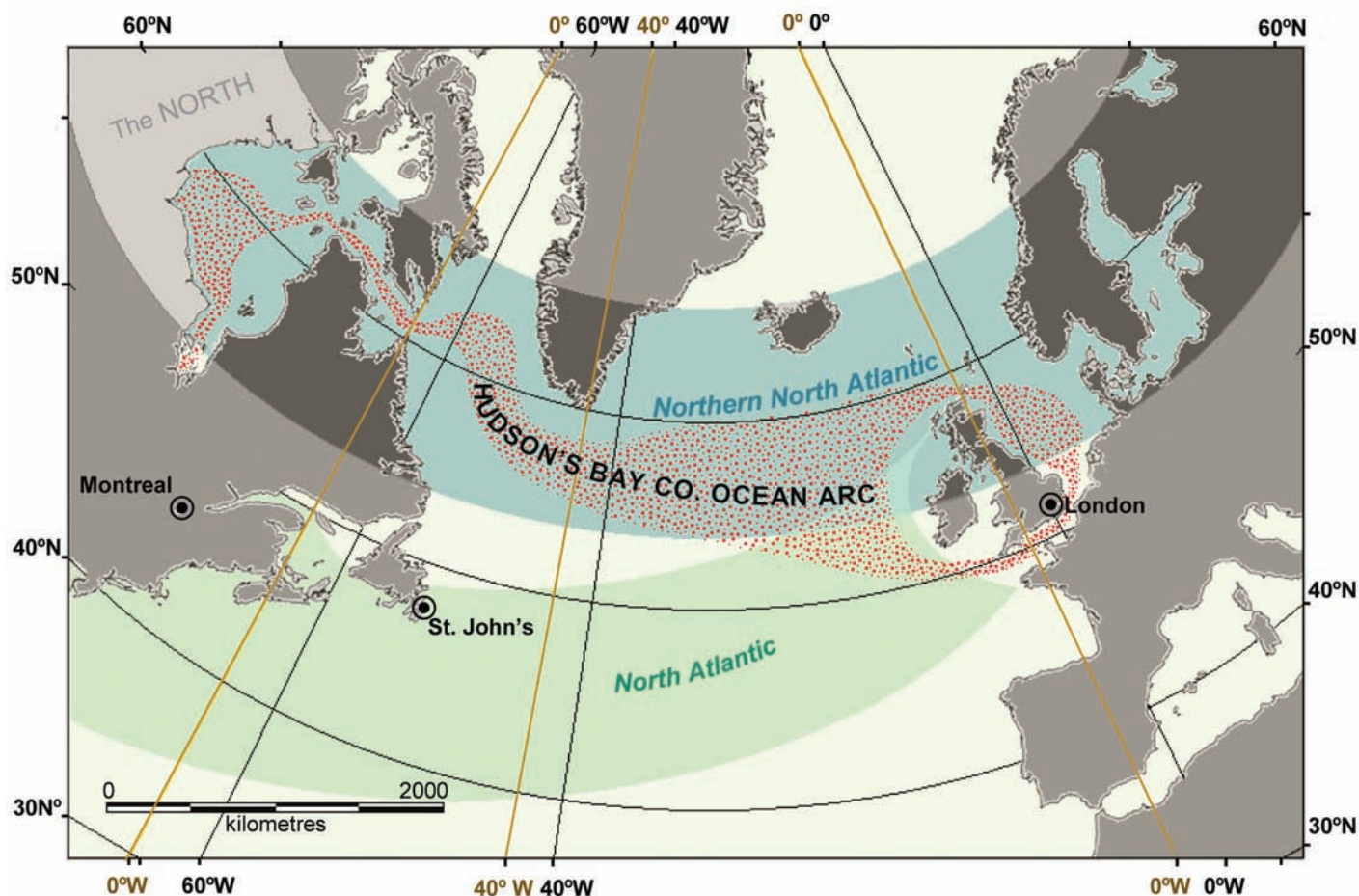
The point made is that the Western Canadian present is not an arbitrary circumstance, but a context arising out of a historical process with an ocean-crossing dimension. When contemplating the dynamics of this process, notably at Red River, but in other locations as well, there is merit in thinking beyond shorelines to take seafaring experience into account.

Geographical space and the HBC ocean arc

Ocean crossings to Hudson Bay shared aspects of merchant voyages on shipping lanes, just to the south, that connected



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The Hudson's Bay Company Ocean Arc.

European ports and those of the Eastern Seaboard of North America. Nevertheless, HBC seafaring was distinct. First, sailors and seafarers dealt with a different set of natural features. Second, their ships, as workplaces, were more crowded and in some respects more complicated to handle. Third, they underwent a singular social experience, due to the first two factors and because the people who made up

Surveying transatlantic shipping to Hudson Bay, from the late 1600s to the early 1900s, reveals that each voyage was unique in terms of conditions, a ship's complement, and encounters.

a ship's community were overwhelmingly "Company" people—including individuals who were native to North America.

The space traversed by HBC ships was markedly northern. Canadian historians generally situate the North between 54° and 66°33'35" North latitude, above the fertile belt of the prairies, and below the "eternal ice and snow" of

the Arctic.³ Company voyages also dipped into Canada's Middle North in James Bay. And, at their eastern end, voyages crossed what maritime historians have designated the North Atlantic. Geographically speaking, the oceanic space of historical HBC sea voyages was not properly a region, because that term applies to land. Rather, the space of Company voyages was an ocean arc—a term for a continuous watery plain over which sailors repeatedly sailed their ships. The sailors on transatlantic HBC ships to the Bay, in working across a HBC ocean arc, made it a known place—naming it, mapping it, and recording its features in logs, journals, and pilot books.

Natural features made the HBC ocean arc distinctive. The East- and West-Greenland currents were convenient, carrying ships across the Atlantic at the rate of ten to fourteen kilometres a day around the southern tip of Greenland and thence to the entrance of Hudson Strait. Sailors also took advantage of the wind. On the Northern North Atlantic, it blew more consistently as a fair wind (sending a ship in the right direction), than did the highly variable winds just to the south. Wind was nowhere near as reliable as currents, however. Charts that show prevailing winds illustrate high-altitude patterns, not the surface winds generated by local weather systems. Because sea winds could blow



Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1988-250-3.

Greenland Ice. Peter Rindisbacher's watercolour painting portrayed the encounter of ships with icebergs in the vicinity of Greenland on 26 June 1821.

from any point on the compass, voyages did not necessarily follow the unwavering lines commonly laid down on maps showing shipping routes. Though sometimes a captain was lucky, the wind was regarded as a "fickle lady," and voyages were much more zig-zaggy affairs, often with stalls, and even reversals.⁴ One spot where stalls occurred was known as the Stormy Forties. The name, however, did not refer to weather, rather it signalled water conditions. Three major currents (the West Greenland, Labrador, and North Atlantic Drift), met in "aqueous mountains", just below Cape Farewell, Greenland, situated longitudinally between about 40° and 50° West.⁵

The location of the Forties was somewhat provisional. Although the Greenwich meridian was established as 0° longitude in 1750, up until about 1888 HBC captains customarily set 0° longitude at Hoy Head, in the Orkneys. On reaching Hatten's Head on Resolution Island, Hudson Strait (somewhere around 65° W), they would "resolve" longitude, by resetting it to 0°. Regardless of whether the Hoy Head or Greenwich meridian system was adopted, the Stormy Forties, as a point of transition, could be felt. If ships to Hudson Bay stalled there due to foul (meaning unfavourable) winds, or to no wind, all on board were subject to a "boisterous" experience — endured by Selkirk Settlers for fifteen days in 1811.⁶

Even on a rapid transit, in crossing the Forties seafarers bid "farewell" to the kind of sailing encountered elsewhere in the North Atlantic, because they met with ice. Carried down from Arctic seas by currents, through spring break-up to late summer, ice—as bergs, fields and shattered remnants of both—was a primary determinant when it came to the distinctiveness of Northern voyaging. Icebergs were eagerly looked for by passengers, as visual evidence of having entered decidedly Northern space. On the other hand, by the time ice was encountered, sailors were more interested in sighting land, to know where they were relative to "home."

Passage Outward from the Home Port of London

For mariners, determining whereabouts was at all times a primary concern. They set out on HBC voyages from the London River. The Pool below London Bridge marked the inland end of the home port for deep-sea ships. The nautically minded called the river above the bridge the Thames. The lower stretch, to the river's mouth, they called the London River, after the port. The river was congested, and marked by very bad smells emanating from sewage, rotting garbage, and drowned "river waifs."⁷

HBC ships bound for the Bay moored at Gravesend Reach. There, the vessels were outfitted with crew and cargo, and took on passengers. From Gravesend, depending on weather conditions, it could take from two days to two weeks to get down the river to its estuary, thread the channels and pass the sand bars into open seas.

Sailing "north about," up the east coast of England to Stromness on the Orkney mainland, took approximately two weeks, perhaps a few days more. It all depended on whether a ship put into a port along the way, how long it stayed in port, and whether wind was blowing in the right direction. Occasionally, ships instead went "west about" through the English Channel, or departed from other harbours, such as Stornoway, on the Isle of Lewis, Hebrides archipelago, and Sligo, Ireland (with Selkirk Settlers aboard, in 1811 and 1812, respectively). But, assuming a ship took the north about passage, on reaching Stromness it might anchor for one week or three, depending on tasks that remained to be done—from loading supplies, to hiring additional crew, to waiting for consort vessels to arrive. For safety, HBC ships crossed the Atlantic in convoys. During times when warfare was of concern, which was fairly often, Admiralty vessels would escort the convoy.

Ships would take leave of the Orkneys at Hoy Head, about 58°55' N. By this point, a Company ship might have been at sea for as much as a month or more of difficult

HBC ships bound for the Bay moored at Gravesend Reach [near London]. There, the vessels were outfitted with crew and cargo, and took on passengers.

sailing, the crew contending with troublesome tides, rocks and shoals that marked all passages around the British Isles. Once on the Atlantic, however, sailors could anticipate uninterrupted sailing ahead, holding to a course along the bands between 56° and 60° N. for approximately 2,250 kilometres to Cape Farewell, Greenland. Covering an additional 1,125 kilometres would bring them to Hatten's Head, Resolution Island.

While mariners might hope to make the entire crossing in as few as nineteen days (as Captain William Kennedy

managed in 1851), or in a record-breaking seven days (set by Captain David Herd in 1861), the passage was more likely to take three or four weeks. In terms of visual points of interest, seafarers tended to record the Atlantic crossing as “long, monotonous and dreary.”⁸ They also reported getting wet, especially in the Forties—in high seas ships leaked. As they rounded Cape Farewell, Greenland, and approached Hudson Strait, the cold became intense, which seafarers attributed to the presence of ice.

It was no mean feat to enter Hudson Strait, because currents carried massive amounts of ice southward across its opening. However, currents also dipped into the strait at Resolution Island. If collision with large bergs (and the island) was avoided, then drifting into the strait surrounded by the “small ice” of late July was a relatively safe entrance to effect.

Once in Hudson Strait, passage through it could take as many as six weeks or as few as four days, depending on whether the strait was closed by ice, or open. From at least the early 1700s, ships would pause midway, to trade with Inuit for whalebone. Trade was not always possible. Ice could limit manoeuvrability and prevent a ship from stopping, because the ice was always moving. It flowed westward along the north side of the strait, and eastward along the south. For this reason, fortuitously for the HBC, even ships thoroughly beset in ice would eventually exit the strait.

Once out into Hudson Bay, ships could take from three days to four weeks to cross to Churchill Harbour or Port Nelson, and longer still to get to the Bottom of the Bay. Here again, timing depended principally on the presence or absence of ice. The voyage home, in September, was usually—not always—shorter. A late arrival in the Bay, or an early onset of winter freeze-up, could force a ship to over-winter.

Ships as workplaces and social spaces

HBC ships carried sail into the 20th century. Although the size of Company ships increased over time, they began and remained small in comparison to merchant vessels in other seas—ice sailing required tight turns and rowing and towing by crews. HBC ships had rounded bottoms to lift them up and out, if ice crushed inward, and they were shallow in draught to deal with the shallowness of Hudson and James bays. Consequently, they were tricky to handle in rough seas—they could roll alarmingly and sometimes travelled sideways as readily as forward.

Sail ships with auxiliary steam engines were not typical HBC transatlantic vessels. Instead, sail-steamers travelled a coastal circuit from Montreal to the Bay. Coal in their holds limited cargo capacity. By 1920, the company’s newer ocean-crossing ships were fully steam-driven and significantly larger. As workplaces, however—whether steam or sail—the ships were crowded. They had confined quarters, with equipment, livestock, and people stowed everywhere. Additionally, although the ships were small compared to merchant vessels elsewhere, they carried a



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Inuit Barter. In this Robert Hood watercolour from 1819, the HBC ships *Prince of Wales* and *Eddystone* are shown bartering with Aboriginal people off the Upper Savage Islands in Hudson Strait.

greater number of officers and crew—as many as a third more.

Partly to maintain order in crowded conditions, the space aboard ship was highly structured socially. Depending on one’s job, there were places one was allowed to be and places one was not. Nonetheless, even with these restrictions, there was opportunity, and time, to mingle with people from all over the globe. Seafaring was integrative, in that sailors of different geographical and cultural origins worked together, a condition that was the norm throughout the Atlantic World. On the foredeck—the sailors’ space for working, relaxing and interacting with passengers—stories, songs, and jokes were exchanged. Seafarers, who were native to North America and working or travelling from place to place in the Bay, or across the ocean, participated in this exchange.

Sailors as settlers

Before the mid-18th century, men, women and children from Europe and from North America—working and non-working—mingled aboard HBC ships for months at a time. HBC sailors and seafarers were mobile people, circulating widely in North America and around the world. Not a few “swallowed the anchor” to settle as landmen in Red River, where they contributed to the mix of information about the wider world at that settlement.

Among accomplished former Company sailors to retire to Red River, there was Captain William Kennedy. Born in 1813 at Cumberland House, to Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy and Aggathas, he was sailing the seas off Labrador in HBC vessels by 1838. By 1848, he was master aboard his own ship on Lake Superior. From 1851 to 1856, he commanded two sailing expeditions to the Arctic in search of Sir John Franklin, during which he crossed from New York to Liverpool, Aberdeen and London; wintered in the Arctic; and sailed round the Horn to Valparaíso. As of 1861, he resided at Red River, building Kennedy House in 1866.⁹

There was also Captain Colin Robertson Sinclair, born in 1816 at Norway House to Chief Factor William Sinclair and Nahoway. By 1830, he was working on transatlantic voyages through Hudson Strait and out of Newfoundland. By 1840, he was master and owner of a ship in the China and East India trade. He retired to Winnipeg in 1897 to reside at his sister's family home—Seven Oaks House.¹⁰

HBC ships carried sail into the 20th century. Although Company ships increased in size over time, they began and remained small in comparison to merchant vessels in other seas

And then there was Ranald Macdonald. Born in 1824 at Fort George on the Pacific Slope to Chief Trader Archibald McDonald and Koale Koa, he was grandson of Chief Comcomly, who was harbour pilot for the HBC on the Columbia River. Macdonald lived at Red River while attending school from 1834 to 1838. By 1841, he had begun working his way to Japan by sea. He set the experience down, circa 1888, in a manuscript that was finally published in 1923.¹¹

The Hudson's Bay Company Archives has compiled biographies that indicate there were many more transatlantic sailors, coastal sloopers and boatmen, along with servants working passage aboard ship, who migrated from the Bay and elsewhere to live at Red River. They began making an impression there at least as early as 1815 and continued to do so until well after Winnipeg's incorporation as a city in 1873. Passengers of HBC vessels did likewise.¹²



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Loaded for commerce. This 1908 photo by John Woodruff shows the heavily loaded decks of the steamer *Arctic* as it prepares to get under way for travels between HBC posts in the Canadian North.

Along with the ocean-going Selkirk Settlers, there were men, women and children of families inextricably woven into the history of the Settlement and of Western Canada, who depended upon the HBC transatlantic link to Europe for the movement of people and supplies. Many were directly acquainted with the Northern North Atlantic in ways that 21st-century Canadians are not and perhaps never can be. Seafarers aboard HBC ships spoke, worked, and travelled their way into historical process, learning by experience that seas, as seeming barriers, could also be bridges. ❧

Notes

1. See Norma Hall, "Seafarers", Dictionary of Canadian Biography and Hudson's Bay Company Biographical Sheets, *Northern Arc: the Significance of Seafaring to Western Canadian History*, doing canadianhistory n.0, <http://hallnjan.wordpress.com>, accessed 2 January 2013.
2. See Norma Hall, *Northern Arc: The Significance of Shipping and Seafarers of Hudson Bay, 1508–1920*, Ph.D. dissertation, St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2009, available on-line from Electronic Theses and Dissertations, Digital Archives Initiative, Memorial University Libraries, <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/theses4&CISOPTR=69051&CISOSHOW=68398>, accessed 2 January 2013.
3. William Dennis, "The Sources of North-Western History," *MHS Transactions*, Series 1, No. 6, read 1883, p. 2.
4. William Coats, *The Geography of Hudson's Bay*, ed. John Barrow, London: Hakluyt Society, 1852, p. 10.
5. Isaac Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers*, Toronto: William Briggs, 1913, p. 86.
6. Library and Archives Canada, Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk Fonds, Microfilm A.27, Selkirk Papers, vol. I, Miles Macdonell, letter to Lord Selkirk (York Factory, 1 October 1811), p. 46.
7. Walter Thornbury, "The River Thames", *Old and New London*, vol. 3, New York: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1878, p. 303.
8. Cowie, *Company of Adventurers*, p. 84.
9. See William Kennedy, *A Short Narrative of the Second Voyage of the Prince Albert, in Search of Sir John Franklin*, London: W. H. Dalton, 1853; Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, GB 0015, William Kennedy collection (1851–1856), MS 248/433/1; D Letter to Sophia Cracroft (n.d.), and MS 248/433/2-8; D Letters to Jane, Lady Franklin, 6 July 1851 to 23 January 1856; Edward C. Shaw, "Captain William Kennedy, An Extraordinary Canadian," *MHS Transactions* 27, Series 3 (1970–1971 season); and Edward Charles Shaw, *Captain William Kennedy*, Winnipeg: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Historical Resources Branch, 1985.
10. See Norma Hall, "Captain Colin Robertson Sinclair," doing canadianhistory n.0, <http://wp.me/Pz2Dv-iu>, accessed 2 January 2012.
11. Ranald MacDonald, *Ranald MacDonald: The Narrative of his early life on the Columbia under the Hudson's Bay Company's regime; of his experiences in the Pacific Whale Fishery; and of his great Adventure to Japan*, ed. William S. Lewis and Naojiro Murakami, Spokane: Eastern Washington State Historical Society, 1923.
12. See Hudson's Bay Company Archives [HBCA], Biographical Sheets, www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/index.html, accessed 2 January 2013. Early arrivals include ship's surgeon and factor, Thomas Thomas, in 1815; sailor and sloop master, Joseph Brown, 1816; and ship's surgeon, William Todd, 1818–1819. See also HBCA, E.5/1, 1827 Red River Settlement Census, which lists sailor 'Jack Tar' Saunders and boatman Soowamis.

Rooted in Mobility: Metis Buffalo-Hunting Brigades¹

by Brenda Macdougall, Geography Department, University of Ottawa
Nicole St-Onge, History Department, University of Ottawa

Carts were seen to emerge from every nook and corner of the settlement bound for the plains ... From Fort Garry, the cavalcade and camp-followers went crowding on to the public road, and thence, stretching from point to point, till the third day in the evening, when they reached Pembina, the great rendezvous on such occasions ... Here the roll was called and general muster taken, when they numbered on this occasion, 1,630 souls; and here the rules and regulations for the journey were finally settled. The officials for the trip were named and installed into office; and all without the aid of writing materials.

The camp occupied as much ground as a modern city, and was formed in a circle; all the carts were placed side by side, the trains out-ward. These are trifles, yet they are important to our subject. Within this line of circumvallation, the tents were placed in double, treble rows, at one end; the animals at the other in front of the tents. This is in order in all dangerous places; but where no danger is apprehended, the animals are kept on the outside. Thus the carts formed a strong barrier, not only for securing the people and their animals within, but as a place of shelter against an attack of the enemy without.²

This iconic description written by Alexander Ross of the departure from Red River of a cart caravan bound for the Plains on 15 June 1840 and the organization of the semi-annual, commercial, buffalo hunt is echoed in several other 19th-century accounts providing us with a lens into the organizational structure of these events but also a sense of the spatial dimensions of the brigades.³ The history of this Red River-based buffalo-hunting tradition was extensively documented by explorers, travellers, fur traders, artists, and other visitors to the Plains because its size, scale, and organizational matrix were considered remarkable achievements (then and now) for a group of people often described as an illiterate underclass. The general focus of these early accounts was on the emergence of a nascent political structure, emphasizing the pseudo-militaristic elements that permitted the mobilization of these small cities. While these descriptions provide us with an important opportunity to understand Metis political and military culture, they also point to several deficiencies in our

current understanding of Plains Metis society as a whole. For instance, although the presence of women and children was hinted at, there is no sense of how family life defined the participants' expected behaviours. Furthermore, the lens of buffalo hunting is generally so focussed on Red River—the place—that the Plains go unidentified as a place of import except as an undifferentiated space where the Metis went but the observers usually did not. Therefore, the community as a whole disappeared from view while on the Plains. As a result of this singular fixation on political and military traditions of the Red River Metis, few have examined how the buffalo hunts reflected Metis systems of socio-cultural organization or constituted a unique adaptation to an indigenous, Plains-based style of life. The movement of people, goods, animals and eventually the produce of the hunt subsequently attracted the attention of generations of historians, political scientists, lawyers and sociologists who all concluded that it was the style of commercial hunt that formulated the basis of uniquely Red River-based Metis governance systems and political ideology.

Ross' efforts to describe and define the Metis of the Plains led to the evolution of a body of literature focussed on the political, economic and military history of the Metis at Red River. Due to its geographic and demographic import, as well as its central role in 19th-century Metis nationalism, the Red River settlement and the constituent

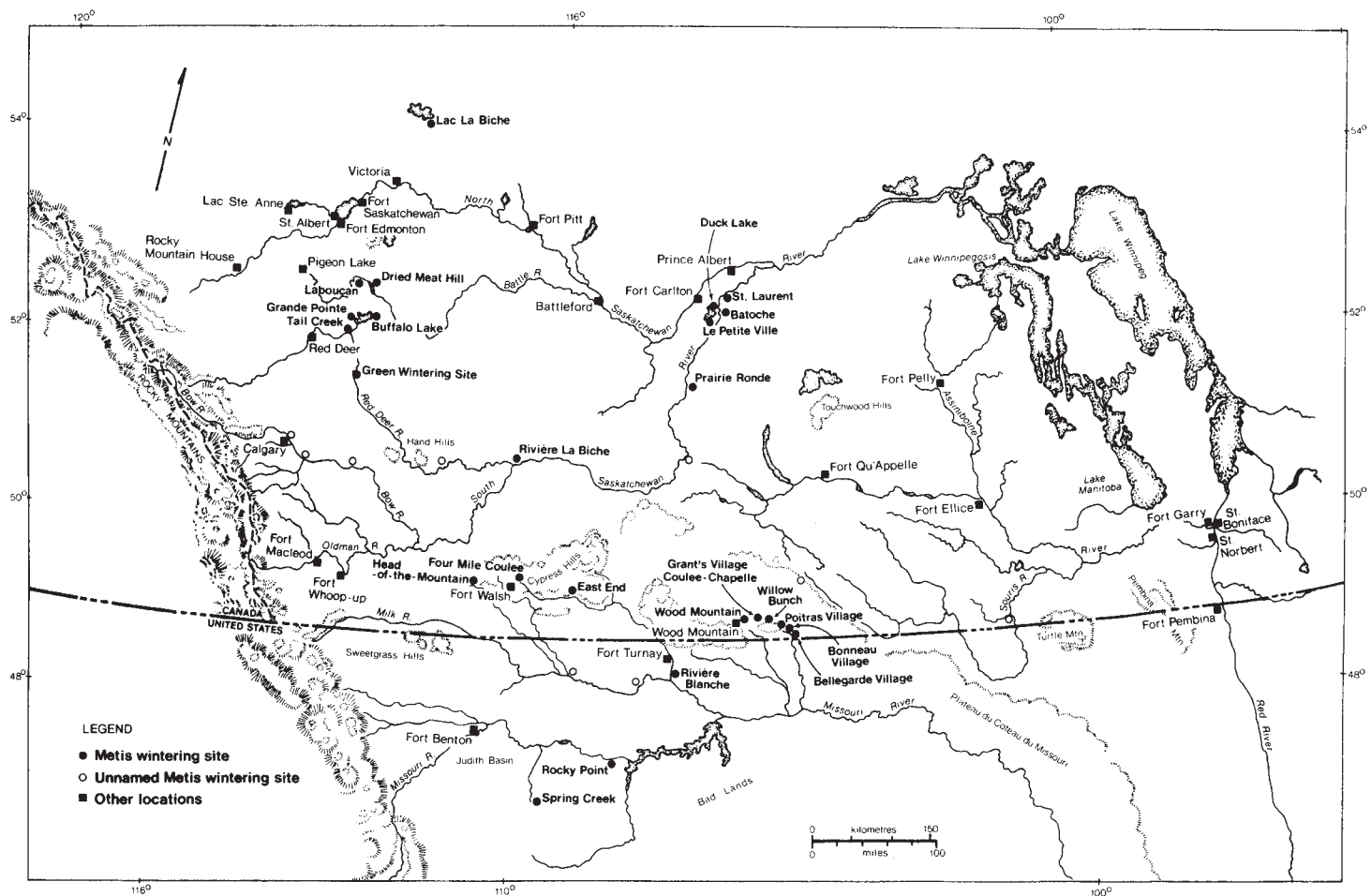


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Metis Buffalo-Hunting Brigades



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Figure 1. Map of northwest North America showing Metis wintering sites, circa 1870.

parishes involved in the buffalo-hunting economy—St. François-Xavier, St. Boniface, and St. Norbert—have been the focus of a great deal of research. This scholarship largely assumes a singular population inhabiting those spaces for lengthy periods of time or on a semi-annual basis. When not at Red River, this buffalo-hunting society (the thousands of people noticed by Ross and others) lived at or in a series of semi-permanent wintering sites (*hivernements*) like Petite Ville, Willow Bunch, Turtle Mountain and Buffalo Lake (see Figure 1). In large part, these scholarly assessments reflect the available sources. For the most part, surviving historical records are place-specific—that is, written documentation exists in relation to a fur-trade post, a religious mission or the attempts at colonization such as the Red River settlement. Resident officials, like Alexander Ross, and institutions tried to capture the existence of a people who moved between places, but their focus was necessarily on the place from which they (the officials) worked and the institutional body that required the creation of the records. As a result, once the mobile populations left the sightlines of those fixed locations and travelled into a prairie space, they vanished from the scholarship, leaving us to ponder where they went and whether their reality has been adequately captured. These people may be “recaptured”

in another fixed location by another set of records, but their lives spent “in-between” these fixed points—the places where they lived and hunted—remain poorly understood. Arthur J. Ray found that this problem was tied to a greater intellectual tradition that, consciously or not, was “settlement-oriented.”⁴ He suggested that the solution required a reframing of the discussion to look at regional economies rather than location-specific economic activities.⁵ Ray’s approach would certainly help us better understand the 19th-century buffalo hunt as an economic activity, but what would still remain shrouded in mystery are the social networks and cultural matrices that allowed these specialized hunting brigades to organize and perpetuate themselves. What Ross and others described was not a random collection of men gathering to hunt. Rather, the thousands of souls who went on the hunt also included women and children—the hunt was not performed by adult male hunters alone. Their labour was supported and supplemented by the efforts and productiveness of the young and old, boys and girls, elderly men and women, and adult women. The buffalo hunts are both a representation and a product of the family structure of the Plains Metis. We need to reframe the paradigm by not just looking at regional economies, but also at *who* engaged in

this economy and evaluating *how* a socio-cultural network to support this complex economic activity was established. In order to do this, we must understand the context in which this economy—and therefore the families engaged in it—evolved as a specific form of trade.

The commercial buffalo hunt did not begin in 1840 with the event Ross described. Rather, this economy got its start with the commencement of the western fur trade in the latter half of the 1700s. Expansion of trade into the

What [Alexander] Ross and others described was not a random collection of men gathering to hunt. Rather, the thousands of souls who went on the hunt also included women and children—the hunt was not performed by adult male hunters alone.

Athabasca and Mackenzie regions in the North necessitated that fur companies secure a stable and consistent food supply for their boat brigades. Pemmican, a mixture high in protein and fat made from dried buffalo meat, was highly nutritious as well as easily stored and transported, making it the ideal food for voyageurs who expended a great deal of energy canoeing hundreds of miles daily. The buffalo meat trade began with the Montreal trade companies, which, in turn, opened a host of pemmican-provisioning posts across the western Plains at places such as Fort Augustus on the North Saskatchewan River.⁶ Eventually, as Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) tripmen on the northern trade networks also utilized this food source, it became integral to the Company's economy. Consequently, the commercial pemmican trade, which began in the late 1700s-early 1800s, depended on the development of a corpus of hunters and their families who both hunted and then processed the meat into pemmican. By the mid-19th century, the buffalo hunters were independent operators often referred to as freemen or

free traders because they were no longer employees of any particular trade company. Historian John E. Foster argued that an ethos or sense of freedom gained by wintering fur traders led to social relationships between the traders and Aboriginal people, which in turn formed the Western Plains Metis and their sense of independence. Foster's theory of Plains Metis ethnogenesis privileged the role of European men (whom he referred to as "outsider adult males") in the creation of Metis society and de-emphasized the role of women—First Nations or Metis—in their evolution into a distinct society.⁷ As independent entrepreneurs, buffalo hunters operated in a mixed economy as traders, hunters and freighters seeking out new markets with a multitude of trade companies operating on both the Canadian and American Plains. As such, buffalo meat, hides and robes became central trade items increasing the scale and prosperity of the buffalo-hunting tradition. It was this latter incarnation of the commercial hunt and, in particular, the Metis role within it that so fascinated observers.

While the narrative focus of the 19th-century ethnographies has been on Red River, there are hints as to the types of movement occurring on the Plains. Visiting Canada in 1872, Sanford Fleming stopped at Fort Ellice (near present-day St. Lazare, MB) and took note of the Mackay family, who were preparing to head out onto the plains to hunt. Fleming remarked that it was common for people to "club together in the spring, and go west to hunt the buffalo."⁸ He added that "their united caravan [was] popularly called a brigade."⁹ The HBC's journals for Fort Ellice contain several references to brigades in the 1866–1867 season:

The Saskatchewan carts still here all day. David and Patanaude repairing carts to take on the Saskatchewan that was left here by the first Brigade. [The following day, the Saskatchewan carts left with David Prince joining them] taking 3 carts with the 27 pieces that was left here.¹⁰

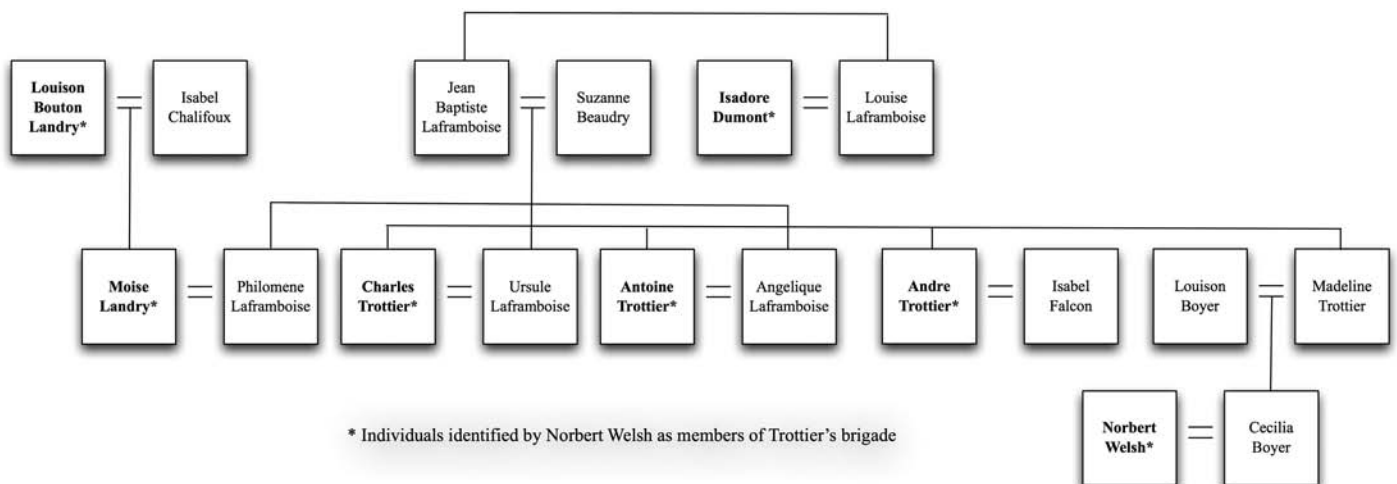


Figure 2. Genealogy of the Trottier Brigade.

The Qu'Apell [sic] Brigade [was part of] 31 carts arrived this evening loaded with 174 packs robes and 12 bags pemmican. Bill Lading says 13 bags but one was eaten on the road.¹¹

A. Belange arrived with the 2nd Brigade of Red River carts going up to Carleton.¹²

It is unclear whether these were freighting, trading or hunting brigades or a combination of two or more. Regardless, the ethnographies make it clear that hunting brigades—organizational units similar to Indian bands—were opportunistic economically and that buffalo hunters also traded and freighted.¹³ So, while the activity was characterized as buffalo hunting, the brigades in fact engaged in a complex, multifaceted economic behaviour based on season, need, opportunity and external demands for their services and expert knowledge of the Plains.

By the time that the buffalo hunters attracted the attention of Ross and other writers and artists, multiple brigades were permanent, year-round fixtures on the Plains, moving between fur posts, missions and habitation sites. Furthermore, an adult man (usually, but sometimes a woman) with a strong personality, knowledge of the region, and with excellent hunting ability headed these brigades.¹⁴ The Fort Ellice records refer to the Belanger brigade, for instance, but identified in the historical records are five additional kin-centred brigades named after their leaders – Gabriel Dumont, Charles Trottier, Francois Ouellette, Francois Garipey and Jean Baptiste Wilkie.

The Trottier Brigade

In order to analyze the brigades as representations of Metis socio-cultural organization, we focussed our research efforts on the Trottier brigade. Named for a 19th-century captain of the buffalo hunt and a member of Louis Riel's 1885 provisional government, Charles Trottier, this brigade was a community of people from White Horse Plains in Red River who began engaging in the hunt as a cohesive group in the 1830s. There are two central data sets about the Trottier Brigade that illuminated the history of this community of people. The first is the memoir of Norbert Welsh, based on an interview given by Welsh to journalist Mary Weekes and published in 1939.¹⁵ Welsh, a one-time member of the Trottier brigade, as well as the nephew via marriage of Charles Trottier, provided a number of important descriptions of the buffalo-hunting economy generally and the Trottier brigade more specifically. He accounted for the movements of the brigade, as well as those of a number of other brigades, along with descriptions of where and when wintering sites were constructed throughout the western plains. Furthermore, according to Welsh, by the 1850s and 1860s the Trottier brigade comprised thirty families (approximately three hundred people), including his own. Welsh further identified a limited number of brigade members, noting that Charles' brothers Antoine and Andre Trottier, brothers Moise and

Louis Landry, and Isidore Dumont and Welsh were all members. However, beyond those individuals' Welsh names, we do not know precisely who comprised the thirty families. To learn more about the members of the brigades and apply some context to the family structure, the second set of data utilized were vital statistics. Within mission records, census lists, and scrip records are important genealogical data about the brigade. With these data, we proceeded to rebuild the familial and social ties between the identified brigade members so that we could then begin to chart their movements.

Our methodological approach for rebuilding familial and social spaces of the Plains Metis was twofold. We began with a standard genealogical reconstruction for a series of brigades, including the Trottier brigade, and then analyzed them by creating social networking graphs that illustrate trends and behaviours within families and between brigades. What was created by this exercise was a revealing snapshot of one specific brigade. Close inspection of genealogical connections of the brigade's men demonstrated that this community had at its core Laframboise women. Sisters Ursule, Philomene and Angelique (all daughters of Jean Baptiste Laframboise and Susanne Beaudry) were married to Charles Trottier, Moise Landry and Antoine Trottier, respectively. Isidore Dumont, father of Gabriel, was married to Louise Laframboise, the aunt of the three Laframboise sisters (see Figure 2).¹⁶ This social matrix calls into question Foster's theory about the centrality of men in the creation of Plains Metis society.

While the genealogical method is useful for understanding simple relations in a brigade, genealogies are limited in their ability to reveal a society. Genealogies are intended to trace the lineage of an individual through parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren, and are not designed to capture broader familial or social relationships. As such, we determined that transforming genealogical data into a social matrix as a means to understand Plains Metis society was necessary. We

[The Trottier] brigade was a community of people from White Horse Plains in Red River who began engaging in the hunt as a cohesive group in the 1830s.

utilized Visone Software, a program that develops visual representations of social networks (or the social matrix) of a brigade and, eventually, the society as a whole.¹⁷ For the purposes of this research, the social network was defined as representing a cohesive group of people—a Metis brigade—who associate with one another for various reasons—work, religion, political needs/desires, protection and/or support. A social network, therefore, is an effective means of identifying and representing familial relationships, and, therefore, the broader social

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Trottier Brigade Core

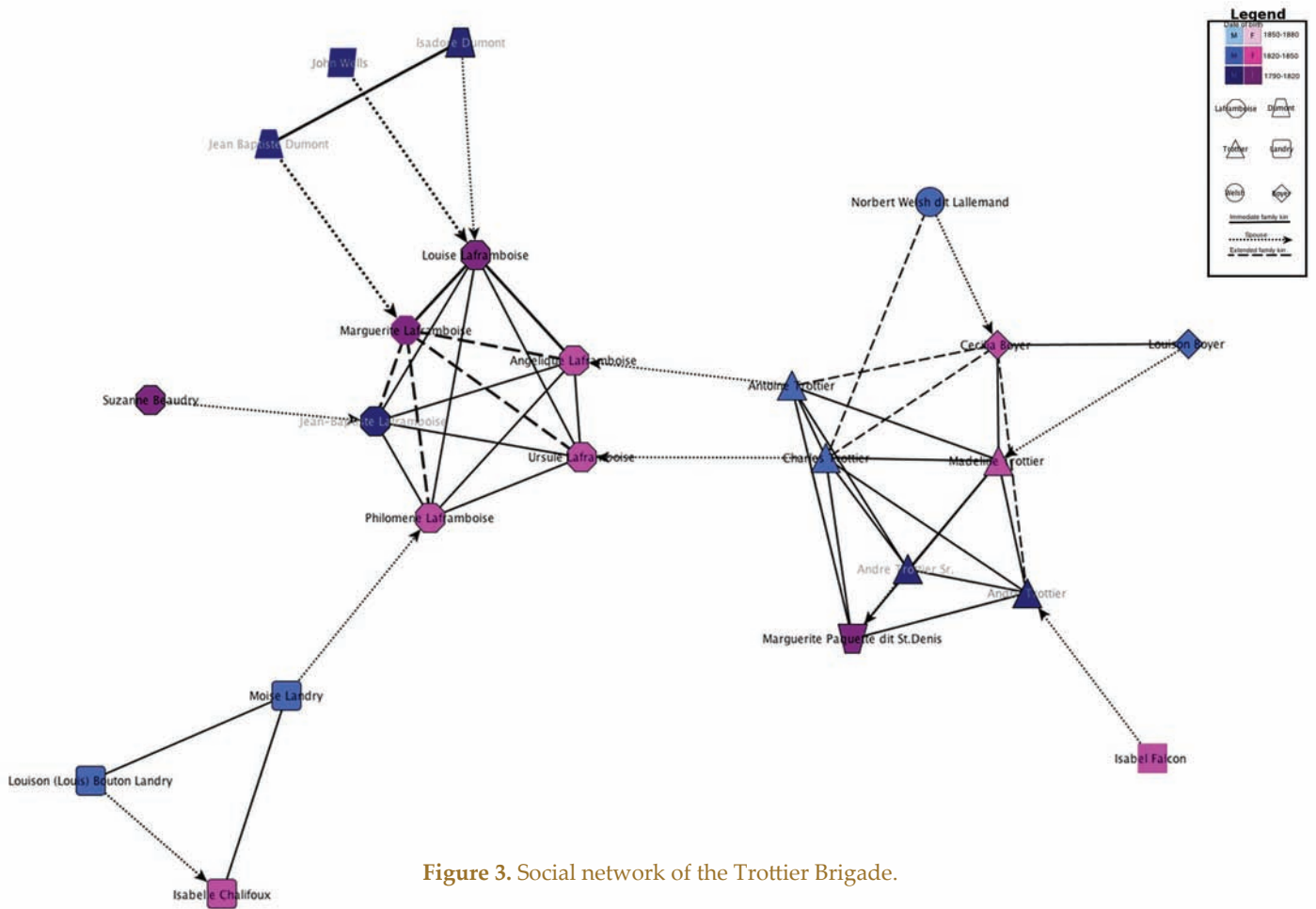


Figure 3. Social network of the Trottier Brigade.

community. This represents a new means of producing and representing genealogies. All social networks are made up of a series of nodes representing individuals present in a specific time and place, and can reveal linkages between individuals and the different types of ties that bind them. It represents families, but also communities of people living and working together. Social networking is simply a methodological tool that permits the visualization of the genesis and growth of the brigade as it travelled through time and space. This method of analysis has provided new clues about the social organization of the historical Metis. The Trottier brigade's genealogy represented in Figure 2 can also be represented using social networking software, whereby we can visualize differently how the core group of Laframboise women, the cluster of circles on the left, are connected to the brigade's men, as identified by Welsh, the cluster of triangles on the right (see Figure 3). All the individuals in the social networking graph are the same individuals listed in the genealogical chart, but instead of a linear representation of marital alliances, we can see how groups of related women drew a group of men who worked together into a social matrix predicated on blood and marriage. This connection between the women was

revealed through basic genealogical information and some scant ethnographic data, but it is only through the graphing of the relationships that we can visualize the central space that they occupied in the formation of the brigades.

Based on the initial Trottier-focussed research, we began systematically gathering, databasing, and synthesizing data from a wider collection of ethnographic materials and genealogical records in order to capture additional brigades that we noted were in contact with (or connected to) the Trottier brigade. By collecting a broader array of sources associated with other buffalo-hunting brigades, we linked the Trottier brigade to five other brigades via interfamilial connections. Tied to the Trottier brigade via marriage were the Dumont, Ouellette, Wilkie, Gariepy and Berger brigades. Trottier brigade members Isidore Dumont and Louise Laframboise's son, Gabriel Dumont, was perhaps the most famous brigade leader of the 19th century due to his role as war chief during the 1885 Resistance. Gabriel was married to Madeleine Wilkie, the daughter of Jean Baptiste Wilkie, himself the leader of a brigade from Pembina (now in North Dakota) in the early 19th century.¹⁸ Madeleine Wilkie's sister, Judith, was married to Pierre Berger, the leader of the Berger brigade, while her brother,

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Jean Baptiste, Jr., was married to Marie Laframboise, the cousin of Ursule, Philomene and Angelique. Judith Wilkie and Pierre Berger's daughter Elise was married to François Ouellette, while their son Jacques was married to François' sister, Philomene Ouellette. François and Philomene were the nephew and niece of François Ouellette, Sr., another brigade leader. Finally, Cecilia Wilkie, sister of Madeleine and Judith, was married to Joseph Gariepy, member of the Gariepy brigade. As with the Trottier brigade, we can represent these connections genealogically (see Figure 4).

Once we began looking at the families involved in the buffalo-hunting economy, it became clear that these individuals were intimately connected to one another and had forged a geo-social relationship predicated upon their involvement in this very specific, yet complex, economy. Just like what we discovered in the Trottier brigade, tracing the genealogies of specific families associated with identifiable brigades reveals a pattern of sisters—more importantly, related women, sisters or otherwise—marrying brigade members and linking otherwise unconnected males into a kinship system predicated upon interfamilial structures. In the case of the Trottier brigade, three Laframboise sisters stand out as having connected unrelated men to one another in a hunting brigade. This pattern was also seen with the Wilkie sisters, Judith, Madeleine and Cecilia. In this case, these three sisters were all married to captains or leaders of separate brigades—Pierre Berger, Gabriel Dumont, and Joseph Gariepy—and not men who all belonged to the same hunting group. There is a third variation regarding inter-related women connecting

buffalo hunters. Within the Ouellette brigade, there were three Ouellette brothers marrying three Bottineau sisters. Brothers Isidore, François and Antoine Ratte Ouellette were married to Marie, Josephs and Angelique Bottineau, respectively (see Figure 5). As with the Trottier brigade chart, we can see to the left the three Bottineau sisters and on the right the three Ouelette brothers. The green clusters represent the children, the second generation, who belong to these groups of married siblings. In short, women played a pivotal role in the creation, formation, leadership and maintenance of brigades.

Clearly, family provided the matrix for establishing social and economic cohesion, but it must also be remembered that these were families on the move. Though identifiable with particular regions, they did not establish settlements, as we understand them. While the buffalo hunters occupied habitation sites—wintering camps or *hivernements* in the historical records—they lived as much in-between them as in them. Where, how, and when the brigades moved was central to their economic behaviour, but it was also pivotal to their efforts at maintaining social cohesion. The Plains Metis and their brigades connected to one another in a style of life distinct from others engaged in the trade economy writ large.

Re-orienting the Geographic Gaze

The ethnographic data highlight some mobility issues and reveal several realities on the Great Plains that have not been fully addressed by academic scholarship. As noted earlier, the standard interpretation of the buffalo hunt

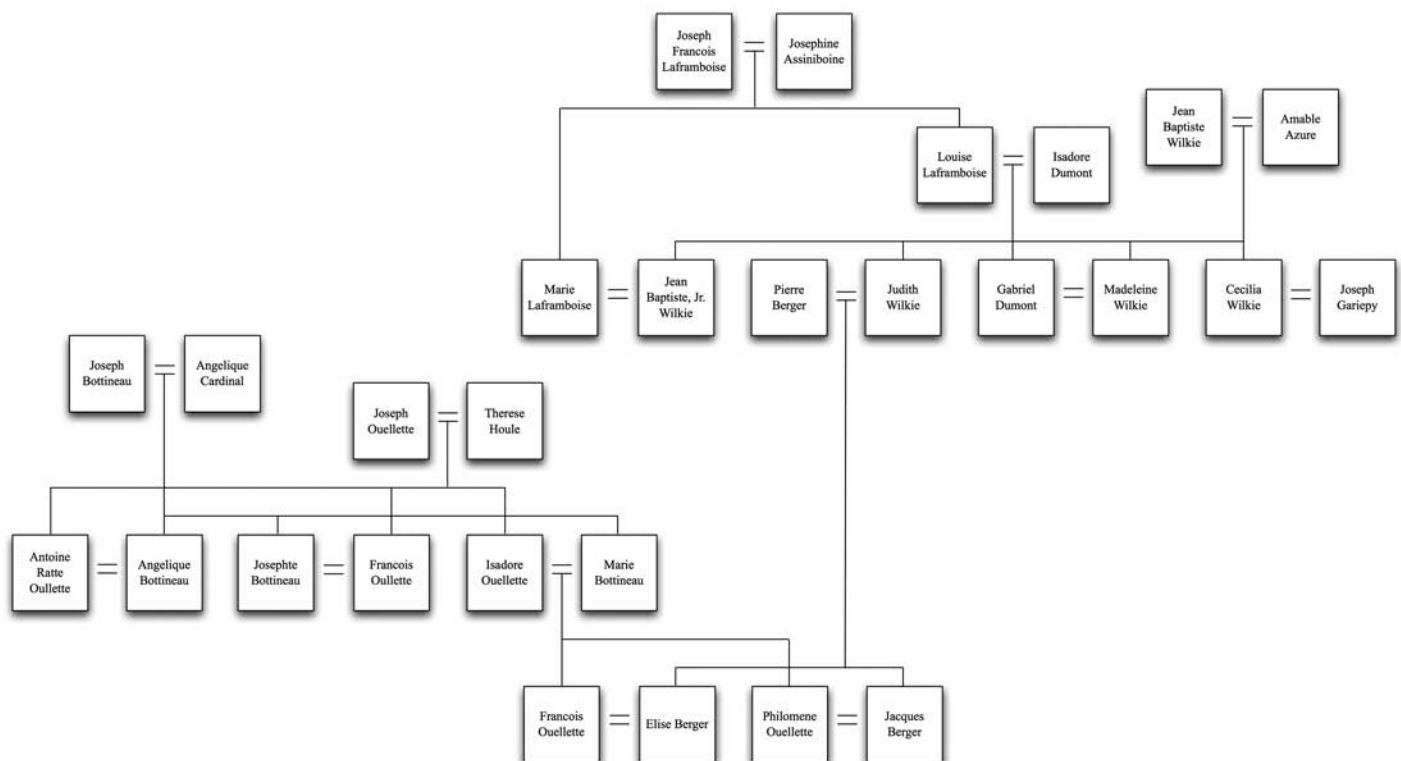


Figure 4. Inter-Brigade connections.

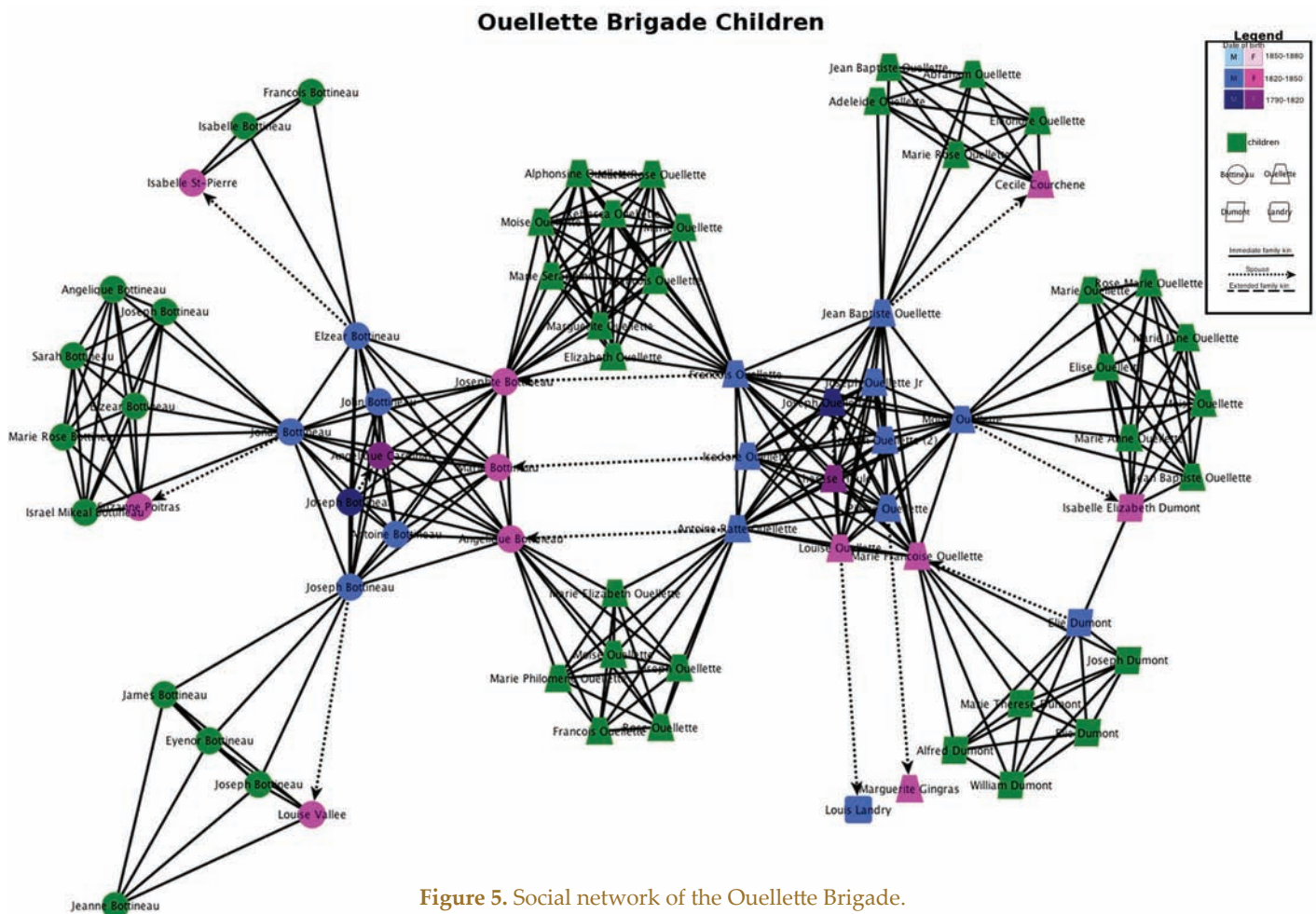


Figure 5. Social network of the Ouellette Brigade.

is that it originated in and from Red River, and that two brigades left this settlement, heading south and west to the buffalo ranges beginning in the late 1830s-early 1840s. In this interpretation, the Plains were not a homeland but rather a place in which the Metis worked seasonally but otherwise had no ties. Instead, Red River was at the centre of the buffalo hunters' geography and, in turn, was the homeland.¹⁹ This purported reality is further emphasized by the use of geographic terms to describe the brigades. Red River, Pembina and Whitehorse Plains become privileged locations in this narrative rather than the families who went on the hunt.

Within the framework of place-specific buffalo-hunting narratives, scholars generally agree that the strongest concentration of committed buffalo hunters at Red River came from the Whitehorse Plains, a sizable region situated west of the Forks of the Assiniboine and Red rivers on the eastern edge of the Prairies. In 1824, famed Metis leader Cuthbert Grant and fifty families left Pembina for the Whitehorse Plains to a location first named Grantown and later renamed St. François-Xavier after a Catholic mission was established. Whitehorse Plains encompassed an area greater than the community of Grantown or the parish of St. François-Xavier, likely including the parish of St. Charles, another Roman Catholic mission farther east on

the Assiniboine River, plus Baie St. Paul (the Saulteaux mission) to the west. Largely described as a French Métis parish because of its Roman Catholic heritage, many of the earliest inhabitants of St. François-Xavier were Scottish Halfbreeds with names such as Grant, McGillis and McKay. Irene Spry argued that racial and/or cultural divisions amongst the Red River Metis population was grossly over-stated. By surveying non-clerical sources, she demonstrated instead that "Métis and mixed-bloods" were linked in "ties of blood and long association on the hunt and trip."²⁰ Intermarriage between the so-called English- and French-speaking Metis families at Red River was, according to Spry, fairly widespread, and so the emphasis on division was less useful for assessing the community's social make-up. Spry's conclusions are born out when one looks at the number of families within the parish of St. François-Xavier with clear Scottish paternal traditions and the rise of Jean Baptiste Wilkie, Scottish Halfbreed, to the level of brigade leader in an economy largely described as being pursued by French Métis. By the late 1830s, when the Whitehorse Plains brigade(s) began heading directly west to the prairies, following the Assiniboine River and bypassing Pembina, they were also re-orienting themselves more fully to a plains-based style of life. Some of the Whitehorse Plains Metis—the Trottier Brigade and others—began moving

and wintering farther west by the 1850s and not returning regularly to the settlement because the distances between Red River and the buffalo ranges were simply becoming too great.

Interestingly, after analyzing the ethnographic and vital records capturing the life cycles of individuals, it became apparent that this movement of hunting brigades out of Red River onto the Great Plains in an east-to-west fashion did not constitute population shift from the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers to the Plains. The Metis of Red River were not the first out onto the plains; instead, they joined other Metis who had made the plains their home since the early 1800s. To understand this, it is relevant to revisit Marcel Giraud's work on the Metis of

By surveying non-clerical sources, [historian Irene Spry] demonstrated ... that "Métis and mixed-bloods" were linked in "ties of blood and long association on the hunt and trip."

western Canada, originally published in 1945. Giraud's research produced an observation that has been overlooked by scholars focussed on Red River as the heartland of Metis ethnogenesis and political expression. According to Giraud, there was a clear division within Plains Metis society by the early 1800s. Giraud argued that there were the Metis of the West, who "dwelt outside the nucleus of civilization" as established at Red River and who had a strong affinity with Plains Indians because they followed closely their mode of life by refusing to create permanent settlements.²¹ Giraud regarded the Metis of Red River as far more civilized because, even though they hunted, they were more privileged due to their closeness to the parishes and western society. While Giraud's analysis has the heavy overtone of crude social Darwinism—savagery versus civilization—he provided an important hint about the dynamics of Plains society.

Furthermore, Giraud's perception that there was a group of Metis originating from the northern Plains who were not as civilized as the Red River people—because they lived a lifestyle more akin to Indians—is an issue discussed within the HBC's administrative records. In her analysis of the minutes of the northern council, Nelly Laudicina observed a series of "grey zones" in the administrative and legal history of the Council of Assiniboia. The Council was largely uncomfortable with the level of independence exhibited by the Metis hunters at White Horse Plains. These inhabitants residing along the banks of the Assiniboine River were often described as belligerently independent, resistant to farming, and insistent on maintaining close ties to Indians, all of which made their activities and behaviour suspect. The manner in which the HBC attempted to resolve

its unease with this population manifested itself in a series of contradictory policies. For example, although it was Company policy to try to encourage former employees, freemen, and their respective families to come to the colony, the Council of Assiniboia tried to control exactly where this hunting population settled. The Council made efforts to divert them away from the heart of the colony and towards the banks of the Assiniboine River at a safe distance and under the control of Cuthbert Grant. Clearly, there was some unease in Red River immediately after the merger of 1821 regarding the role and influence that the Plains Metis would exert within the settlement. At the same time, however, there is also recognition that these hunters were potentially useful if their economic energy could be harnessed. In encouraging the Pembina Metis community to shift to Red River in the early 1820s, Governor George Simpson specified that he wanted them to settle at Whitehorse Plains on the far western edge of the settlement where they could be controlled by Cuthbert Grant, who had recently been made "Warden of the Plains."²² In bestowing this title on Grant, the HBC effectively set him outside the Company hierarchy because he was no longer employed as a clerk, yet also to establish him as an agent of Company authority. The title Warden of the Plains was strictly honorific, "a Sinecure offered him entirely from political motives and not from any feeling of liberality or partiality."²³ Grant's role was to assist the Chief Factor of the Red River District in his efforts to stop free trading in the area of the settlement. By keeping him thus occupied, Grant would himself no longer interfere with the HBC's trade, while also keeping the Metis and Indians at distance from the colony:

It moreover affords us the benefits of his great influence over the half breeds and Indians of the neighbourhood which is convenient inasmuch as it exempts us from many difficulties with them. He resides at the White Horse Plain about 16 miles up the Assiniboine River where he farms and only visits the Establishment on business or by invitation; but is always ready to obey our commands and is very effective when employed as a constable among the half breeds or Indians.²⁴

No such concern was ever expressed by Simpson or other HBC officials about the Metis settled at St. Boniface and southward along the Red River. This type of attitude was reserved almost entirely for the Assiniboia Metis. Additionally, in 1825, the Northern Council further flattened the differences between Indians and Metis by directing that "Freemen; Half Breeds and Iroquois" hunters and trappers be treated as if they were Indians.

Additional ethnographic data support Giraud's conclusion that there was a separate group of Plains Metis, distinct from the Red River core, and the data also reveal elements of events on the plains. In his memoir, Auguste

Vermette discussed the history of the relationship that the hunters at St. Norbert and St. Boniface had with those from Whitehorse Plains (St. François-Xavier), noting:

Les gens de Saint-Norbert puis de Saint-Boniface, ils ne s'entendaient pas bien avec les gens de la Prairie-du-Cheval-Blanc. Ils allaient à la chasse ensemble, ils voyageaient ensemble, mais on aurait dit que leur manière de vivre était pas pareille. Ils logeaient, ordinairement, un quatre, cinq milles de différence, en cas d'alerte, être assez proches pour avoir de l'aide. On pouvait venir aider l'autre en cas d'attaque par les Sioux. Encore, je rencontre les gens de la Prairie, on dirait qu'ils ne sont pas comme nous autres.²⁵

Vermette's observation that the people from Whitehorse Plains were somehow different from hunters of the St. Norbert and St. Boniface parishes is telling. When we look at the history of the family names from Whitehorse Plains, it becomes apparent that many originated in the trade at Forts des Prairies (Fort Edmonton) on the North Saskatchewan River, not on the southern Plains or at Red River.²⁶ It is known that Grant, founder of the Whitehorse Plains community, had begun his career as a young man working in the Montreal-based pemmican trade. The son of a NWC wintering partner and the nephew of one of that company's founders, Grant was posted to Fort Espérance (now in Saskatchewan) on the Qu'Appelle River in 1812. By this time, the fur-bearing animals in the Qu'Appelle region had been almost exterminated and Fort Espérance was a victualling post whose primary functions were the organization of the buffalo hunt and the supply of pemmican to sustain the fur trade in the Athabasca country.²⁷ Although many members of these western families resided on the outskirts of the settlement, they continued to be perceived as distinct by authorities, as well as other Metis. Furthermore, according to Barry Kaye's analysis of the settlement's census records, these families continued to demonstrate even stronger ties to the buffalo-hunting economy than the residents of other parishes who, though they participated in the semi-annual buffalo hunts, engaged in a more mixed economy that included freighting with carts and oxen and low-level agricultural activity. The residents of White Horse Plains had few oxen and even fewer worked the land. This may help explain their earlier westward departure from the Settlement and their opting for a life of continual hunting and travelling on the northern Great Plains as the buffalo herds continued their westward range contraction. The Assiniboine parishes were populated by families from very different regions, very distinct economic nodes—kin to various and distinct First Nations and western Metis communities within the vast northwest trade network; so their enduring distinct behaviour is perhaps not so surprising.²⁸

Like Grant, there were others identified as being from the Whitehorse Plains region who had been, in fact,

employees in the West long before Red River existed as a place to live. The family progenitors of our identified brigades were such men employed in the West in the early 19th century. Jean Baptiste Dumont was at Forts des Prairies working for the North West Company, beginning in 1811 until his death in the spring of 1815. Joseph François Laframboise was also at Forts des Prairies from 1816 to 1821, and there is no indication that he worked elsewhere. Joseph Berger, conversely, was in the interior by 1811, but he alternated between Red River and Lake "Ouinipic" (Winnipeg). Berger bought two horses from the NWC in 1816 and was noted as having deserted in 1818. From 1819–1821, he was rehired in Montreal by the NWC to serve another three years as a winterer and middleman at Red River and/or Nipissing River. Given all the years that he worked in the Red River region, it is no surprise that his family was from there. Similarly, Andre Trottier, Sr. worked in the Red River area, designated in the ledgers as the "country of his birth", from 1813 to 1818. In the period 1811–1821, we found the Laframboises and Dumonts tied to NWC's Fort des Prairies post region, while the Bergers and Trottiers were based out of the Red River posts. We can see from these differing employment opportunities that many of the families we associate with the buffalo-hunting tradition originated in very different parts of the Great Plains and Parklands.²⁹ We also know, however, that by 1821–1822, several families originating from Forts des Prairies were at Whitehorse Plains, having been encouraged to "retire" there by the HBC after the 1821 merger.³⁰ The Metis of Forts des Prairies had their societal and economic origin in the North West Company's pemmican-provisioning trade network. Vast buffalo herds surrounded the posts of the North Saskatchewan River region in the late 18th–early 19th century, and many of these posts existed to administer the buffalo-hunt economy. Consequently, the Fort Edmonton region dominated the pemmican-provisioning trade. When the fur-trade and pemmican wars broke out in Red River in the early 19th century, men such as Cuthbert Grant, who had been working in the pemmican-provisioning forts between Edmonton and Red River, mobilized to march on Red River to defend their interests.³¹ This event, which culminated in the Battle of Seven Oaks on 19 June 1816, as we know, has long been described by scholars as a Red River event instigated and manipulated by the NWC, thus denying Metis much role in the development of this political expression. However, when one considers that the men heading eastward from the Plains to Red River lived and worked in an economy that gave rise to a new society, it certainly points to a need for scholars to re-assess the relationship between these events—i.e., the evolution of a political consciousness based on economic necessity having its origins in a separate, plains-based Metis society. The buffalo and pemmican economy remained central to Fort Edmonton and to the Metis brigades based in that area after the 1821 HBC-NWC merger.³²

Arguably, some of the group that Giraud identifies as the Plains Metis may not have originated in Red River

at all (a conclusion he does not reach), but instead were a mobile group who had emerged by 1800 along the North Saskatchewan River. Families such as the Grants, McGillises, Brelands, and Dumonts were, by their history, not linked to Red River, but instead were descended from the pemmican-provisioning networks of the Saskatchewan and Milk River valleys. It is this first group, the mobile Metis of the West, who came out of the Forts des Prairies and onto the plains at about the same time that the people of St. François-Xavier and St. Charles were heading west. The marital alliances between the Trottier men of Red River and the Forts des Prairies-linked Laframboise women may have been partly a strategic linking of different pools of geographic knowledge and kin networks in the creation of a new hunting brigade. The autobiography of Johnny Grant of Montana clearly illustrates that the Fort Edmonton region was home to a Metis society in the early 1800s, well before Red River's establishment. The region's Metis, in turn, populated the Montana districts

by the 1820s–1830s. Johnny Grant, the son of Marie Anne Breland and Richard Grant, was born at Fort Edmonton in 1831 but spent much of his life in the Montana territory.³³ Through this family history, it becomes clear that there had developed an *in situ* Metis population in the region around Fort Edmonton who worked throughout the Great Plains, particularly in the North Saskatchewan River valley along with the Idaho/Montana regions, first provisioning pemmican and then in the buffalo robe trade.

We can see elements of this phenomenon described by Giraud in ethnographic writings left by other 19th-century writers. In 1859–1860, the Earl of Southesk, who travelled between Red River and Fort Edmonton on the Carlton Trail, identified at least six different locations where hunters were preparing for the summer hunt:

- at Fort Garry, a large camp of halfbreeds were preparing for a winter hunt;
- at White Horse Plains, halfbreed hunters and their families with innumerable carts and horses were preparing for the annual summer hunt;
- at Fort Ellice, men were on the plains hunting buffalo;
- at Fort Qu'Appelle, hunters were heading south into unfrequented districts (i.e., the US);
- at Cherry Bush Plains, near Fort Carlton, halfbreeds were organized and experienced buffalo hunters; and
- at Fort Edmonton there were a lot of hunters.³⁴

Southesk's observations arguably point to a series of brigades preparing for their summer hunts that year. Giraud's insights, along with accounts generated in the 19th century, and our efforts involving the methodology of social networking point to a need to re-assess the origins of Metis buffalo-hunting society.

Capturing the history of family-based brigades returns us to the central issue of mobility and why it has not been systematically studied as a style of life. The answer largely rests with sources and the types of methods employed by scholars. How does one track a people whose lifestyle is inherently mobile when the historical records are inherently immobile? For example, a sacramental register—baptismal, marriage, burial—has a fixed geographical scope that corresponds to either the territorial boundaries of a specific parish or the circuit of a particular itinerant missionary. However, hunting brigades moved continually *across* parochial and missionary boundaries. Records may exist for any one individual (or group) across a whole series of

registers, so that if we were to look only at one register set, we would miss capturing the entire range of the family's experiences and, therefore, the brigade as a whole. We first needed to delineate the brigades' general patterns of migration and residence.³⁵

Tracing the genealogical records of the Trottier brigade enabled

us to locate individual brigade members, the locations where they lived, were born or baptized, hunted, traded, married, and died. With this information, the general path of the Trottier brigade's mobility emerged, providing a sense of its evolving spatial usage of the Great Plains. According to church records for the Trottier brigade, for instance, the permanent transition to the plains from St.-François-Xavier took place in the late 1850s and early 1860s. However, the brigade's founding families were already establishing marital links to families along the North Saskatchewan River by the late 1830s. It is these marital alliances as much as the economy that brought the people of Whitehorse Plains, like the Trotters, out onto the Plains. As a group, the brigade moved into the Qu'Appelle Valley, onto the Wood Mountain Plateau, and into the Cypress Hills by the late 1860s and early 1870s, and then fanned out both northward toward Round Prairie and southwestward into Montana Territory. The evidence, both social and geographic, found within a series of sacramental registers, was supplemented with data generated from an analysis of relevant trade, census, petition, and scrip records, and then further correlated with a close reading of existing narrative materials.³⁶ Utilization of all these sources permits the creation of a larger picture of the brigade's activities, movements and composition away from Red River. In a sense, we have the ability to create a social and geographic grid across the Plains with specific temporal and geographic reference points. We were thus able to reduce the "silent zones" where the Trottier brigade disappears from the researcher's gaze, and provide a more robust understanding of both their social and geographic networks.

Conclusions

New developments in computer software and technologies have the potential to transform humanities research in the area of history, especially the history of peoples who did not typically produce their own records. As researchers, we are often limited by the sources available to us, but more often, we are blinkered by our own preconceptions of what was historically possible or real. The overt focus on Red River as the nexus of Metis society can be attributed to the overabundance of sources for that area, but that is only part of the story. The Red River settlement was an important node in the fur-trade system and the HBC's administration after 1821, but it was not the centre of the Plains Metis world. In many respects, it was its eastern periphery. Arthur Ray rightly pointed to our scholarly myopia that privileges settled spaces as homelands, which, in turn, denies the possibility that mobility is in fact what defined a people. Through the utilization of new methodologies such as social networking software for tracing who and where a people were at any given time, coupled with a reassessment of the existing ethnographic and secondary literature available with an eye to further our understanding of the social and cultural composition of their society, it is evident that there is more to know about the Plains Metis. Quite broadly, greater attention needs to be paid to the role of women in the formation of the brigades and where the buffalo-hunting communities originated. But more than this, our research to date points to a new paradigm about the very nature of Plains Metis society. These were a people who lived in family-based economic units and spent their lives in a continuous cycle of movement that is alien to us today. Indeed, their sense of home was clearly far broader than fixed points on the map and far more extensive than the existing scholarship is able to capture. By embracing new technologies to support and enhance our scholarship, we have the opportunity to begin understanding a way of life on the terms of those who lived it. Through networking analysis, we were able to chart the contours of one brigade while beginning to see the outlines of others. Determining who the key members of the brigade were and to whom they were linked allowed us to proceed to an exhaustive yet targeted search of information on the brigade in far flung archival records. This, in turn, allowed us to chart the creation, composition and movements of the Trottier brigade over an immense geography and across several decades. It also allowed us an entry point into other brigades and to explore the interrelations of brigades, the actual foundation of *La Nation Metisse*. ☞

Notes

1. We were assisted on this project by Dr. Timothy Foran, research associate at the University of Ottawa, who conducted extensive archival research on the Catholic missionaries and their interactions with Plains Metis, and by Émilie Pigeon, graduate research assistant, who began the process of developing our social networking analysis. We are grateful to them both for all the hours spent working with old records and computer software. The research undertaken for this project was made possible through the financial support of the

- Office of the Federal Interlocutor, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.
2. Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: its Rise, Progress and its General History to the Present Day*, Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972 reprint, pp. 245–246.
3. For example see: John McLean, *John McLean's Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory*, ed. W. S. Wallace, Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1932; Father Louis Lafleche Saint-François-Xavier, 1er juin 1847 (Ann. de la Prop. de la Foi, Québec) or "The People of Red River", *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, XVIII (Dec. 1858–May 1859), p. 172.
4. Arthur J. Ray, *Telling It to the Judge: Taking Native History to Court*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011, p. 107.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Fort Augustus was the North West Company (NWC) post near the HBC post of Edmonton House. Both posts were occasionally referred to as Fort des Prairies, along with a number of other posts in the West in that general region. After 1821, the NWC and HBC posts were amalgamated and became Fort Edmonton.
7. John E. Foster, "Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis", *Prairie Forum* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 1–13.
8. George Monroe Grant, *Ocean to Ocean: Sanford Fleming's Expedition through Canada in 1872; Being Diary kept During a Journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with the Expedition of the Engineer-in-Chief of the Canadian Pacific and Intercolonial Railways*, Toronto: Coles Pub. Co., 1970, p. 135.
9. *Ibid.* Emphasis added.
10. Fort Ellice Post Journal, 1865–1867. HBC 1M51 B.63/a/9. 9 August 1866.
11. Fort Ellice Post Journal, 1865–1867. HBC 1M51 B.63/a/9. 8 May 1867.
12. Fort Ellice Post Journal, 1865–1867. HBC 1M51 B.63/a/9. 9 July 1867.
13. For an analysis of the opportunistic economic approach of the Metis hunting brigades, see James McKillip, "A Métis Métier: Transportation in Rupert's Land", Master's thesis, University of Ottawa, 2005.
14. Mary Weekes as told to her by Norbert Welsh, *The Last Buffalo Hunter*, 1939; Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1994, pp. 76–77; and Marie Rose Smith, "Eighty Years on the Plains", Glenbow Museum Archives, GAIA, Box 1, File 4:64.
15. Weekes, *The Last Buffalo Hunter*.
16. Cheryl Troupe's MA thesis on the history of urbanization of the Metis in Saskatoon details this early history of the Trottier brigade. She began the genealogical reconstruction of the Trottier brigade at Round Prairie, and a version of the genealogy in Figure 2 can be found in her thesis. Cheryl Troupe, "Métis Women: Social Structure, Urbanization, and Political Activism, 1850–1980," Master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2010.
17. <http://www.visone.info/html/about.html>. We are indebted to Émilie Pigeon for her work creating the social networking graphs contained in this paper.
18. Jean Baptiste Wilkie was the son of a Scottish NWC employee, Alexander Wilkie, and an Anishanaabe woman, Mezhekamkijok.
19. The most comprehensive study of the buffalo hunters leaving Red River, specifically St. François-Xavier, was undertaken by Gerhard J. Ens. See his *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.
20. Irene M. Spry, "The Métis and Mixed-Bloods of Rupert's Land before 1870", in eds. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, *The New Peoples*, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1981, p. 97.
21. Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, trans. George Woodcock, 2 vols., Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986, p. 3.
22. Nelly Laudicina, "Droit et Metissages, Evolution et usage de la loi a la colonie de la Riviere Rouge, 1811-1869," PhD Thesis, Université

- Paris IV-Sorbonne & University of Ottawa, 2012, p. 92; quoting Beaver House, HBCA, D4/8, pp. 14-16.
23. Laudicina, p. 91; quoting Williams, *Hudson's Bay Miscellany*, Character Book, p. 210
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. "The people of St. Norbert and of St. Boniface did not get along well with people of Whitehorse Plains. We hunted together, we traveled together but it seemed like their way of life was not like ours. They lodged, usually, four or five miles away. In an emergency, they were close enough to get / give help. One could come to help the other if attacked by the Sioux. Still, I meet people of La Prairie [today], and they are not like us." Marcien Ferland, *Au temps de la Prairie: L'histoire des Métis de l'ouest canadien racontée par Auguste Vermette, neveu de Louis Riel*, Saint-Boniface MB: Les Éditions du Blé, 2000, pp. 51-52.
 26. Forts des Prairies, rather than Fort de Prairies, is a reference often found in the Oblate records referring to the region of the North Saskatchewan River valley where there were many posts associated with the HBC and NWC. Fort de Prairie, however, was a specific location, a fur post operated by the HBC in the location that became Fort Edmonton.
 27. George Woodcock, "Cuthbert Grant," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=38064>, 1 June 2012.
 28. Barry Kaye, "Some Aspects of the Cultural Geography of the Red River Settlement, 1827-1850," MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1967.
 29. HBCA F.4/32 NWC Ledger Book, 1811-1821.
 30. See also Ruth Swan and Edward A. Jerome, "Indigenous Knowledge, Literacy and Research on Metissage and Metis Origins on the Saskatchewan River: The Case of the Jerome Family" *Prairie Forum* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 1-24.
 31. Woodcock, "Cuthbert Grant." See also Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, 1:450: "The correspondence of Duncan Cameron and Cuthbert Grant revealed the organization of a new force of Bois-Brules whose members, recruited in the region of Fort Dauphin, Fort des Prairies, the Churchill River, and the Qu'Appelle River, would sweep away in the coming spring the last vestiges of the colony that presumed to defy the wishes of their nation."
 32. Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, 1:16; Brock Silversides, *Fort de Prairies: The Story of Fort Edmonton*, Surrey, BC: Heritage House Publishing, 2005.
 33. There are two significant biographies of Grant's life: Gerhard Ens, *A Son of the Fur Trade: The Memoirs of Johnny Grant*, Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008; and Lyndel Meikle, ed., *Very Close to Trouble: The Johnny Grant Memoir*, Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1996.
 34. Earl of Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains: A Diary and Narrative of Travel, Sport, and Adventure, During a Journey Through the Hudson's Bay Company's Territories, in 1859 and 1860*, Edmonton: M. G. Hurtig Ltd., 1969.
 35. Timothy P. Foran, the research associate for this project, was the one to draw our attention to this issue of sources and location based on his work tracking the families through the existing sacramental registers for the Catholic missions in western Canada. He presented these ideas in a paper, "Marrying Well: Catholic Matrimony and the Construction of Metis Kinship Networks, 1850-1885", presented at the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS), hosted by the Universities of Ottawa and Carleton, 24 May 2012.
 36. *Ibid.*

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Future History

In the next issue of *Manitoba History* ...

- Beer brewing in Winnipeg from Hudson Bay to Patrick Shea
- How cannons shaped the keystone province
- Murder on the Canada-US border
- Jack Houston's editorials
- The Red River Valley in song
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- book reviews & more

Conservative Visions of Christianity and Community in Early Red River, c1800–1821

by Tolly Bradford
Concordia University College of Alberta

Except in rather celebratory church histories like A. G. Morice's *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*, Christianity has largely been written out of the history of both Red River and western Canada before 1820.¹ Historians have largely assumed that, before formal mission churches arrived in the region, Christianity was not a factor in the lives of people in Rupert's Land, or in process of colonization. This assumption is based on the belief that the fur-trade era, especially before 1820, was a time period characterized almost exclusively by issues of trade and commerce. While some historians, since the 1970s and 1980s, have recognized that this economic backdrop had social consequences—most notably in the way intermarriage between trader and Native led to the emergence of new Metis communities—religion, and Christianity especially, remains a relatively understudied feature in the history of the west before 1870 and especially before 1820.

In this article, I want to address this gap in the scholarship, albeit in a very limited way. Looking at the period from about 1800 to 1821 when missions formally arrive in Red River, the paper explores how the chief architects of the Red River Colony—the London Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company and Lord Selkirk—used Christianity to create communities in the colony before 1821. I refer to the London Committee and Selkirk collectively as “the metropolitan elites” because, unlike HBC officers and servants living in Rupert's Land or Selkirk's own settlers, the London Committee and Selkirk (at least before 1817) saw Rupert's Land from their home-base in London, rarely setting foot in the territory. While a larger study may address the way Metis, settlers and Aboriginal peoples likewise understood and used Christianity during the early 19th century, my focus here is on how these metropolitan

elites used Christianity. I want to explore what this use tells us about the meaning of religion and Christianity in the West before missionaries began playing a pivotal role in the region after the 1820s and well before they became a decisive force in the colonization of the West by Canada after the 1870s.

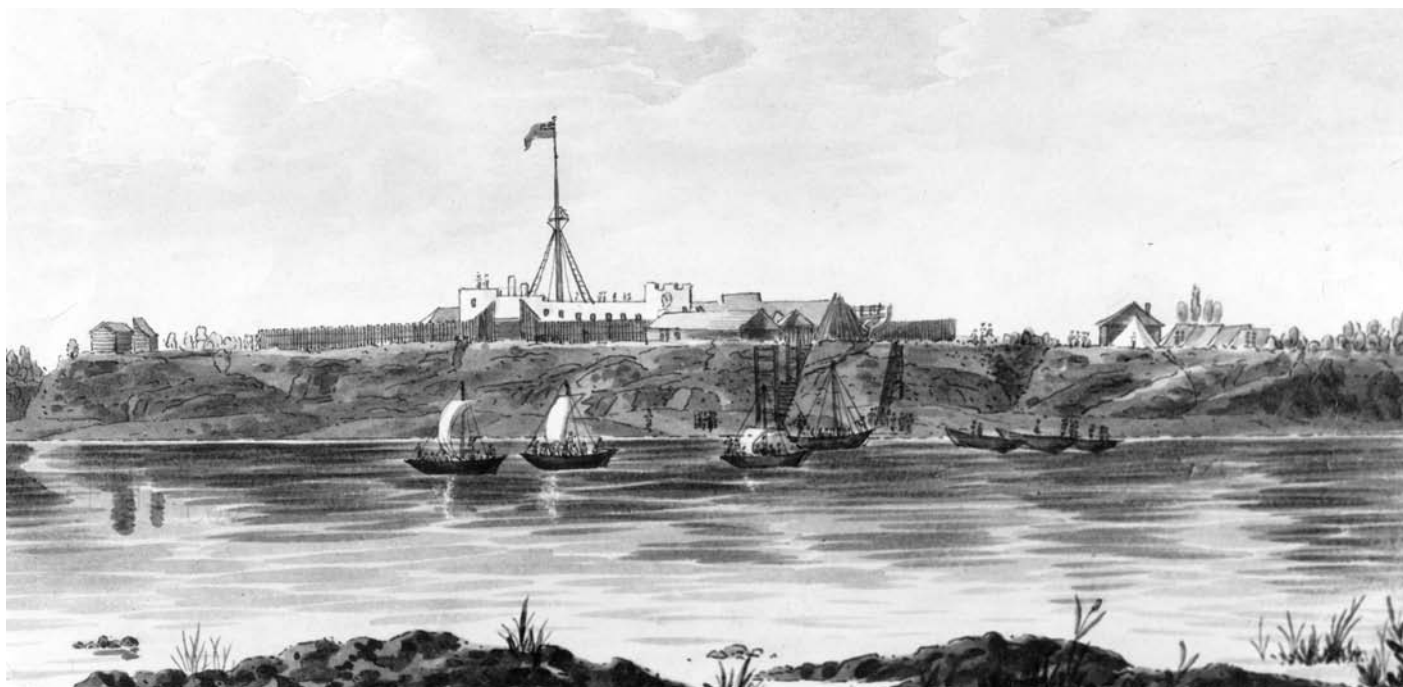
Although Selkirk and the London Committee of the HBC had slightly different visions of what constituted a “Christian community,” I argue here that during the earliest years of the 19th century, they both shared a fairly conservative vision of who could and should become a Christian and how Christianity should be used in Rupert's Land, and in Red River particularly. In brief, these metropolitan elites saw Christianity as a mechanism to describe, order, and retain control over peoples and families that had been born into Christianity and had existing familial ties to the religion through their fur-trading fathers or Scottish upbringing. Most strikingly, neither the Company nor Selkirk saw Christianity as something that should be used to convert Aboriginal peoples and assimilate them into the colony at the Forks. Rather, for Selkirk and the HBC, Christianity was something bred in the bone, not learned through conversion; it was something, which could be used to govern the communities of Metis and British-born settlers living along the Red and Assiniboine rivers, and keep them separate from the “Native” hunters and trappers living outside the colony. This fairly conservative view of Christianity, which seems to fit into the broader patterns of the British Empire, shaped the early beginnings of European religion in the Red River Colony.²

Selkirk's Christianization of the Red River Valley

According to J. M. Bumsted's recent and very thorough biography of Selkirk, The Earl “appears to have had no visible religious beliefs whatsoever.”³ This may be true. His life was, it seems, shaped more by the writing of Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus than by the Bible. Indeed, I would agree more with this portrayal of Selkirk than with how he appears in Alexander Ross' 1856 history of Red River. There, Selkirk is portrayed as a kind of Christian missionary who created Red River, not to settle a group of poor Scots and Irish, but, in the words of Ross, with the objective of “spreading the Gospel, and the evangelization of the heathen.”⁴ I do, however, disagree with Bumsted on one point: that he does not acknowledge how Christianity



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Library and Archives Canada, Rindisbacher 7, Acc. No. 1988-250-17.

The first group of Selkirk settlers leave York Factory for Red River, August 1812, as painted by Peter Rindisbacher (1806–1834).

figured into Selkirk's thinking and extensive writing about immigration schemes dating back to the beginning of the 19th century.

To understand the role of Christianity in Selkirk's thinking, it is important to recognize that, aside from his scheme to help the poor of Britain, one of Selkirk's many motivations to resettling Scots and Irish in British North America was to stop what he called the "contagion" of American Republicanism in the British colonies. As he wrote in 1806 about Upper Canada, the influx of Americans ("late-Loyalists") was, in his mind, altering British society in the colony, threatening to "infect the mass of the people throughout the province" with Republicanism.⁵ Selkirk saw a carefully engineered scheme of immigration as a solution to this northward spread of Republicanism. Outlined in letters and pamphlets in 1805 and 1806, he explained how he hoped to resettle large communities of non-English-speaking peoples from Europe in Upper Canada. Under this scheme, the colony of Upper Canada would be divided into different districts, each home to "national settlements" of European immigrants, particularly Highlanders, Dutch and Germans. These settlements, stated Selkirk, should remain "distinct and separate" from one another, and be sites where the "peculiar and characteristic manners [of Highlanders or Dutch or German settlers], should be carefully encouraged." The point of this scheme was that Upper Canada, once settled by blocks of Dutch, Germans and Highlanders (each kept separate and each retaining their respective language, religion and culture), would be less attractive to the English-speaking American. It was these "national settlements" of non-English speakers, prophesied Selkirk, which would form "a strong barrier against the contagion of the American sentiment," and settlement.⁶

In this sense, Selkirk did not see migration and settlement as a way to assimilate newcomers into existing Aboriginal or British North American colonial society. Rather Selkirk's expectation was that the European settler communities he moved from Europe to North America would remain completely intact as they crossed the Atlantic and re-establish themselves in Upper Canada or elsewhere. Although the retention of "national" language and dress were two features that would keep the "old cultures" of these communities alive and unchanged in North America, he also recognized that religion, particularly religious institutions and religious leaders, would be crucial in helping these "national communities" remain cohesive units during and after their transatlantic crossing.⁷

By 1811, as he was preparing his scheme for Red River, traces of the "national community" ideal he had outlined for Upper Canada remained part of his thinking. Although he dropped his insistence on using only non-English-speaking settlers, religion remained an important tool used by Selkirk to help his settlers transplant their culture to British North America. In the "Prospectus" Selkirk published to attract potential settlers, he makes a great deal of the cheap, good-quality land available to immigrants; however, he also devotes an entire paragraph to his promise that the new settlement in Assiniboia would be a place free of the sectarian strife so common in Britain, and especially Ireland, during the 18th century. The Prospectus stated in part that, "The settlement is to be formed where religion is not the ground of any disqualification; an unreserved participation in every privilege will, therefore, be enjoyed by Protestant and Catholic, without distinction."⁸ This would not, however, be a colony without religion. Selkirk

also explained to prospective settlers that they would be given a minister of their own denomination: "It is proposed, that, in every parochial division, an allotment of lands shall be made, for the perpetual support of a clergyman, of that persuasion which the majority of the inhabitants adhere to."⁹ Just as in Upper Canada, the Selkirk settlement at Red River would not just allow—but actively encourage—the retention of "old world" cultural and religious practices.

Although not realized before 1818, there were some provisions made by Selkirk to equip his settlers with religious leaders. A Presbyterian minister was assigned to the Scottish settlers, although he remained in Scotland to learn Gaelic and never reached the colony; and a "Rev. Bourke" had been recruited by Selkirk to act as a priest to the Irish Catholics, although he was sent back to Ireland in about 1813.¹⁰ Without these ordained ministers, divine services, marriages and weddings were performed by Miles Macdonell for the Catholics, while Presbyterian rites were carried out by James Sutherland, one of the Scottish settlers.¹¹ As early as 1816, Macdonell and Selkirk were writing to the Bishop of Quebec to ask that he send a Catholic priest to the region. In line with his ideal of using institutional religion to build and maintain communities, Selkirk felt strongly that a Catholic priest could be used to serve the Canadian and Metis populations of the settlement. "I am fully persuaded of the infinite good which might be effected by a zealous and intelligent ecclesiastic among [the Canadians], among whom the sense of religion is almost entirely lost," wrote Selkirk.¹² As it happened, an ordained leadership never materialized in Red River until 1818.

Aside from providing leadership to the community, Selkirk, and likely most of the HBC Committee in London, also foresaw that communities that had sound religious leadership would be more likely to become a force of what was called "respectability" in the Red River valley. Somewhat like the way he had described the value of his "national communities" as bulwarks against the lawless Americans, metropolitan elites like Selkirk and the HBC committee members in London expressed hopes that these settlers, particularly the thrifty and principled Scots, would in time, allow these communities to stop the "contamination" of the region by lawless peoples. In Red River, this "contamination" was not attributed to American Republicanism, or even to the "heathen natives" Alexander Ross talks about, but rather to the apparently "lawless" fur traders of the North West Company (NWC). Selkirk expressed an almost prophetic vision of how his poor but energetic settlers would inevitably end the influence of the NWC at Red River. As he wrote in 1816, before Seven Oaks but after years of violence at Red River, "when a body of industrious farmers have once been firmly established,

[the settlement] must soon put it out of the power of any lawless...traders to overawe and insult them."¹³ Selkirk further illustrated how this would happen. Through time, he explained, the small settlement he had started at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers would "bring along with it, in due time, an effective police, and a regular administration of justice; that [will be a threat to men] who maintain a commercial monopoly by the habitual exercise of illegal violence..."¹⁴ While Christianity is not mentioned, we have seen that at the base of this "flourishing settlement" was, at least in Selkirk's mind, religion—particularly the "national" religions of the settlers, complete with clergy and church.

The Hudson's Bay Company, Christianity, and Post Society

At the same time that Selkirk was working to create a "flourishing settlement" at Red River comprised of distinct ethno-religious blocks, the London Committee of the Company was using Christianity to create a slightly different kind of Christian community at its hinterland posts throughout the North-West. Stretching back to at least the mid-18th century, Christianity—in rhetoric

if not reality—had always been a part of the post society. Throughout the 18th century, the HBC, although a business, encouraged post factors to use religion as a way to retain the social structure and social order in the forts. According to Scott Stephen, divine services had a kind of double purpose

in the 18th-century post society—to remind servants of the hierarchy of the fort (with God at the very top, presumably), and to encourage "more virtuous" behaviour amongst the servants. Interestingly, Stephen also suggests that in the months after periods of labour unrest at forts, post factors made a particularly vigorous effort to tell the London Committee that they were holding regular divine services at the post, and demanding "virtuous" behaviours from the servants.¹⁵ While this pattern of reporting suggests that the on-the-ground reality of post life may not have been as religious or virtuous as the London Committee hoped, it does reveal that religion, or at least the rhetoric about it, was a central pillar of Company operations well before 1800.

After 1800, the HBC had somewhat modernized its use of Christianity at the posts. Due to demands from HBC servants that their children be given an education at the post, and due to the growing evangelical mood amongst a few members of the London Committee, Christianity started to have a dual purpose at its posts: on the one hand, divine services and the fear of God would continue to be used to assert the hierarchy of post society, with the governor, the Committee, and ultimately God at the top; on the other hand, Christianity should be used to assimilate the mixed-ancestry children of post families into a form of Britishness.¹⁶

... neither the Company nor Selkirk saw Christianity as something that should be used to convert Aboriginal peoples and assimilate them into the colony at the Forks.

Christianity in Early Red River

This new use of Christianity marked a significant departure from the way Christianity had been used in the past. In the 18th century, Christianity was something that shaped the world within the post walls. Neither the original charter of the HBC nor directions from London seem to make mention of bringing Christianity to Aboriginal communities outside the post walls.¹⁷ However, by the early 19th century, at least amongst the Committee in London, there was some consideration being made about the way Christianity could be brought to serve the wider “fur trade society”—including both the children and wives of servants, and the “natives” of the territory. In 1808, the Committee noted, for example, that they may create “Schools under the direction of Clergymen at the Company’s several Factories in Hudson’s Bay for the purpose of instructing the native Youths of both Sexes would tend greatly to promote the cause of Religion & Virtue.”¹⁸ The purpose of the schools was clarified a few weeks later when the London Committee suggested that the purpose of a school was two-fold. It would “instruct the Children of the Servants & also the Children of such native Families as may be desirous of reaping the benefits of Civilization & religious Instruction.”¹⁹ However, as I show below, the focus placed by the HBC on instructing “native Families” was limited and, if anything, faded over the course of the 1810s and 1820s.

This ideal of the Company school at Bayside posts was never realized in a systematic way. Although there were a few schoolteachers assigned to some of the larger posts, the plan of establishing a Company school at the centrally-located Cumberland House never came to pass.²⁰ What these plans do suggest, however, is that the Governor and Committee in London, knowingly or not,

were suggesting a change to post society. In this new vision, Christianity would absorb non-whites, especially mixed-ancestry children with ties to the post, into the sphere of the HBC, and in the process create a new kind of post society that was multi-ethnic, Christian, and led by a white HBC officer class. In many ways, this envisioned post society—hierarchical, Christian, and multi-ethnic—is evident in the way the Colony at Red River took shape after 1821. This was no accident. The HBC carefully arranged that its servants and families once retired or made redundant after the merger of the NWC and HBC, should not be allowed to stay in the hinterland but rather should be gathered at Red River and placed in the care of a Church.

The idea of using Christianity to make new communities of post employees at Red River was outlined by Committee member John Halkett after a visit to Red River in the early 1820s. Writing back to his colleagues in London, Halkett explained that all retired employees and their Metis families should be sent to Red River at the Company’s expense. The reason for the decision to relocate the Metis families was principally economic: the HBC did not want retired or discharged employees interfering with the fur trade and its relations with Aboriginal traders. In the words of historian E. E. Rich, Halkett and the Committee in London felt it was a “necessity to get men who ought to be discharged from the fur trade to take up land at Red River instead of hanging around the posts, tempting the Indians to trade and inevitably putting something of a strain upon the supply system by their demands.”²¹ Once resettled in Red River, these HBC families should be placed under the “care” of either the Roman Catholic Mission or, in the case of Protestant families, the newly arrived Church Missionary Society.



Archives of Manitoba, H. L. Hime 6, N10833.

The Cathedral (left) and Nunnery (right) at St. Boniface, as seen from the west bank of the Red River, circa September 1858.

While there was a philanthropic and humanitarian aspect to the HBC's plan to relocate families to the parishes of Red River, the main factor driving this plan to place its discharged employees with missions was the desire for the Company to retain authority in the North-West. Not only would this plan make it impossible for retired traders to "hang around the fort and tempt Indians to trade," but also it would offer the Company a way to control the Colony. By using missionaries to act as patriarchal figures to the retiring fur-trade families, the company believed it could recreate at Red River the multi-ethnic, Christian and hierarchal post society that had characterized the hinterland posts. This plan, in a sense, would relocate fur-trade society from the post to the parish.

Symbol of Separation

By the late 1810s, then, Selkirk and the HBC had slightly differing visions of how the Colony at Red River should be shaped by Christianity. While Selkirk tended to see communities as ethnic blocks, each following its own version of Christianity, the HBC, given its long experience of the post society, saw their Christian communities as multi-ethnic, comprising both British-born and Aboriginal peoples. However, more important than these differences was the way Selkirk and the London Committee shared a sense that Christianity was a kind of glue that could be used to bind together their communities. Indeed, both seemed to see Christianity as a key marker differentiating Aboriginal peoples living outside the settlement from the mixture of communities that settled in the Red River Colony.

Selkirk seems quite clear on this point: he makes no reference to integrating Aboriginal peoples—or even other Europeans—into his settlement of Scottish Presbyterians. He does, in an 1814 pamphlet, outline a vague plan for Indian education. However, as this pamphlet argued, the transformation of Aboriginal peoples into settled farmers should be achieved without the direct integration of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Instead, selected Aboriginal boys should be brought to Industrial schools at settlements like Red River, and there taught agricultural and industrial skills that they could then bring back to their community. There is no mention of either outright cultural assimilation or a concerted attempt at Christianization.²² While Selkirk does suggest that a missionary could in the future be used to recruit these potential students, he thinks that, in the short term, HBC officers and servants could "visit the wandering tribes, and... call their attention to the utility of the improvements recommended to them."²³ This was a vision of a mission project without missionaries, without overt references to Christianization, and without a goal of absorbing and assimilating Aboriginal peoples. Selkirk wanted them to change the way they used the soil, but he did not seem interested in interfering with their spirituality.

For its part, between 1800 and the 1820s, the HBC Committee seemed to be moving further away from supporting mission activity in the hinterland of the North-

West. Although the London Committee had suggested that prayers and Christian education at posts should be open to those "as may be desirous of reaping the benefit of Civilization & Religious Instruction", by the 1820s, and especially in reference to Red River, the Governor and Committee seemed, if not opposed, then certainly not prepared to support, the evangelization of Christianity amongst peoples not otherwise connected to a parish at Red River through family ties. In 1819, when John West was recruited to be deacon for the Company, he was told to restrict himself to serving only the families of Company men at Red River. As recorded in the London minute book, West was hired for the "purposes of affording religious instruction and consolation to the Companies [sic] retired Servants & other Inhabitants of the Settlement, and also of affording religious instruction & consolation to the Servants in the active employment of the Company upon such occasions as the nature of the Country and other circumstances will permit."²⁴ No mention is made of evangelizing the Aboriginal population outside the colony. As those familiar with West's short stay in Red River will know, his few attempts to evangelize created considerable friction between West and local HBC authorities, especially George Simpson. Indeed, it was not really until 1840 that Catholic and Protestant missionaries were able to use HBC transportation support to move out of the colony and begin evangelizing to the north and west. Until that time, although many Aboriginal and Metis families were drawn to the missions at Red River, in the opinion of many HBC officers in Rupert's Land, and at least some members of the London Committee, Christianity should be kept inside the post walls and within the boundaries of the Red River Colony.

Conclusion

Historians of the British Empire often talk about the period after the early 1800s as a period marked by the slow shift to "the Second British Empire." This Second Empire was supposedly marked by the gradual change in the nature of the British Empire. While there is some debate as to the timing of this move towards a "new" Empire, most scholars agree that by the 1830s the Empire was emphasizing new things—most especially more migration from Britain to its colonies, an agenda of liberalism, free trade, and, by the 1840s, a concerted movement to convert indigenous peoples to Christianity.²⁵ Unlike the previous decades of simply commercial imperialism, during this Second Empire the British aimed not just to colonize the material resources of spaces like western Canada, but also to colonize the space of the region and the minds of its peoples. While this periodization certainly holds for places like the Cape Colony of South Africa, Upper Canada and India, in some ways Red River remained stuck in the First Empire until at least the 1850s, and arguably into the 1870s. While there was a brief wave of emigration from Britain to the West under Selkirk, many other features of the West remain stuck in an 18th-century vision of empire. The fur trade

and the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company were still the main features of British presence in the prairies, and Christianity rarely moved beyond the boundaries of settlement. The fact that John West, and CMS missionaries until the late 1840s, were hired to work in the colony and were not permitted to go beyond it suggests the Company—and George Simpson in particular—were still working by the rules of the 18th and early 19th centuries: that Christianity was the religion for the “civilized” settlers at Red River and hinterland posts, not a religion to be propagated throughout Aboriginal camps. Still tethered to the banks of the Red and Assiniboine, they were charged

[According to Selkirk] selected Aboriginal boys should be brought to Industrial schools at settlements like Red River, and there taught agricultural and industrial skills that they could then bring back to their community.

with preaching to the converted, rather than preaching to convert. Was this due to the tyranny of geography or to the tyranny of George Simpson and his Company's attachment to a vision of Christianity that promoted the control, order and containment of the Aboriginal peoples of the west?

Whatever the reason for this restrictive use of Christianity by Selkirk, Simpson and the London Committee, it is clear that the early history of religion in Red River reminds us of the distinct patterns of colonization in the Prairie West. For instance, the story of missions in the colonization of western Canada is different from the role of Christianity in what would become central Canada. There, the concerted effort to convert Indigenous peoples to Christianity began in the 17th century and continued under the guidance of various Catholic and Protestant organizations through to the 20th century. In the Prairie West, Christianity arrived later and for different reasons. It was first and foremost, a tool for the making of settler society, and only after the mid-1800s would it become a tool for the cultural conversion of the Aboriginal populations. Selkirk's dream of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural world in the West provided a limited role for the evangelization and conversion of Indigenous Peoples to Christianity. Religion, in this instance, was meant to define communities, not to change them. ✎

Notes

1. See the early chapters of Adrien Gabriel Morice, *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada, from Lake Superior to the Pacific (1695-1895)*, Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1910.
2. A convincing argument about the relatively “conservative” nature of the empire between the 1780s and 1820s is made in C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*, London: Longman, 1990.

3. J. M. Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk: A Life*, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008, p. 157.
4. Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress and Present State. With Some Account of the Native Races and Its General History to the Present Day*, Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1856, p. 1.
5. Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk, “Observations on the Present State of the Highlands of Scotland, with a View of the Causes and Probable Consequences of Emigration,” J. Ballantyne & Co. for A. Constable and Co., 1806, p. 162.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
7. Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk*, p. 139.
8. [Lord Selkirk], “Prospectus for the Red River Settlement,” in, John Strachan, *A letter to the Right Honourable the Earl of Selkirk, on his settlement at the Red River, near Hudson's Bay*. London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown etc, 1816, p. 71
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.
10. A. Begg, *History of the North-West*, Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co, 1894.
11. Morice, *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada, from Lake Superior to the Pacific (1695-1895)*, chap. 5; Ross, *The Red River Settlement*, pp. 30-31.
12. Morice, *Ibid.*, p. 90.
13. Selkirk, “A Sketch of the British Fur Trade in North America; with Observations Relative to the North-West Company of Montreal, 1815” in *The Collected Writings of Lord Selkirk*, Vol. 2, 1810-1820, ed. J. M. Bumsted, p. 95.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 96
15. Scott Stephen, “Masters and Servants: The Hudson's Bay Company and Its Personnel, 1668-1782”, Unpublished Manuscript. Thank you to Scott Stephen for allowing me to look at this manuscript. Although not commenting on the role of religion specifically, one of the most thorough discussions of the importance of hierarchy and authority in 18th-century HBC post society is also made in, John Elgin Foster, “The Country-born in the Red River Settlement,” PhD, University of Alberta, 1973, ch. 1.
16. Foster, “The Country-born in the Red River Settlement”, p. 75.
17. Scott Stephen, e-mail message to author, 7 May 2012.
18. Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, Minutes, quoted in, Archives Department Research Tools 16, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA), Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg, RG20/6/16, 2 March 1808.
19. HBCA, RG20/6/16, 16 March 1808.
20. Mention of plans to start a Company school at Cumberland are made in HBCA RG20/6/16, 31 May 1809.
21. E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, vol.2, 2 vols., London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958, p. 429.
22. Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk, “Untitled Pamphlet on Indian Education, ca. 1814”, in *The Collected Writings of Lord Selkirk*, Vol. 2, 1810-1820, pp. 3-6.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
24. Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, Minutes, 13 October 1819, quoted in, Archives Department Research Tools 16, HBCA, RG20/6/16.
25. For discussion and debate about the “Second British Empire”, and the changing place of Christianity in the Empire, see C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*, London: Longman, 1990); P. J. Marshall, “Britain Without America—A Second Empire?”, in *The Eighteenth Century*, vol. 3, The Oxford History of the British Empire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 576-595; Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004; and, Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012, pp. 6-7.

The Fork in the Road: Red River, Retrenchment and the Struggle for the Future of the Hudson's Bay Company

by Scott Stephen
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The early years of the nineteenth century were gloomy ones for the 130-year-old Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). Mounting problems at home and abroad were breaking down the Company's well-established business practices, confidence in which had for so many decades underpinned the Company's staunch (and infamous) conservatism. With the future looking murky at best, the time had clearly come for those within the HBC to—in modern parlance—"think outside the box."

A corporation in crisis attracts "blue sky" thinking even without an invitation. A range of proposals was put forward by HBC directors and employees—and even by a former competitor looking for a job. Everything was on the table: pouring more resources into the fur trade, focussing on timber resources and even establishing a colony on the northern prairies. From the banks of the Thames, the HBC's future seemed inextricably tied to two rivers little known in England: the Athabasca and the Red. We know few details of the lively debate which ensued, but the overall shape of the conversation would shape the Company—and northwestern North America—for decades to come.

Dark Days for the Honourable Company

The road from London to Red River ran through Montreal. The HBC's Montreal-based competition was claiming three-quarters of the fur trade at the beginning of the 19th century, and promised to double their efforts after the merger (or, rather, re-merger) of the North West Company (NWC) and the New North West (XY) Company in 1804. The re-invigorated NWC embarked on its ambitious "Columbia Enterprise" in 1805, and their push to the Pacific was supported by repeated strikes against the HBC east of the mountains, even in the heart of the old Company's territories.

The HBC was equally vulnerable on the other side of the Atlantic. The fur market of Napoleonic Europe had both shrunk and reshaped itself: beaver remained dominant, but other furs like marten and bear (on which the HBC relied almost as heavily as beaver) were at times almost unsellable. Attempts in the field to extract the necessary flexibility out of the London-dictated Standard of Trade proved insufficient, and the relative value of furs in the Bay was increasingly out of line with their relative value in Europe. Furthermore, wartime conditions had pushed the

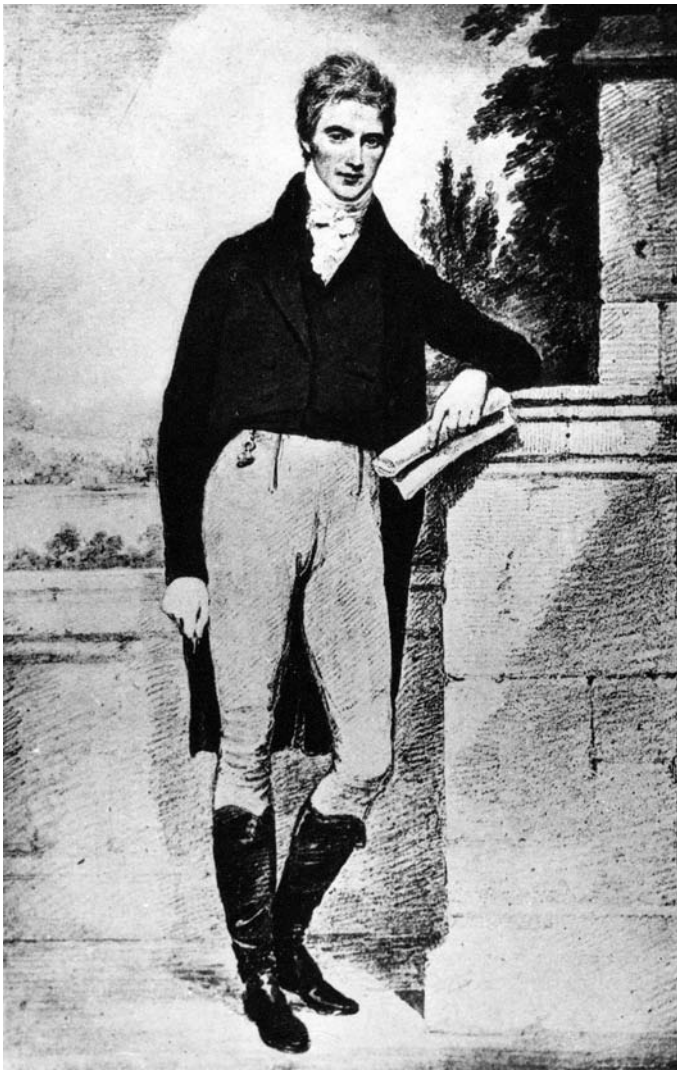
price of trade goods well out of proportion to the value of furs for which they were being traded in North America.¹

Not only was the London-based Committee unable to adapt its North American operations to the changing market in Europe, their agents in the field lacked both the information and the incentive to accomplish that for them. The intelligence and activity of men like James Bird and William Auld stood in rather stark contrast to the poorly informed and less motivated bulk of the officers and men—although their self-important acerbity appears to have been a more common commodity. To be fair to these others, they often lacked important information about European conditions: Auld reported that his traders were entirely ignorant of how much their employers were paying for trade goods.² The Company's own accounting system did not even allow men in the field to calculate profit or loss.

The HBC's oft-criticised failure to offer its leading traders a significant share in the profits encouraged timidity and corruption. Auld reported having been offered a bribe to recommend a certain manufacturer's goods to the Committee, and estimated that every year £2,000 worth of goods was misappropriated by officers and traders for their own use.³ Auld may have railed against Peter Fidler's "mean and spaniel-like behaviour" in withdrawing from Ile à la Crosse with his tail between his legs in 1809, but we may wonder if the men in question would really have behaved much differently if offered a new incentive program. Contemporary observers felt that the nation's most active and industrious men were naturally attracted to the more glamorous and potentially profitable arenas of the East Indies and the war against Napoleon, leaving the "second-rate" men to sign up for less attractive companies like the HBC.⁴ And, of course, at least some of these gentlemen (like



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Archives of Manitoba, Personalities, Selkirk Thomas Douglas 5, N8755.

Lord Selkirk. This drawing of a youthful, energetic Thomas Douglas (1771–1820), Fifth Earl of Selkirk, was contained in the 1912 work *Life of Lord Selkirk, Coloniser of Western Canada* by Winnipeg cleric and educator George Bryce.

Fidler in 1809) could have served as patsies and straw men for ambitious and voluble superiors like Auld and Bird seeking to emphasise their own value, honesty and virtue.

There was much at stake, and men could be forgiven for sounding defensive or sheepish in their correspondence with their employers. In 1803, the NWC had audaciously occupied Charlton Island in James Bay, and the HBC's feeble attempt to oust them fizzled when the crew of the intercepting ship refused to attack the Nor'Westers. Yet the NWC failed to establish a foothold on the Bay: despite building trading posts at Charlton Island, Hannah Bay, and Hayes Island (Moose River), the local Cree bands showed little interest in trading with them, and the Nor'Westers withdrew in 1807.⁵ The passive nature of the HBC "victory" in that theatre highlighted the Company's general approach to the escalating competition: avoidance of conflict. "The great and first object of our Concerns is an Increasing Trade to counterbalance the very enormous and increasing

Expenses of it. We do not expect returns equal to those of our more powerful Opponents but we ought to receive such returns as are adequate to the quantity of goods you are annually supplied with." The HBC Committee maintained that it was "Not the intention or the interest of the Company to create Contentions either with the natives or the Canadians, which may produce the most serious and mischievous consequences."⁶

Historian E.E. Rich observed that the Committee's "ideas of a fur trade war must seem strange and "kid-gloved" in a struggle in which not only courage but some lack of the finer susceptibilities were essentials." This was the "staid and durable chartered company which [had] achieved coherence and stability at the cost of many promising ventures, and of a conservatism which often proved frustrating." They pursued their trade with quiet purpose and courage, and with a frame of mind that was benevolent but far from acquiescent. Their "slow and steady" approach could easily be under-estimated by their more flamboyant opponents, whose partnership was strong in personalities, and whose enterprise and individuality proved to be both a strength and a weakness.⁷

Keeping Their Heads Above Water

In this context, the NWC in 1804 offered £103,000 in Navy 5% annuities to buy access to the route through Hudson Bay. In subsequent negotiations, the NWC offered up to £2,000 in annual rent for use of the route, and was willing to withdraw from the shores of the Bay (except for a post near York Factory to facilitate inland transport).⁸ The offer was both an admission that the NWC's increasingly far-flung operations were posing significant logistical problems, which needed to be addressed, and an implicit suggestion that the businessmen of the HBC's Committee would prefer cash in hand to an arduous and expensive struggle with

A corporation in crisis attracts 'blue sky' thinking even without an invitation. A range of proposals was put forward by HBC directors and employees—and even by a former competitor looking for a job.

a stronger rival. The HBC was in fact willing to enter into such negotiations, and may well have struck a deal with the (Canadian) devil had the price been right: their chartered privileges were arguably the most valuable asset remaining to them, and the Committee was not prepared to let those go for a song.

Although those negotiations were ultimately rejected by the HBC, the whole episode highlighted the geographic allure of the Hudson Bay route, which offered a considerably shorter and cheaper path across the continent than the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes route. The Nor'Westers' projected

Columbian enterprise had forced that Company to reconsider the difficulties presented by its long line of communications from Montreal.⁹ The episode also spoke to the NWC's ambivalent attitude towards the HBC and its Charter: they were ready, willing, and able to challenge their adversary's chartered privileges, but much preferred the easier path of purchasing or leasing those privileges for themselves. As is often the case in business history, attitudes towards a monopoly depend very much on whether you have one.

Yet a monopoly's value depends greatly on one's ability to enforce it, and turning down the NWC's offer still left the Committee with many obstacles to overcome. Competition in the field became more physical (as Fidler discovered), while in 1806/7 Napoleon and his allies effectively closed off most of Europe from British trade. By 1808, the HBC was reduced to begging for relief from the Board of Trade in England: according to their petition, they had three years' stocks of furs on hand and had not sold a single skin for export in two years.¹⁰

Such a crisis in the Company's affairs strained their established business practices to the breaking point. Previously, the Company had comfortably relied on credit from the Bank of England, drawn upon regularly each year until the fur sales began and income accumulated. Normally, the Company's debt would stand at about

£10,000 at the beginning of January, usually doubling as tradesmen and wages were paid during the course of that month. Revenue from fur sales and the Company's own investments were usually sufficient to pay out a 4% dividend and pay off debts during the summer. The Bank was never asked for more than £20,000 credit, which was easily covered by the HBC's assets (including its ships, posts, territorial claims, more than £40,000 in safe

As is often the case in business history, attitudes towards a monopoly depend very much on whether you have one.

investments and a £50,000 insurance policy covering furs in the warehouse awaiting sale). Interest was paid regularly, debts were repaid on time, and no one ever questioned the credit-worthiness of this "unadventurous" Company of Adventurers.¹¹

Unfortunately, such a system left the HBC with relatively little capital on hand with which to finance significant expansion of its operations, as was clearly necessary in the face of virile opposition from Montreal. Furthermore, when wartime fur sales fell (at the same time as fixed costs and customs duties were rising) the Company's lack of fluid resources was cruelly exposed. Although the overall returns were actually rising – from 64,711 Made Beaver (MB) in 1804 to 81,007 MB in 1807 – much of that was not beaver and only beaver was selling.¹² In 1807, the HBC asked the Bank of England for an unprecedented £50,000 credit and yet by the following year was still reduced to liquidating some of its outside investments to raise cash. At the same time, they were asking for a six-month extension on paying customs duties: previously the customs duties paid on furs imported from North America were partially offset by a refund on the duties for those furs subsequently re-exported, but Napoleon had effectively cut off much of Britain's legitimate trade with the Continent. The Company was only able to carry on thanks to contributions from individual Committeemen, a situation common enough in the early days of the 1670s, but beyond the experience of any living shareholder. At the beginning of 1809, the HBC's bank balance stood at a paltry £101.1.0.¹³

No Shortage of Advice

Now was the time for all good men to come to the aid of their company. William Auld quickly emerged as the loudest and most respected voice in Rupert's Land. Having entered the service as a surgeon in 1790, he was soon appointed Second at Churchill (1793) and then Inland Trader from that factory (1795). His bustling (though largely ineffective) activity inland, including several attempts to overcome internal competition with York Fort, earned him an appointment as chief factor at Churchill in 1802. He went to London in



Library and Archives Canada, copy negative C-104181.

"When among wolves, howl!" This was the personal motto of flamboyant fur trader Colin Robertson (1783–1842), who held posts throughout HBC territory, including a term at Red River during the early days of the Selkirk Settlement.

1809 to personally persuade the Committee to adopt a more energetic approach in the field.¹⁴

Auld also sponsored a younger man, whose arguments would eventually overshadow his own. Scotsman Colin Robertson was a former apprentice hand weaver, who found his way into North West Company service via the New York retail sector. Any ambitions he may have had—and evidence from his later life suggests that he probably had quite a few—were soon curtailed by the 1804 merger between the NWC and XYC. Many junior officers felt that this merger limited or even closed the avenues to promotion, which had previously been available.¹⁵ Aggressive behaviour, towards the First Nations and/or towards HBC servants, seemed the best way to attract the attention of one's superiors in the "new" NWC, and Robertson declared himself unwilling to follow such a path.

He made this declaration in 1809 to William Auld, ironically at a time when Auld had convinced himself that only armed force could dislodge the Nor'Westers from HBC lands. Robertson praised the HBC's "Candour and Generosity" in its dealings with Aboriginal traders, although the NWC itself was candid and generous in its testimonial to Robertson later that year: "On your taking leave of the North West, it is but bare justice in us to bear testimony to the Zeal and Fidelity with which you have served the North West Company during a residence of six years in the Indian Country. We could have wished that prospects had been more favourable in that country, so as to induce your persevering, but your determination being different, we shall sincerely rejoice to hear of your success in life."¹⁶ His former employers were obviously unaware that Robertson's next move would be to London, with a £20 loan and letter of introduction from his auld enemy, Auld.

Robertson was not the only old Nor'Wester interested in the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1808, when HBC stock appeared to be in free-fall (the price of a £100 share dropping from £250 to below £60), Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Edward Ellice became involved in buying it up. The former, at least, intended to gain control of the Company and use it to realise his long-held ambition to expand the fur trade not just to the Pacific coast, but across the ocean into China. William and Simon McGillivray were also involved, though in the background and not necessarily placing their complete trust in their old friend and enemy, Mackenzie. The plan was for some neutral or at least innocent person to purchase the stock (for fear that word of Mackenzie's involvement would drive up the price) and later sell it to Mackenzie *et al.* The chosen stooge was Thomas Douglas, the Earl of Selkirk, who (as we shall see) later derailed the whole scheme by embarking on a scheme of his own.¹⁷

Auld and Robertson approached a Committee which was ready and willing to consider even radical changes. In 1809, it became painfully apparent that, for the first time since Lapérouse had sacked Churchill and York in 1782, the Company was in no position to pay its shareholders a dividend.¹⁸ This was the proverbial straw that broke the corporate camel's back, and the entire situation was up for



Archives of Manitoba, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, HBC Calendar Art, P-398, 1934.

Jean Baptiste Lagimodière confronts Lord Selkirk, 1815. On 17 October 1815, Lagimodière was sent to Montreal by Colin Robertson of the HBC to report the destruction of the colony at Red River. According to a popular account, Lagimodière arrived during Selkirk's New Year's Eve ball and forced his way in to deliver the message. In fact, Lagimodière did not arrive at Montreal until March 1816.

re-evaluation. There was obviously nothing that the HBC could do to break Napoleon's Continental System and re-open the major European markets to British commerce, but the HBC could at least become more effective in acquiring the one commodity that still sold well in the fur markets still available to them: beaver. Auld and Robertson appealed directly to those Committee members who took this view.

However, an alternative school of thought shied away from re-inventing the Company's business practices and using capital which it did not have to go toe-to-toe with an experienced and intimidating rival, in a titanic struggle for furs which the Company would not be able to sell anywhere other than London or New York. George Hyde Wollaston was all in favour of streamlining or "modernising" some aspects of the Company's operations, but he became the Committee's leading advocate of an entirely different approach to the problem. Why not withdraw from the fur trade entirely for a period of time? British victory against Napoleon (whenever it came) would dramatically improve the export market, but in the meantime, the Company could make use of the few assets which it still possessed, namely a geographically advantageous route to the continental interior via Hudson Bay and the wonderfully flexible royal charter upon which that geographic claim was based. The Company's charter in no way committed them to the fur

trade, but left them free to pursue whatever branch of trade circumstances might render profitable.¹⁹

On 6 April 1809, Wollaston presented the Committee with his “Observations” on the trade, weighty words from one who had served on the Committee for several years and who had a better understanding than most of the Company’s situation. Later that month, he introduced his colleagues to Alexander Christie of Glasgow, who discussed the possibility of exporting timber via Moose

In 1809 it became painfully apparent that, for the first time since Lapérouse had sacked Churchill and York in 1782, the Company was in no position to pay its shareholders a dividend.

Factory. Further discussions at the sub-committee level led to Christie’s engagement in HBC service at £500 per annum: new men for the fur trade operations would not be forthcoming, but Christie was to start with four assistants and ten labourers. On 17 May 1809, the Committee recorded its intention “to promote, as much as possible, the Importation of those Articles which meet a ready Sale, for home Consumption. So far from increasing the number of Servants, it is a great Object to retain those only who can prosecute to Advantage that Branch of Trade which alone can answer under the present Circumstances.” The market in furs would be allowed to recover, and in the meantime, the HBC would attempt to supply the market in masts, spars, and other naval timber, which had been opened up by the loss of Britain’s Baltic trade.²⁰

Debating the Company’s Future

Wollaston had not yet won the day, however. In November 1809, William Auld appeared before the Committee to urge them to action in prosecuting the fur trade. His conversations with Robertson and his own discouraging experiences in the field were still fresh in his mind, and in December, he followed up his verbal arguments with written documents outlining the situation in Rupert’s Land. Although Auld later felt that his opinions had been too easily dismissed, he in fact precipitated considerable debate within the Committee: the minutes of 3 January 1810 recorded that most of the day was taken up with “Consideration” of “the state of the Company’s affairs and their Trade in general”, an apparently lively discussion which was to be continued after an upcoming interview with a gentleman “lately arrived from Canada,” Colin Robertson.

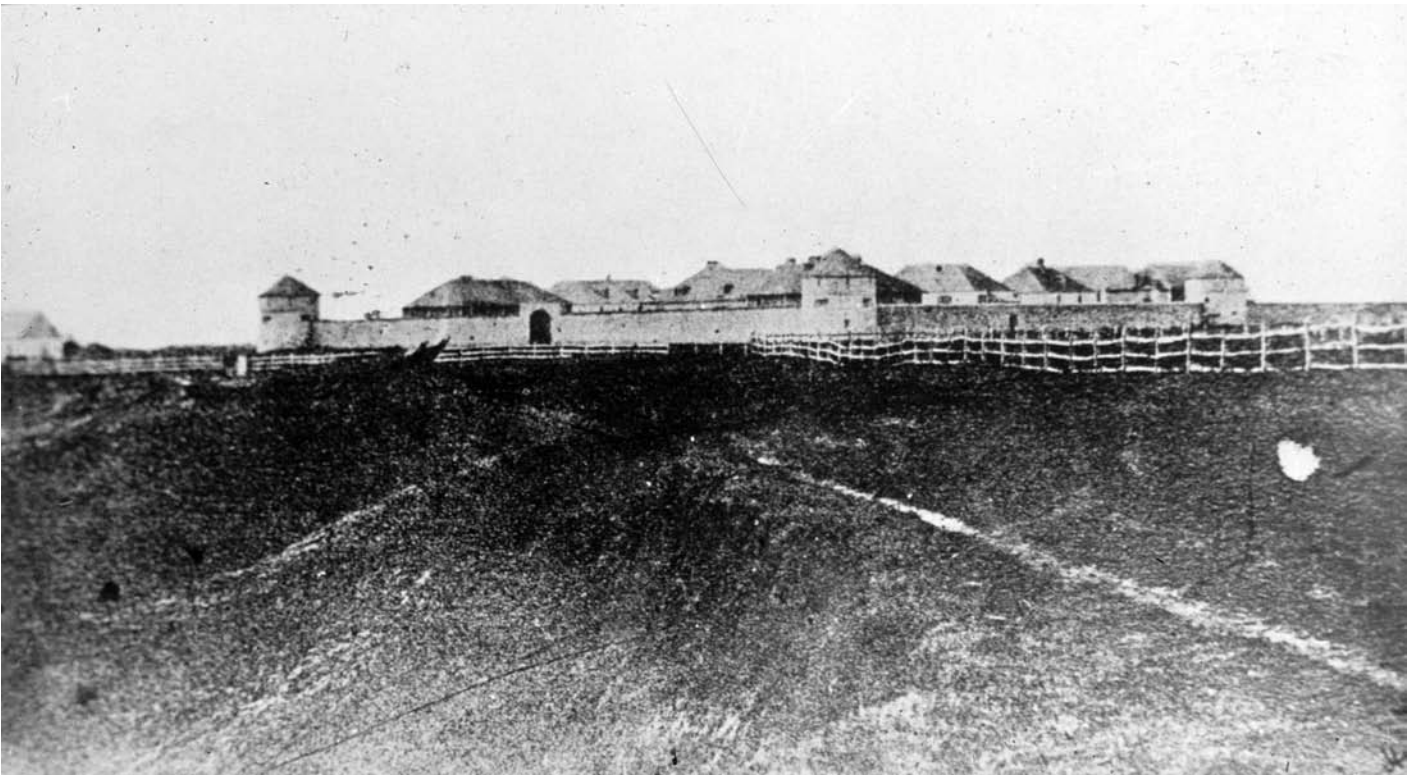
Robertson’s plan assumed that the Company’s resources were more extensive and more fluid than they really were, but coming so hard on Auld’s heels, he held the Committee’s attention. He was invited to submit his

ideas in writing, which he did on 10 January 1810.²¹ He emphasised the NWC’s advantage of controlling the beaver-rich Athabasca country and urged the HBC to make better use of its own natural advantage, the supply route via Hudson Bay. He estimated that the NWC, if unopposed, could easily reap profits of £20,000 per annum from the Athabasca, plus perhaps another £10,000 from English River and Lesser Slave Lake. These regions were “the richest in Furs that has as yet been discovered, and lies so contiguous to one of your principal Factories, say Churchill, that it can be established from there at one third of the expence which it costs the North West Co. ... the Canada Merchant performs a voyage of four months to purchase Beaver at the threshold of your doors.”²²

Robertson’s geographical recommendations undoubtedly warmed the cockles of Auld’s heart. Robertson proposed a unified and concerted HBC push into the Athabasca under the supreme command of the chief factor of Churchill (who just happened to be William Auld), who would eliminate “those jealousies between your officers inland which have been so prejudicial to your interests” — precisely the argument which Auld had just put before the Committee himself. Once Athabasca had been penetrated, it was to be given its own establishment, and was to be supported by all of the Company’s other operations, in the form of guides, fishermen, food, and transport.²³

The other radical aspect of Robertson’s proposal — in some respects, the most radical part of the whole scheme — was his proposed reliance on Canadian rather than Orcadian labour. Slow and steady had manifestly failed to win this race, he argued: the Athabasca campaign must be manned with Canadian voyageurs, commanded by officers who could manage them in their own French language. Thus, some kind of Montreal Agency would be necessary, and Robertson’s discussion of that revealed what was in all of this for him: he proposed himself and “a Colleague [Henry McKenzie]...who has been brought up to the business in Montreal” to manage the Montreal Agency. He also proposed that colleague’s brother (Donald McKenzie) as a prospective manager for the “Interior department, having resided many years in Athabasca,” and mentioned that “I have a number of Under-Clerks in view, who will embrace the cause as soon as it is set on foot.”²⁴ In other words, Robertson proposed that the HBC should storm the NWC’s citadel with its own former servants, all of whom would look to Robertson as their patron and friend.

Radical though some of his proposals might have been, there was actually little in Robertson’s letter that was entirely new. The possibility of establishing a Montreal Agency had been discussed before and rejected as expensive and impractical; while both expansion into Athabasca and the best route to get there had been the subjects of heated debate on both sides of the Atlantic for a generation. What Robertson brought to the table was a unified plan, the support of a senior and respected officer (Auld), and his own vigorous and persuasive personality. However, at this pivotal moment, vigorous and persuasive



Archives of Manitoba, H. L. Hime Collection, copy courtesy of Parks Canada.

The first-known photograph of Upper Fort Garry, taken by Humphrey Lloyd Hime during his visit in 1858.

personalities do not seem to have been in short supply within the Company's council chambers.

On the very same day that Robertson wrote that letter, the Committee resolved to put Wollaston's proposal into action. "[T]he Standard of Barter of European Articles for Furs or Peltries" was to be "abolished," along with the "present system of prosecuting the Trade in the interior of Hudson's Bay, on Account of the Company." Goods henceforth sent to the Bay would be on the traders' own accounts, and they were to be responsible for conducting their own trade in their own way (provided the Company still made a reasonable profit from them).²⁵ Selkirk and some other shareholders were sceptical, arguing that under such circumstances the inland traders would soon detach themselves from the Company and become more trouble than they were worth. In particular, such divestiture jeopardized the Company's chartered privileges: one independent trader's successful legal challenge of the HBC's claim to exclusive navigation in the Bay would be enough to open up that route to everyone.²⁶

These resolutions were still being discussed later that month, when the London sugar merchant Andrew Wedderburn (later Colvile) was elected to the Committee. His sister had married the Earl of Selkirk in 1807, and he had helped re-orient Selkirk's thinking about the HBC away from Mackenzie's scheme. Wedderburn and his cousin John Halkett (who later married another of Selkirk's sisters) started buying stock and building support in the HBC in 1809.

The newcomer wasted no time in making his presence felt, leading the opposition to both Wollaston's and Robertson's proposals, and offering (in a suspicious, "I just happen to have made a few notes," kind of way) his own plan "for the management of the Trade within the Bay." Robertson was rejected on 21 February 1810, on the same day that Colvile was asked to enquire about potential recruitment in the western isles of Scotland. The terms of such recruitment are important, for Colvile was authorised to offer not only good wages (£18 per annum for three years) but also land: 30 acres of it in the Red River valley upon satisfactory completion of a three-year service contract, plus an extra 10 acres for every further year of service given to the Company. Clearly visible here is the influence not only of Colvile himself, but his more illustrious brother-in-law, the Earl of Selkirk.

Selkirk's passion for emigration and colonisation projects is well known, at least in its broad outlines. However, the core of Colvile's proposal was not colonisation, but continued and more energetic pursuit of the fur trade.²⁷ Although traders would be given considerable latitude in setting their own local "standards of trade," the overall trade would remain firmly under the Committee's control. Accounting methods would be significantly overhauled, expenses vigorously trimmed, and profits shared between the Company and its senior traders. Posts would be encouraged (not for the first time) to rely more on local food sources than on imported provisions. Rupert's Land was to be reorganised into two departments (Northern and

Southern) and several districts, helping to streamline the Company's hierarchy in North America. Recruitment in the highlands and islands of Scotland would be strongly encouraged. A colony to be established at Red River could also provide recruits down the road, but in the short term it offered more immediate assistance in the form of agricultural produce (to replace at least some of the provisions currently imported from Britain at considerable expense).

Fundamental to Colville's scheme was the same truculence which Robertson and Auld had advocated. The Nor'Westers had consistently used physical and emotional intimidation against the Bay men, and turning the other cheek had not achieved much more than matching bruises and a widespread reputation for being "nice guys." Since the Nor'Westers showed no signs of being won over by this approach, a more robust strategy appeared to be necessary. As the Committee reminded its servants later that year, "We expect you will defend like men the Property that is entrusted to you; if any person shall presume to make a forcible attack upon you, you have arms in your hands, and the Law sanctions you to use them for your own defence."²⁸ Such a challenge to their masculinity and their courage must have struck the officers in the field as somewhat disingenuous, however: it can be difficult to screw your courage to the sticking place when you are outnumbered as much as ten to one.

Choosing the Path Forward

Colville won the day by the force of his personality and his general business acumen, as well as by playing on some of his colleagues' reluctance to willingly withdraw from the fur trade. Colville's knowledge of that trade, and indeed of the HBC itself, was considerably less than that of Auld and Wollaston, or even of Robertson. Colville himself recognised this, and borrowed liberally from their opposing plans. His profit-sharing scheme was taken from Wollaston. His recruitment scheme was similar to that of Auld and Robertson, even though his proposed source of more active servants was different; and he was much less sanguine than Robertson about the feasibility of competing with the NWC in Montreal itself. What Colville himself (probably with considerable input from Selkirk) brought to the table was business sense, new accounting methods, a colonisation scheme, and a sense of moderation: his proposal was more proactive than Wollaston's, yet more cautious than Robertson's and Auld's. The assault on Athabasca was to be postponed until the Company had set its house in order: "we shall be more likely to succeed in a contest in Athabasca, when the home territory of the Company is fully occupied, by numerous and powerful

establishments, conducted by active servants, whose interests are assimilated with those of the Company."²⁹

A NWC proposal dated 7 November 1810 renewed the offer of purchasing or renting the Hudson Bay route, but included more concessions than had been on the table in 1804–1805. Instead of giving up a few recently established posts on the Bay, the NWC was now willing to vacate the Nipigon country and the region east and north of Lake Winnipeg, as well as the valleys of the Rat, the Red, and the Assiniboine, and the "South Side of Saskatchewan" (South Saskatchewan River?). This represented 17 posts employing six partners and more than 150 officers and men, and annual trade valued at more than £13,000. Yet this, too, was rejected as insufficient remuneration.³⁰ By this time, Colville's plan had been accepted by the Committee and Wollaston's rejected. New orders had been sent to officers in the field that spring, exhorting them to trim their fat, tighten their belts and roll up their sleeves.³¹

A land grant to Selkirk was debated and ultimately approved in the early months of 1811. Although this is usually depicted as the fulfillment of a long-standing personal vision, Selkirk's own version of events attributed the initiative to the HBC. He later insisted that the idea for the Red River Settlement was originally a

Company plan to provide for retired and redundant personnel and their families: with their plates already more than full reorganising the operations, the directors approached Selkirk to handle the settlement business, and to recruit new servants while he was about it. Selkirk's biographer, J. M. Bumsted, argues that this "actually makes more sense and fits better with the surviving evidence.... Selkirk's first interest was in the Hudson's Bay Company and its reform, and Red River colonization was imposed upon him as a neat and tidy solution to a whole series of problems."³²

Mackenzie, Ellice, and their supporters among the shareholders tried to block the land grant, but to no avail. They argued (among other things) that the sale of 116,000 square miles of HBC territory should be handled by auction, but there was more at stake in this historic land grant. Not only was it an expression of the Selkirk-Wedderburn ascendancy within the HBC, it was also a strategic move based on the legal opinions obtained after the NWC landed on Charlton Island in 1803: that the practical strength and security of the HBC charter lay not in a monopoly of trade, but in a claim to the soil.³³

The HBC's experiment with lumbering was not entirely forgotten: they had, after all, signed a contract with Alexander Christie. The first shipment of timber from Moose in 1810 was badly chopped and sold poorly, but Christie was ordered to erect a sawmill in 1811 and as

many as twenty new men would be sent to assist. A steam engine was sent out in 1812, but there was no one who could set it up or operate it. By this time, Christie had (at the Committee's instructions) set up his base of operations on Charlton Island, where he was expected to combine his lumbering activities with cattle farming.³⁴ Although neither of those ventures amounted to much, Christie stayed with the Company, supervising the whale fishery on the Eastmain before entering the fur trade proper: nearly forty years later, he was a chief factor and Governor of Assiniboia (Red River).

The Athabasca campaign did not commence until 1814, at which time Colin Robertson was called upon to lead it. In the meantime, William Auld was named Superintendent of the newly created Northern Department and charged with implementing Colville's Retrenching System (or New System). He soon proved out of step with the Company's "modernisation" and decidedly unsympathetic to the Red River Colony, whose creation he had strongly opposed. "Increasingly, Auld felt that the committee's policies and directives reflected ignorance of local circumstances and did not take into account the advice of knowledgeable experienced officers such as himself."³⁵

Auld was too good a servant—and had too good an opinion of himself—not to implement the wishes of his employers. Yet he was deeply frustrated at how the eventful winter of 1809–1810 had turned out, having seen his own and Robertson's proposals, grounded in personal experience of the fur trade on both sides of the competition, taking second place to an uninspiring scheme offered by a mere ingénue, whose only previous experience with the HBC was selling rum to it. Even as Auld accepted his new assignment, he did not hesitate to express his lack of confidence in the new approach. For instance, he felt that men hired on three-year contracts could hardly be expected to do battle with the Nor'Westers when they already had half an eye on their future farms by the banks of the Red.

In the strongest terms I am capable of using I conjure you to believe me that no triennial apprenticeships will qualify for the perilous duty of ascending and descending the cataracts, which interrupt the navigation of every river in this country. Your local ignorance (forgive me Honble. Sirs. I call God to witness the purity and sincerity of my respect) of the nature of these dreadful interruptions while you can make no allowance for the shortness of our year—you calculate by your own—we reckon by a very different method.

The Committee's plan to inflict upon him "a regular and immense number of new men annually to carry on your trade" filled him with "consternation and affright."³⁶ Auld resigned in 1814: he was kept on in the London office, but a final acrimonious split came the following year.

Robertson was no more enamoured of the Company's new direction, and railed against both the Committee

men who had decided upon it and the officers who were implementing it. Auld (who, after introducing Robertson to the Committee, had little else to offer him) was criticised as being more concerned with cutting expenses than with fostering the trade, and Robertson blamed him for driving 60 of York Factory's best hunters into the arms of the Canadians at Cumberland. Ironically, Auld himself would have agreed: his letters to London are full of pessimism and foreboding. Soon, Auld was depicting the Company's trade as being in a "wretched state," "not worth any one's attention and it would be infinitely better to abandon it altogether." In his depressed state, he had come round to the same conclusion that Wollaston had two years earlier.³⁷

Conclusion

Colville's scheme has generally been accepted as a key element in the HBC's long-term viability, and the NWC certainly felt as though they were facing a new and more energetic foe. Yet historians E. E. Rich and R. Harvey Fleming argued that his ability to gain acceptance of his plan "is in itself proof of the incompetence of the Committee to manage the Company's fur trade."³⁸ A. S. Morton was both more generous and more jingoistic: "The Governor and Committee were characteristically English in being slow to convince themselves that their system was antiquated but when the unpleasant fact began to dawn upon them they were truly English in the courage with which they faced it, in the earnestness with which they sought to understand the true situation and in the practical wisdom of their final determinations."³⁹

Some elements of the scheme betrayed a relative ignorance of the fur trade, or at least a naive assumption that changes in governance and in bookkeeping could revive the fortunes of a large and established trading company. The emphasis on cost-reduction was poorly received by First Nations traders and HBC officers alike, the incorporation of colonisation and the fur trade was poorly thought out, and no significant effort was made to unify or co-ordinate any of the Company's operations. As Auld phrased it, the Company's establishments and enterprises "like the froth and driftwood on the Lakes float along wherever private individual feelings waft without design energy or motive sufficiently legitimate to avow or justify."⁴⁰

Yet the new system—and least of all the new colony at Red River—can hardly be judged on first impressions alone. Refinements were made to both over the next decade (and beyond): mistakes were made, but lessons were learned. Many of Robertson's ideas were eventually implemented in the later Athabasca campaigns, and even Auld's demands for some muscle were eventually answered with some Irish and Scottish heavies to lock horns with NWC bully-boys. In 1812, the HBC turned a profit for the first time in years, and by 1815 was able to start paying dividends again.⁴¹

Regardless of whether or not Colville's plan was the Company's *best* choice for its future direction, it was the plan which the Company *did choose* for its future direction. That decision was made after other options were weighed

and considered, options which promised to take the venerable company along very different paths. The variety of options, which the Company was willing to consider, surely undermines its long-held reputation for stodgy conservatism and inflexibility, even if the dynamism is cloaked in the musty shrouds of committee minutes and memoranda. ☛

Notes

1. E. E. Rich & R. Harvey Fleming (eds.), *Colin Robertson's Correspondence Book, September 1817 to September 1822*, London: Champlain Society for the Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1939, pp. xxi-xxii; hereafter referred to as *Robertson's Letters*.
2. *Robertson's Letters*, pp. xxii.
3. See *Robertson's Letters*, xxii and footnotes. 'Misappropriation' is often in the eye of the beholder, and it is not clear whether the gentlemen in question felt they were doing anything dishonest, or whether they felt they had a customary right to occasionally blur the line between public and private property.
4. For Auld's comment, see *Robertson's Letters*, pp. xxiii.
5. See E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870*, London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958-59, II, pp. 257-258.
6. Quoted in Rich, *History*, II, pp. 256-257.
7. Rich, *History*, II, pp. 170, 181.
8. See Rich, *History*, II, pp. 259-264. Also see Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, new ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999, pp. 278-279; A. S. Morton, *The History of the Canadian West to 1870-71*, 2nd ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973, pp. 522-523.
9. See A. S. Morton, "The Place of the Red River Settlement in the Plans of the Hudson's Bay Co., 1812-1825," *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association* 8/1 (1929), p. 104.
10. *Robertson's Letters*, xxi; Rich, *History*, II, pp. 264-265.
11. *Robertson's Letters*, pp. xxvii-xxviii.
12. Made Beaver was a unit of value equivalent to one prime winter beaver skin. All furs and trade goods were valued in terms of Made Beaver.
13. *Robertson's Letters*, pp. xxviii-xxix. Already in 1806, the Company owed £25,000 to Committee members Thomas Neave, William Mainwaring, and T. B. Raikes: Rich, *History*, II, p. 266.
14. John E. Foster, "Auld, William," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* VI, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=2738
15. They were right: see Innis, pp. 258-260.
16. *Robertson's Letters*, p. xxv.
17. Mackenzie blamed the McGillivrays for being slow to find the necessary money for stock purchases, but it was Selkirk who felt the brunt of Mackenzie's ire: the former explorer threatened to sue Selkirk for breach of trust, in retaining stock purchased on someone else's behalf. Morton, "Red River," pp. 104-105. J. M. Bumsted, *Fur Trade Wars: The Founding of Western Canada*, Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 1999, p. 17, referred to Mackenzie's "quite unwarranted sense of having been betrayed by the man he was attempting to exploit." For a brief summary of the NWC's (and Mackenzie's) Pacific plans, see Bumsted, *Fur Trade Wars*, pp. 24-28; for more detail, see Morton, *Canadian West*, pp. 520-522. J. M. Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk: A Life*, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008, pp. 171-173, sees no evidence that Selkirk in 1808 was thinking of the HBC in terms of his own ambitions. "At this stage, the venture with Mackenzie was probably merely an incidental speculation made possible by Selkirk's knowledge of the actual value of the depressed HBC stocks."
18. This had ended a long run of dividends from 1718 through 1782: for the accounting sleight-of-hand necessary to maintain that long run, and to resume it in 1786, see Rich, *History*, II, pp. 265-266.
19. *Robertson's Letters*, p. xxix.
20. Rich, *History*, II, pp. 270-272; *Robertson's Letters*, pp. xxix-xxx.
21. *Robertson's Letters*, pp. xxvi-xxvii; Rich, *History*, II, pp. 288-289. Also Hudson's Bay Company Archives (Archives of Manitoba) A. 10/1, fo. 87ff.
22. *Robertson's Letters*, p. xxvi.
23. Robertson also recommended giving officers commissions on "the profits arising from their exertions." To avoid privileging the officers "in easy situations" over those in charge of much more difficult "frontier establishments," he suggested collecting "the profits of all the Factories" into an "aggregate fund," from which "shares should be distributed among the officers of our whole establishment in various proportions according to the importance and difficulty of the station assigned to each individual." Innis, p. 162. This system (but weighted only by rank) was ultimately adopted in the Deed Poll of 1821.
24. *Robertson's Letters*, pp. xxvi-xxvii. Robertson also argued that the Montreal Agency would also be able to purchase "high Wines, Tobacco and Provisions" at around half the price of purchasing them in London, and provide a better market for some furs like buffalo robes. Innis, p. 163.
25. *Robertson's Letters*, p. xxxi.
26. See Bumsted, *Fur Trade Wars*, p. 20.
27. *Robertson's Letters*, pp. xxxiii-xxxv. Also see Deidre Simmons, *Keepers of the Record: The History of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives*, Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007, pp. 92-94.
28. *Robertson's Letters*, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.
29. *Robertson's Letters*, pp. xxxv. Bumsted, *Fur Trade Wars*, p. 21, argues that some of Colville's plans "suggest the fertile and inventive brain of Selkirk rather than the cautious business tactics of the merchant. While it is impossible to assign responsibility, it makes good sense to see the Earl of Selkirk at the centre of the new policy." Also see Bumsted, *Selkirk*, p. 190.
30. See Innis, p. 279.
31. See *Robertson's Letters*, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.
32. Bumsted, *Selkirk*, p. 193.
33. Bumsted, *Selkirk*, pp. 200-201; Morton, *Canadian West*, pp. 523-524; Hamar Foster, "Long-Distance Justice: The Criminal Jurisdiction of Canadian Courts West of the Canadas, 1763-1859," *The American Journal of Legal History* 34/1 (Jan. 1990), pp. 11-14.
34. Rich, *History*, II, p. 272.
35. Foster, "Auld."
36. *Robertson's Letters*, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.
37. *Robertson's Letters*, p. xxxviii.
38. *Robertson's Letters*, p. xxxviii.
39. Morton, "Red River," p. 105.
40. *Robertson's Letters*, p. xxxix.
41. Rich, *History*, II, pp. 293, 311.



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Peguis, Woodpeckers and Myths: What Do We Truly Know?

by Donna G. Sutherland
Clandeboye, Manitoba

When I sat down to write this paper, a large pileated woodpecker landed on a tree outside my window. It remained for several seconds, its penetrating stare stirring me to notice it. Pileated woodpeckers are shy birds and although they do nest in my area, they are not commonly seen, so it appeared unusual, to me, for it to show itself so openly. This is not the first time a woodpecker has visited me this way. It has happened several times and it almost always happens when I am thinking or writing about Peguis.

This particular incident got me thinking about a possible connection between Peguis and the prehistoric looking bird with the bright red head. I knew that some people of long ago wore woodpecker feathers in their hair and others decorated their peace pipes with them, so evidently the bird was significant to certain groups of ancient people: was it so for Peguis? My mind began to race with thoughts of possibility. What would it be like to sit with Peguis and ask him what he thought, not only about woodpeckers, but about his life, about how he perceived the white fur traders and settlers who came to the land he called home, and ask him how his long life could be used to teach the young of today? I wish I could hear his answers and compare them to the stories written about him by others during his time and for the two centuries that have passed since. I would ask him if his soul is at peace with how he has been represented.

There is of course no way to ask him these questions, or if woodpeckers meant anything to him, so I did the next best thing in our modern way of gathering knowledge: I googled *Woodpecker* and *Native American mythology* to see what the bird symbolized. Was there purpose in the bird's visit? A few sites suggested woodpeckers represent "opportunity knocking," that it is a time to use one's head, or intellect, to find solutions to our own barriers. Instead of giving up on something, breathe new life into it and be mindful of the words we use to do it. I felt that a mysterious force was at work, shaping my thoughts for this paper, giving me an opportunity to present more information about Peguis from a different perspective, and address the myth that has been created to characterize him. And so, yes, for me, there was purpose in the bird's visit and from it came my title: *Peguis, Woodpeckers, and Myth: What do we truly know?*

There is one myth I know for sure about Peguis: it is how much we think we know about him. But in truth, Peguis is a bit of an enigma, a paradox with contradictory qualities whose actions on one hand were considered positive contributions to the community when he was

a resource to colonists. On the other hand, when I ask modern-day people why he is remembered as a great man, people are often lost for words. Or they revert to the widely held belief that he holds a place in history only because he helped the Selkirk Settlers. And they are correct in saying that. He did help the settlers in many ways, and those contributions should not be forgotten, but why are indigenous peoples remembered primarily for their contribution to white society? Why is Peguis not better known for what he did throughout his life, for himself, his own family, his own community, and not just for his efforts between 1812 and 1817 when he filled a major void for white settlers and fur traders?

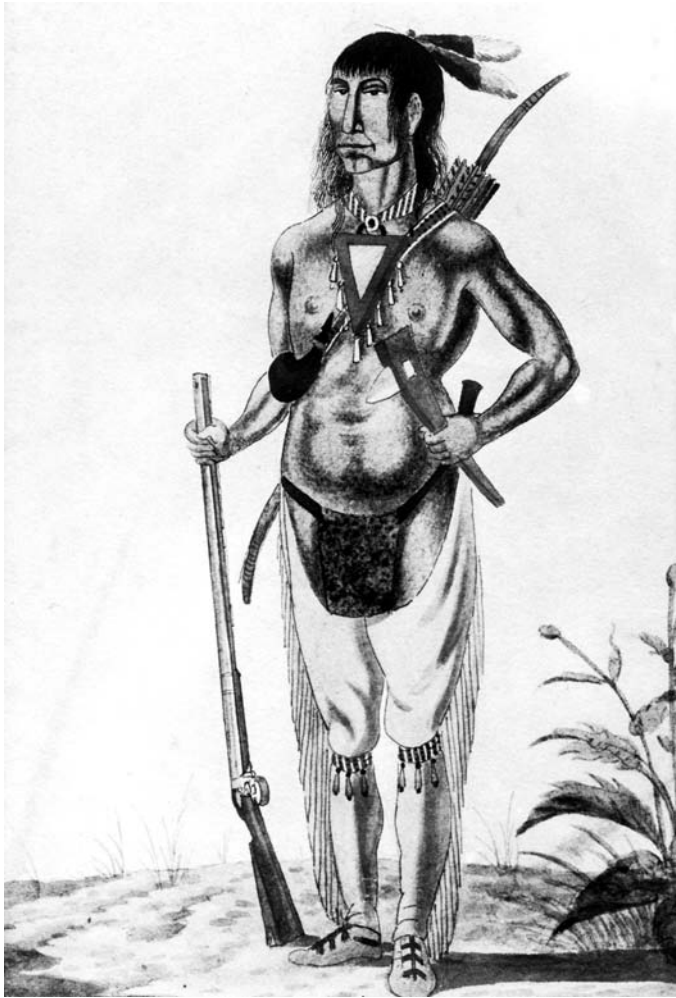
There is so much more to the man and I question now if it is possible to uncover his many complex roles as son, brother, husband, father, uncle, grandfather and patriarch of Peguis First Nation. For example, can we learn more about his contributions as warrior, mediator, negotiator, orator, teacher, protector and leader of his own people? Is it beneficial to rethink his reasons for coming to this region, for settling at Netley Creek, for aiding the settlers, for involving himself with the 1817 Treaty, for accepting European education for his children, and the children of his Band, and for embracing Christianity and a sedentary life style? My answer is yes.

I have chosen two ways to do this. The first is to dig deeply into archival resources for new information about him and "see" him from the perspective of the way an indigenous person of his time would have thought, which was very different from European world views. In 2001, I spent one year reading through archival sources gathering information on Peguis, so I know there are numerous records to study to capture Peguis' character within his own time.

The second way to learn more about Peguis is to use a spiritual perspective to better understand his way of thinking, his core beliefs, and his philosophies. This



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Archives of Manitoba, Peter Rindisbacher Collection, N3753.

"Indian Chief." A watercolour painting of a Saulteaux man in traditional dress, by early Red River painter Peter Rindisbacher (1806–1834), is thought to be of Peguis.

will help us to better understand him and his reasons for doing the things he did. Peguis was a deeply spiritual man inherent since birth. Entries written by fur traders, settlers, and missionaries all note that he practised his ancestral ceremonies, including the midewiwin, sweat lodge, and drumming, and that he was a pipe carrier, smoking the peace pipe before any trade or discussion with others. I believe it was his strong spiritual beliefs that made him who he was, propelling him to do the things he did during the establishment of the Red River Settlement.

Peguis' approach to life, his generosity and charity, his ability to lead and mediate, and his capacity to adapt and change came from his deep-rooted spiritual values. This is something white fur traders, settlers and especially missionaries, never truly understood, or acknowledged, and I am not sure that non-indigenous people today fully understand either, unless they take the time to dig deeply into the old spiritual ways of indigenous peoples.

I certainly did not understand this when I wrote *Peguis: A Noble Friend*. But I do now after years of listening to elders, participating in indigenous ceremonies and

reading through archival records, and secondary sources, with a more open mind. I am a descendant of numerous Cree grandmothers: women who married Orkney-born fur traders, most of whom were employed by the Hudson's Bay Company, beginning in the early 1700s and continuing throughout the generations of the 1800s. Those ancestors resided in places such as Churchill River, York Factory and Oxford House. Many of them knew Peguis. As I learn about those grandmothers, I realize that to truly understand them in their time, I must learn about their spiritual practices. It is often the root source for how they perceived, and made sense, of the world around them.

Peguis believed in the earth-based spiritual practice of animism—the belief that all things are alive with energy, with spirit—including people, all earth elements, animals, birds...everything. His religion was Nature and his belief system was based on the laws of Nature. The Creator made Nature; therefore, Nature is the Creator and thus a sacred place where people commune with their Creator. The people were one with Nature and one with the Creator. Drumming, singing, dancing, juggling, and ceremony were actions or rituals to evoke emotion within a person to enhance their ability to connect themselves with the Creator, to offer prayers and thanks for the gifts given, and for requesting guidance, knowledge, and assistance for life ahead.

The Creator gave the people dreams, visions, ceremonies, extrasensory perception, healers and spirit helpers in the form of animals, birds, rocks and spirit beings from the unseen world to help with the earthly journey. They understood the connection between the metaphysical and physical worlds. Nature showed them that everything in this world was connected and so they lived according to the laws of Nature. They went to Nature for communion with the Creator as well as for sustenance, clothing, shelter, medicines, tool and weapon technology, and teachings such as sharing, reciprocity, equality, balance, growth, change, vision, identity, and listening: to name but a few. This is but a brief overview of Peguis' spiritual beliefs and how he interpreted the world around him, but it is enough to show that to truly understand the man, he must be studied within his worldview and not outside it.

But in truth, Peguis is a bit of an enigma, a paradox with contradictory qualities

Peguis had been a resident of the Red River region for 20 years when the first group of settlers arrived in 1812. He was then approaching the midpoint of his life, at about 38, although he lived for 52 more years, dying in 1864 at the age of 90, and had interacted with French traders since his birth in 1774 near modern day Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. According to oral stories from Peguis to the Gunn family,

his father was a French-Canadian fur trader whom he never knew, but who traded in the region where his mother resided. According to his good friend, Janet Gunn Muckle, Peguis loved to tell this fact about himself and held no shame for not being a full-blooded indigenous person. He spoke openly about being fathered by a French-Canadian fur trader, although he embraced the teachings of his mother's people.

Peguis' great-great grandson Chief Albert Edward Thompson noted in his book, *Chief Peguis and his Descendants*, that Peguis' birth mother was too young to keep him and placed him on a pile of woodchips where another woman found and adopted him: it was from this early experience that his name came.¹ Although it was originally pronounced differently from how we know it today, many descendants still maintain that its initial pronunciation meant *Little Chip* when translated into English.

According to fur-trade journals and missionary diaries, Peguis referred to himself as *Saulteaux*, a French term meaning *people who shoot the rapids*. His descendants self-identify as *Saulteaux*, *Ojibwa*, and *Anishinaabee*. He moved west with his family and community, some say in search of beaver as the waterways in the east were trapped out. Others say it was to escape the dreaded smallpox that had decimated large groups of people. They settled in various places including modern-day Pembina where he developed relationships with fur traders from both the North West and Hudson's Bay companies. Peguis seemed to appreciate his interactions with traders, practising his age old custom of trading furs for goods. Peguis' ancestors had been trading with other indigenous peoples for centuries before white fur traders arrived and so it was a completely normal thing to do. If you wanted something, you traded something. It was not white traders who taught Peguis' people how to trade; it was the other way around. White traders may have brought new ways of doing trade, but the concept was an old one in North America among Peguis' culture.

Near the end of the 18th century, Peguis and his Band spent time at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers as well as various places further north along the shores of Lake Winnipeg. No one knows how long they had been coming to the region before white traders began writing about them. Archaeology shows indigenous peoples have been living in the region for thousands of years.

Peguis and his Band settled on a meandering creek that flowed from the west, calling it *Nee-boo-win* meaning, *River of Death* or *Death River*. They named it so because they found many dead belonging to a large Cree camp, who were old-time residents of the territory. Today, it is called Netley Creek. I hold a real fondness for this waterway: my mother's parents, Hazel and George McKaughan, settled on the creek a century after Peguis. I often ride the

waterway by boat and think of my grandparents and Peguis and wonder why either of them stopped along its banks for a time. What drew them to it? For my grandparents, I know the answer, but for Peguis I am still unsure. I have heard suggestions, but found nothing yet to fully explain his reason for choosing that location. Perhaps it was a combination of things: the beauty or spiritual power of the place, the shelter of the meandering creek, with its point of land to camp on and see river traffic from either direction, the plentiful fish, muskrat, and wild rice in the marsh, and its close proximity to Lake Winnipeg.

There is no known sketch of Peguis that I am aware of, but Swiss painter, Peter Rindisbacher, who visited Red River Settlement in 1821 and stayed temporarily, sketched many local people including a *Saulteaux* man in traditional dress who he never identified. Some scholars suggest the man in the sketch is Peguis. Sheriff Colin Inkster, a

friend of Peguis and my great-great uncle (I descend from his older sister Margaret Inkster and her husband William R. Sutherland), noted Peguis as "short in stature, with a strong, well-knit frame, and the voice of an orator... clad in a cotton shirt, breech clout, red cloth

leggings and over all a blanket wrapped loosely about him, his hair hung in two long plaits studded with brass ornaments, his breast decorated with medals." One of the latter was a medal presented to him by Lord Selkirk as a confirmation of the agreement of 1817. Peguis' appearance, however, was disfigured as part of his nose had been bitten off during a tribal quarrel in about 1802. As a result, he was known to some settlers as "The Cut-Nosed Chief."²

Peguis was proud of the medal Lord Selkirk had given to him and he held on to it until his death. Ten years before that happened he told Rev. Abraham Cowley, the then missionary of St. Peter's (Dynevor) Church about it. It made such an impression on Rev. Cowley, he wrote:

The Old Chief paid me a long visit today & brought a medal of King George the 3rd which he seems to prize very highly...He brought also an article written on parchment bearing the name of Selkirk where in it he is spoken very highly of & commended to all good people.³

Peguis had traded furs with both French and English traders for many years when the first group of Selkirk Settlers arrived. By 1812, he had fallen out with the North West Company and had pledged his loyalty to the Hudson's Bay Company. From accounts written by white traders and settlers, Peguis had no negative reaction to the newly arrived settlers and developed a good relationship with the first group's leader, Miles Macdonell, a man who kept journals of his arrival at the Red River and his interactions with Peguis. One such entry was dated 13 October 1815



Archives of Manitoba, Peguis, N22947.

Peguis' Treaty Medal. A medal presented to Peguis by Lord Selkirk at the conclusion of their 1817 treaty featured the likeness of British monarch George III (1738–1820).

when Peguis visited Macdonell near the newly built post of Fort Douglas. Macdonell described the arrival of Peguis and his Band:

Peguis arrived this morning with his band consisting of 65 men, - when they doubled point Douglas and were in sight of the Fort they fixed a volley – which we returned by a three pounder - we then hoisted our flag. Peguis immediately returned the compliment by mounting his colours at the end of his Canoe, and when the whole Squadron came in sight consisting of nearly 150 Canoes, including those of the Women and Children it had a wild

but grand appearance. Their Bodies painted in various Colours, - their heads decorated, some with branches and others with feathers, and every time we fired the Canon the woods re-echoed with that wild whoop of joy, which they gave to denote the satisfaction they received. When they came in front of the fort the Women and Children paddled past the men's Canoes to a spot where I had fixed upon for their encampment, where they mounted their lodges.

The men accompanied by their Chief...entered the hall with three hearty Cheers from our people...I then ordered the large peace Callimate (Calumet) to be lighted and after taking two or three Whiffs out of it, I presented it to Peguis who after smoking about a minute passed it to the next in respectability to himself, and in this manner it went round the band. During this ceremony not a single word or even a whisper was heard...⁴

These few passages describe a fantastic scene. Imagine 150 canoes paddling along the river with people dressed in all kinds of showy décor and the sound of cannon fire and voices as the excitement of their arrival mounts. I can see the women and children working to erect their lodges while the men tended to business with Peguis smoking the peace pipe before talks between the two groups began. Smoking the peace pipe was considered a sacred ceremony by Peguis' people, done when two groups came together for discussion, trade, or for various ceremonial gatherings. The pipe represents the universe, to the people who follow its teachings. It is like an altar that is taken wherever the people go. The pipe's bowl represents the female powers of the universe and the stem represents the male powers of the universe. When the bowl and stem are joined together, the pipe is sacred. Tobacco is put into the bowl and when it is lit, the smoke carries the prayers to the Creator, inviting the Creator to guide the people in their decision-making, in their prayers, and in their communications with others.⁵

When Lord Selkirk chose to establish his colony along Red River, he was well aware that the land had long been lived on by numerous groups of indigenous peoples. Through his connection to the HBC, he knew about these groups and understood well that if he wanted his settlement to succeed, he would need their support. He instructed the leaders to make contact with indigenous leaders and to develop relationships with them. Peguis was not the only tribal leader: there were several bands of Saukteaux and Cree, and some Assiniboine, residing in the region. The Cree and Assiniboine had been residents longer and were truly more entitled to be the official indigenous leaders in their dealings with the newcomers. But Peguis became the one who formed the closest ties to Macdonell, Lord Selkirk and other white officials. Macdonell began calling him the colony chief. Why did he give him that title? Was it out of respect or did Macdonell see something in Peguis

that he knew he could control or manipulate, using Peguis' influence to persuade other leaders? Was it Peguis' ability to mediate and orate that made him such a strong character in what would come next – the signing of a Treaty?

After much chaos and struggle for the new settlers, their leader, Thomas Douglas, Fifth Earl of Selkirk (Lord Selkirk) signed a Treaty with five indigenous leaders of the region agreeing to share the land with the newly arrived settlers. The names of the indigenous leaders include Mache Wkenesb (Le Sonnant), Mechkadewikonaie (Le Robe Noir), Kagiwoksboia (L'homme Noir), Peguis, and

Imagine 150 canoes paddling along the river with people dressed in all kinds of showy décor and the sound of cannon fire and voices as the excitement of their arrival mounts.

Ouckidoat (Premier). The Treaty was signed on 18 July 1817. Lord Selkirk signed his name simply as "Selkirk." All five indigenous leaders drew the animal that represented their dodem (totem/clan), which was to them, the same as signing one's personal name such as Selkirk did.

Initially, I thought Peguis' drawing was of a beaver, mainly because fur trader Alexander Henry the Younger suggested he was part of the Beaver Clan from Red Lake. But based on new research, I believe the symbol is of a marten.

Peguis certainly cared about the people and the settlement. Lord Selkirk acknowledged his bravery and contribution in a letter written a few days after the Treaty was made;

The Bearer, Peguis, one of the principal chiefs of the Chippewas or Saulteaux of Red River, has been a steady friend to the Settlement ever since its first establishment and has never deserted its cause... He has often exerted his influence to restore peace; and having rendered most essential services to the settlers in their distress, deserves to be treated with favour and distinction by the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company and all friends of peace and order. Signed Selkirk Fort Douglas 20 July 1817⁶

In 1863, one year before Peguis died he went to *The Nor'Wester* newspaper and through the aid of an interpreter requested the editor write down his thoughts and beliefs about the Treaty for future generations. We are those future generations, and this is what he wanted us to know from his perspective:

"Important Statement of Pegowis, the Indian Chief:"

A few weeks ago, the venerable Chief of the Red River Indians, William King or "Pegowis," left his home at the Indian Settlement – a most unusual thing for him – and came up to Fort Garry to make a Formal Statement once and for all, of the arrangement made by the late Earl of Selkirk with the Indians of this region in regard to their land. This Statement, which he made voluntarily and deliberately, for the benefit of all whom it may concern, and for future reference if necessary, he desired to be published in this Journal, and a copy thereof to be forwarded to the Duke of Newcastle. His immediate reason for doing this at present, is, he says, because he is now the only surviving Chief of the five who treated with Lord Selkirk and as there have been many misrepresentations, he desires to see the facts placed on record before he passes off the earthly stage.

...When we were done speaking, the Earl said – I want you to put your names to a paper, to show in England what we propose to do. So we consented. Our names and marks were put down. We did not see why he pressed us to sign; but I now think it was in order to have us in his power, should he not do what he promised. He did not tell us what was in the paper, and I regret to say we did not even ask him what was in it. That was our ignorance. It was a great mistake, as after events showed; Lord Selkirk never came back, and never completed the arrangements about the lands. Our lands have not been bought from us – we have not received payment for them. We got some things from time to time – small supplies – but less and less as time rolled along, until we got nothing. These little presents we looked upon as a consideration for the use of our land until a bargain should be properly made. Besides, we were friendly to the settlers, and often saved them from harm. We thought this also a reason why we got things. For my part, there was a great reason why I should receive something, irrespective of the land. I was the means one time of saving Lord Selkirk's life. When he was going off, some half-breeds wished to kill him – they asked us

Pegowis
his  made

Archives of Manitoba, Selkirk Thomas Douglas 6, N8756.

"Pegowis." The mark by Peguis on an 1817 treaty with Lord Selkirk is the only known sample of his handwriting.



Donna Sutherland

The Old Stone Church. The St. Peter Dynevor Church, built in 1853 under the personal direction of Archdeacon William Cockran, was the spiritual home for Peguis. He is buried in its cemetery and a historical monument there commemorates him.

to take pemmican to an ambush ahead. I refused, and prevented them doing it. The Earl thanked me for this. The things we got, I repeat, were not in payment for our lands. We never sold them. We only proposed to do so; but the proposal was never carried out, as Lord Selkirk never came back. At the time we held council with him, there was no mention of the Hudson's Bay Company. They were not spoken of, or taken into account at all. All of a sudden, some years afterwards, it turned out that they were claiming to be masters here.

And now I wish this statement to go across the waters to my great and good Mother, and I pray her to cause a proper settlement to be made with us for our lands, so that our children, and our children's children, whose lands are being taken possession of by foreigners, may receive what is just and fair for the loss of their lands. I am old and feeble. I am the only surviving Chief of those who spoke to Lord Selkirk. I pray the great Mother, whose medal I have, to feel for us and help us.

(Signed) WILLIAM KING ⁷

[There is more to the article than noted here, please see the paper for the full account.]

Land was sacred to Peguis, given to the people by the Creator. He did not hold the concept that land could be owned by humans, who were after all, only temporarily residents. The Creator provided the land for everyone to live upon. The Treaty may have worked if there had been balance between native and newcomer—meaning everyone reaped the benefit of growth and change. But it was terribly one-sided. The indigenous people did not benefit from the Treaty. In time, they were all pushed out of the region that was, according to that Treaty, theirs to live on.

Before the whites came to this land, Peguis and his Band had been self-sufficient. They were excellent hunters and gatherers, trappers and fishers, tanners, and manufacturers. They had strong spiritual beliefs and practices, first-rate government or council, and had ways of keeping order among their society. They were fearless warriors, explorers, and seekers of adventure and they understood the landscape around them.

History claims Peguis as a leader who was non-discriminatory, courageous, and a man of peace. He was a powerful influence among his people and culture as well as among fur traders and white settlers. He never left his

own people to become a puppet for the whites. He travelled with his own people always, ensuring they, too, were well fed, clothed, sheltered, and protected from the threats of outsiders, as well as supported in the spiritual beliefs of their ancestors. He encouraged them to shift their thought and task to incorporate the new technologies and education of Europe so they could thrive and survive in a world he knew was rapidly changing.

I believe Peguis saw the settlers as a group of people who were not equipped for survival in their new environment and lost among people they knew nothing about. He and his people were rich and stable in their beliefs, their habitation, their knowledge and their ability

The indigenous people did not benefit from the [1817] Treaty. In time, they were all pushed out of the region that was, according to that Treaty, theirs to live on.

to survive on the land. A man of immense compassion and generosity, he did whatever he could to help the settlers, including sharing his knowledge, providing them with food, protecting them from enemy attack, guiding them to places for winter shelter and well-being, and most especially willing to share the land.

In my view, honouring Peguis as a person of historical significance to this region for his many contributions, to his own people, as well as those of the settlers of whom he did so much, is the right thing to do. My intention in this paper is to raise people's awareness to what has been written about Peguis, and other historical figures, especially indigenous peoples, and to reconsider those interpretations of the last century. Before accepting something as true, ask: who wrote it, and why, what purpose did/does it serve, and is/was it a balanced account of the person's life or just embellished bits to satisfy the needs of another person or culture. We need to remember that history is, in its most basic form, storytelling, and the status and recognition given to historical people and events comes from the one telling the stories. And so if I accept my own truth, I must ask myself: why did I write this article, what purpose did it serve, and is it a balanced account of Peguis' life or embellished bits written to satisfy my own needs. I did not write this article to satisfy my own needs. I wrote it to raise the level of awareness for those interested in Peguis' life. Is it a balanced account? I think so for a short article. I think Peguis would approve of what I have said, as he was well known for bringing people together in peaceful discussion to share ideas and knowledge to make the world a more peaceful place to live.

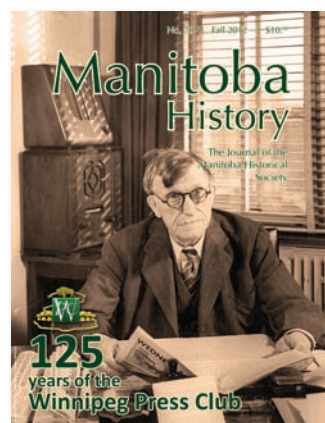
A final note on woodpeckers and their significance to Peguis—two pileated woodpeckers took up residence in the bell tower of St. Peter's (Dynevor) Church in 2011.

This is the church that Peguis helped to build in the early 1850s and where he was buried in the cemetery on 28 September 1864. The woodpeckers destroyed the bell tower and unfortunately had to be destroyed themselves. The tower was restored in 2012 just in time for the rededication ceremony that was held there on 6 September 2012, at which time the monument that was erected in honour of Peguis by the Lord Selkirk Association in 1924 was rededicated, acknowledging the crucial role that Peguis played in ensuring the survival of the Selkirk Settlers. The event opened with a pipe ceremony, followed by drumming, speeches and the rededication of the monument. I was given the honour of saying a few words about Peguis and gifting a copy of my book *Peguis: A Noble Friend to The Right Honourable, The Lord Selkirk of Douglas, P. C., Q. C.*, the current Lord Selkirk. As I looked out at the Red River on that windy, overcast afternoon, I got the feeling that Peguis was watching over us all, and he was smiling.⁸ ❧

Notes

1. Chief Albert Edward Thompson, "Chief Peguis and his Descendants," p. 80.
2. Hugh A. Dempsey, *Peguis*. Dictionary of Canadian Biography online, Library and Archives Canada.
3. Donna G. Sutherland, *Peguis: A Noble Friend*, p. 131
4. Archives of Manitoba, Selkirk Papers (Thomas Douglas) MG2 A1 - Vol. 65, pages, 17,333 - 17,599, microfilm M186
5. Joseph Epes Brown (editor) 1953 *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, Volume 36 in Civilization of the American Indian Series.
6. Donna G. Sutherland, 2003, *Peguis: A Noble Friend*, p. 69 – Archives of Manitoba, "Search File."
7. *The Nor'Wester*, 14 October 1863 – www.manitobia.ca, Legislative Library of Manitoba.
8. Many thanks to Dorothy Long for her editorial assistance and review.

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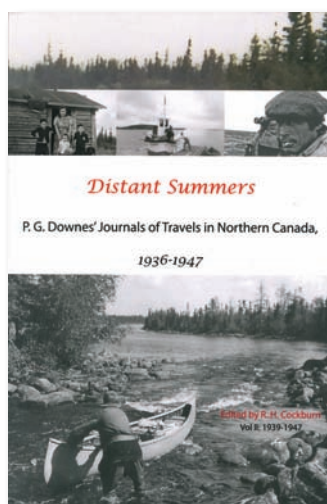
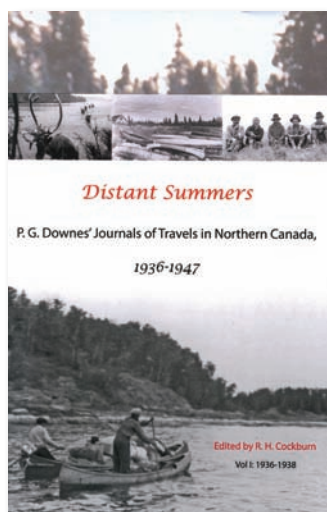
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Reviews

P. G. Downes, *Distant Summers: P. G. Downes' Journals of Travels in Northern Canada, 1936–1947* (Vols. I and II), edited by R. H. Cockburn. **Ottawa: McGahern Stewart Publishing, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-9868600-2-7 & 978-0-9868600-3-4, \$26 each (paperback)**



While canoe trip journals can be excruciatingly boring, the recently published writings of P. G. Downes are a treat. American schoolteacher Downes is best known for his classic *Sleeping Island*, first published in 1943 and republished in 2011. Now the material upon which *Sleeping Island* is based is available in these two edited volumes: the first containing the journals for 1936–1938 and the second containing the journals for 1939, 1940 and 1947.

Of course, the fact that an adventurer and good writer kept a diary is not reason enough to publish the papers. Better possible reasons include the author's insights into the times, his sketches of interesting personalities, and his insightful comments on factual material. The journals also serve as historical research documents and illuminate the personality of the author.

These lavishly illustrated journals also offer room for the reader to ruminate,

wander and plod. Sometimes they answer questions we did not even know to ask. Maps, Downes noted, were “absolutely inaccurate & unreliable” given that they were mostly “hurriedly sketched and dependent upon the angle of observation & distance for their shape.” Instead, he suggested that long eskers provided a much more reliable guide to the country. (II, p.96)

Additional information in these volumes fills out interesting biographical sketches within the *Sleeping Island* text. John Albrecht—paddling partner to Downes in 1939—figured prominently in *Sleeping Island*, as his skill with a pole in tricky waters was pivotal to the summers' travel. A Prussian who had spent time in a British prison

camp, Albrecht apparently disappeared after war broke out in 1939. In the Epilogue to the 1939 Journal, Downes recounts his partner's reaction to hearing that Canada was at war with Germany: “He made no comment but packed his outfit, took our faithful canoe which I had managed for him to have, and that is the last record we have of him....” (II, p.134)

R. H. Cockburn, the editor of these journals, followed up on the disappearance in an appended single-page biographical update in which he explains that Albrecht went trapping and prospecting, married a California actress with whom he fathered a son, and died in retirement in British Columbia in 1991 at 93 years of age.

The journal also explains poling—where one stands in the canoe and works upstream against the current. An ancient skill, it was one Albrecht had mastered. At times, Downes and Albrecht poled the canoe together—a true test of a relationship. “The important point is to keep the nose of the canoe pointed *in* toward the bank; if it swings out you stand a good chance of having the canoe rolled over or at least catapulted down the rapids.” (II, p.48) Sounds like the voice of experience!

The journals also partially explain the age-old question: How bad were the bugs? “Along the west bend I saw what I thought was mist or smoke,” Downes wrote early in the 1939 account. “We went over to get some poles and discovered it to be not mist but a mass of small dun flies, millions undulating in the slight breeze. I have never seen bugs worse, mosquitoes, black flies, sand flies, & bulldogs. They follow us closely even on the river.... Even with a head wind, they perch on one's back & creep up behind your ears.” (II, p.28)

This may account for the state of Downes' wardrobe by the end of the season. Schoolteacher and missionary Bill Buxton ran into Downes that summer and later shared recollections of the man with Cockburn: “He carried only the essentials, this included clothing,” Buxton wrote in 1982. “When he returned from his wild adventures in the Barren Lands, he stank, and worse, he didn't know it.” One guard against bugs is to avoid bathing, and to allow bodily secretions, smoky fires and other travel odours to repel the hordes. “We made him burn some of this clothes and wash the hell out of the rest. I guess I didn't smell all that sweet either, but he was impossible....” (II, p.277)

The editor of these journals, R. H. Cockburn, is to be commended for his attention to detail, his careful insertions of explanatory material into the text in square brackets,

and for adding copious amounts of useful information. Though the 1939 journal will most attract those who love *Sleeping Island*, the other diaries are also worthy of review. Downes' 1938 travels took him into country beyond his usual haunts in Manitoba and Saskatchewan—into Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

At rail's end in Waterways, Alberta, Downes purchased a small canoe and travelled the Athabasca and Slave rivers to Great Slave Lake. "It is so strange here," he wrote of the area now booming with oil sands development. "Everyone intent on their immediate business and no time for anyone or anything else." On 15 July 1938 at Bitumount he witnessed the development by Robert C. Fitzimmons, at the world's first commercial oil-sands plant 80 kilometres downstream from Fort McMurray. He commented: "The cook was most enthusiastic about the possibilities of the

tar sands. Some day, if a method is ever found to extract petroleum, etc. from them, they will supply the world. They ooze oil." (I, p.266)

Downes died in 1959, in his fiftieth year. The two-page Sequel that follows the 1947 diary offers a concluding biographical sketch. Of his travels in the Canadian North, Downes wrote, "I like the life and I like the people there. I saw a lot of it just as the old north was vanishing; the north of not time, of game, of Indians, Eskimos, of unlimited space and freedom.... Well, I suppose I shall never be so happy again." (II, p.338)

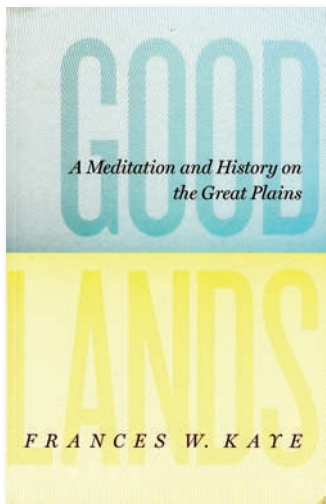
Until someone writes a proper biography of P. G. Downes, these words will do.

David Finch
Calgary

Frances W. Kaye, *Good Lands: A Meditation and History on the Great Plains*.

Edmonton: University of Athabasca Press, 2011, 377 pages

ISBN 978-1-897425-98-5, \$34.95 (paperback)



History, they say, is written by the victors. Well, here for a change is a "meditation and history" written from a different perspective: from the viewpoint of the indigenous peoples of the Great Plains. This is a demanding and far-reaching book, which introduces many new ideas and covers a wide range of topics. It is not easy to summarize the content without trivializing it. The central theme running through this intriguing book is that incoming Euro-

peans mis-evaluated a new and challenging environment as being deficient in many ways. They ignored the fact that the varied ecosystems they were encountering had been a bountiful and sustainable home for indigenous peoples for millennia.

In the first two chapters, Kaye explores the perception of "deficiency" and its implications. From that particular point of view, it was the manifest destiny of the incoming agricultural settlers to overcome obstacles and to transform the grassland "desert" into the "Garden of the World." Among these obstacles were the native peoples who occupied the plains. They did provide resistance to the process. The chapters, which describe first the armed confrontations and then the cultural and spiritual survival of indigenous ideas, are particularly innovative and seminal.

The next section of the book deals specifically with the settlement period. The author weighs the shortcomings of the Homestead Act and its unexpected success as a means of generating capital on the frontier. Analysis of the 1920s and 1930s, with its dust bowls and the attempts to cope with calamity, leads to a consideration of two "extraordinary Prairie progressives": Tommy Douglas of Saskatchewan and George W. Norris of Nebraska. From here, Kaye evaluates some of the planning issues pertaining to the plains, and the economic theories on which they were based. Chapters on damming rivers and exploiting oil follow.

The last section of the book starts by recalling the "Terrible Summer" of 1990 and the Oka crisis. The author reminds us of the plethora of painful cases in which First Nations came into conflict with the Canadian justice system, and of the equally numerous inquiries and commissions, instigated by different levels of government, to right the wrongs and come to grips with the underlying problems. Tragically, it seems that the assumption of "deficiency" is still clouding our vision and paralyzing our will to take effective action.

This book has three characteristics, which set it apart: its spatial range, its temporal depth and its interdisciplinary approach. This is truly a book about the Great Plains. The author achieves a balance in her coverage of the Canadian prairies and the broad sweep of the grasslands from Montana and the Dakotas to Oklahoma and the author's home state of Nebraska. While we all laud and advocate the comparative approach, few of us actually embrace it, simply because it involves so much work. This author slips effortlessly across the international border, and illuminates the contrasting contexts within which European

re-settlement took place. She does not simply describe a situation in Canada and then move on to the USA—in almost every case, she deftly integrates the two.

The temporal span of the book is equally broad, reaching back to pre-contact days and forward to the present. However, there is no doubt that it is rooted in the second half of the 19th century; to what was done then, or more importantly what was not done. Kaye describes the choices which were made in the past and the implicit and explicit arguments behind these choices. Given the author's background, it was no surprise to find that her historical analysis was enriched by her knowledge of the literature of the plains. She uses writers like Hamlin Garland, John Joseph Matthews and Margaret Laurence as sources of regional wisdom. I was impressed by the author's ability to write about climate, geology and ecology on the one hand, and politics and economics on the other. The book illustrates the advantages of an interdisciplinary approach.

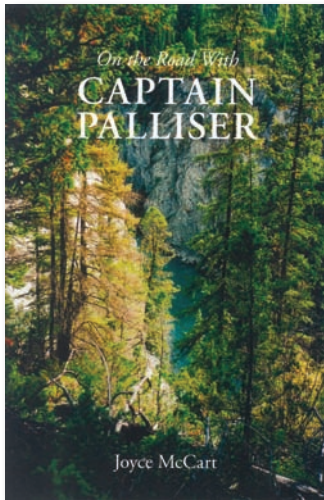
I must confess that I do not feel that I have “digested” this book yet. I think it is one to which I will return often to mine the details of a particular chapter. The author assumes that we are all well informed and up-to-date in our reading of the scholarly literature on the plains. She often refers to points made by others authors, confident that the reader will know the context and the contribution. She frequently left me in the dust! But that is my problem not hers. I was grateful to be introduced to some new voices, which I look forward to listening to more in the future. It was also intriguing to get a new slant on familiar and respected authorities. For example, the author refers frequently to Doug Owsam's *Promise of Eden*, Paul Voisey's *Vulcan* and David Jones' *Empire of Dust*, but she draws new insights from them and recalibrates their ideas in evocative ways. This book is a *tour de force*, a distillation of a lifetime of quiet scholarship and compassionate thought.

Simon M. Evans
University of Calgary

Joyce McCart, *On the Road with Captain Palliser, 1857-1860.*

Victoria: First Choice Books, 2011, 277 pages

ISBN 978-1-77084-133-8, \$18.95 (paperback)



In this book, Joyce McCart sets out two major objectives. First, she wants to provide the growing cadre of “historical tourists” with a guide to the ground covered by the British North American Exploring Expedition, better known as the Palliser Expedition. Second, she seeks to provide a short version of the narrative story of the expedition, which is accessible to the general reader. She achieves these limited objectives with panache.

For the “arm-chair geographers” and travellers among us who want to add a historical dimension to our journeys, the book provides twelve clearly drawn maps covering each section of the expedition. These maps are based on contemporary road maps and show both selected modern settlements and historic forts. They also indicate the drainage pattern of rivers and lakes, and the general locations of mountains and hills. At the outset, I was surprised that the route taken by the expedition was not marked, but I was not far into the account before I realized that this would have been impossible. There were simply too many sub-groups exploring in different directions and taking different trails. However, by reading the text

and referring to the map which accompanies it, one can picture the general path taken, and place the graphic descriptions of the land, which are often taken from the original documents. I can imagine taking this book along on any drive across Alberta, and covering much of the terrain explored by Palliser and his colleagues, a little at a time. Although the author makes no claim to be a rugged hiker, she takes us right to the trailhead leading to a mountain pass and points the way forward.

As for the story, this book is based on the exhaustive scholarly work of Irene Spry. In sixteen short chapters and about 250 pages, McCart has encapsulated for us much of the drama, the human interest and the scientific achievements of the expedition. Having read the book, I feel that I know the five main “actors” much better. Captain Palliser is depicted as something of a *dilettante*, an aristocrat whose constant search for good buffalo hunting frequently dictated the direction taken by the explorers. As the author remarks: “As for Palliser, he hadn’t changed at all. If you watch the stage instead of reading the script, it is evident he was still doing as he pleased, while demonstrating to his watch dogs (in London) he wasn’t. Nowadays, we call it ‘spin’.” (p. 67) Nevertheless, the text makes it clear that Palliser had many of the qualities of the remarkable men of his generation who built the British Empire and penetrated the farthest corners of the globe. He was well connected, and could charm or cajole men in all walks of life, from Governor Simpson of the Hudson’s Bay Company, to a Stoney Indian guide like “Nimrod.” Palliser was completely fearless, and it was perhaps this boundless self-confidence

that impressed Blackfoot chiefs and gave the expedition safe passage through the heart of their territory. Moreover, although he was indolent and disorganized, Palliser was an experienced and fluent writer, with an eye for pertinent detail. Finally, during three years of intense activity in western Canada, Palliser never lost a man in his charge.

As for the other four main characters, one cannot help being drawn by the tremendous enthusiasm and energy of the young geologist, James Hector. His epic winter journeys by dogsled are the stuff of "Boy's Own" adventure stories. As Peter Erasmus commented to Palliser: "Your doctor (Hector) is so fanatical in his work that realities do not exist in his mind." (p. 133) He often compromised the safety of himself and his companions by giving no thought to provisions. The martinet Thomas Blakiston wanted everything handled "by the book," as it would have been done in his regiment. A confrontation with his *laissez-faire* superior was inevitable. Eugene Bourgeau proved to be a knowledgeable and single-minded botanical collector, and John Sullivan, the butt of Blakiston's bullying, did sterling service as secretary.

The author summarizes the achievements of the expedition judiciously. Anyone who has had an opportunity to examine the map derived from the observations of the expedition and produced by cartographers Arrowsmith

and Stanford in 1865, will be awed by the level of detail depicted. It was a pity that McCart could not include a detail from that source among her several photographs.

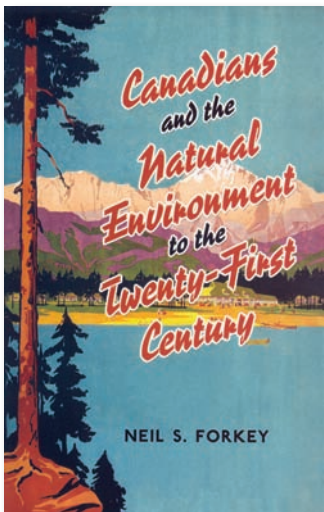
As this is a short book with limited objectives, it is perhaps unfair to cavil about what is left out. But one looks in vain for an appreciation of the intellectual baggage, which the explorers brought to their task. Palliser's constant laments about the lack of timber—"entirely barren, no trees" (p.104)—conveys his perception of the prairie as being "treeless" rather than "grass full." He expected to find a northward extension of the Great American Desert, and naturally, he found it. Moreover, contemporary historians might question the degree to which the expedition was really "exploring." Were they not really scientific tourists being led hither and yon along well-known routes? And what about the Aboriginal inhabitants of the prairies who had developed a spectacular way of life based on the buffalo, and who had adapted both to the re-introduction of the horse and the market forces of the fur trade? McCart's book is a useful tool to help us follow in the wake of Palliser and his team. At the same time, it will spark interest, which will encourage readers to dig deeper.

Simon M. Evans
University of Calgary

Neil S. Forkey, *Canadians and the Natural Environment to the Twenty-First Century*.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012, 157 pages

ISBN 978-0-8020-4896-7, \$24.95 (paperback)



Canada is a big place and the history of its peoples' relation to their environment is a big topic. Its spaces have inspired explorers, geographers, poets, painters, scientists and policy makers. Communities have been defined by their relation to the land or sea, from First Nations to Newfoundland fishing villages and prairie farms. Then, as now, exploitation of the country's natural resources has been a mainstay of the economy, including fisheries, mining,

lumbering and agriculture; and, thus, the wise use and protection of these resources has preoccupied governments, industry and special interest groups over the years.

While the environment has been an important theme throughout the writing of Canadian history, articles and books on environmental history have flourished in recent

years. Some North American scholars have written about conservation policies relating to national parks, wildlife and fisheries. Others have focussed on particular geographic features. In the United States, there are organizations and journals devoted to environmental history, while in Canada the Network in Canadian History and Environment (NiCHE) provides a roomy umbrella for the people of diverse disciplines studying and writing on this topic. And the topics are diverse. Some look at specific industries, such as mining or fishing, and others are critical examinations of conservation programs such as the Canadian Wildlife Service or national parks. Some look at policies that have excluded Aboriginal peoples from their traditional environments; others seek to understand the nature of diminishing resources. So, to try to cover this topic in 125 pages of text is a formidable, some might say impossible, task.

The problems of this book are many: too little space, too little discussion, not sufficient balance of source material. First, the author has to rush by too many events and ideas with insufficient information or analysis. In the first chapter, entitled "The Classification of Canada's Environments (1600s to early 1900s)," the reader is

presented with a dizzying succession of facts and ideas. Sub-headings are given as "First Encounters with the Land" (p. 5), "Physical Changes: Pathogens, Wildlife, Plants and Fish" (p. 10), "Natural Science Develops" (p. 16), "Toward an Early Ecological Understanding" (p. 20), "Scientific Understanding in Support of the State" (p. 23), and "Interpreting Darwin." (p. 28) Such compression of information sends too many facts whizzing by the reader with insufficient or no explanation. The important institution of the Geological Survey of Canada is barely explained. The Department of the Interior with its mighty Forest and Lands Branches and the Dominion Lands Survey is not mentioned at all. And, more important from the reader's perspective, reading this succession of facts and opinions becomes mind-numbing. There is little to visualize. People and ideas are not grounded with examples. There are no maps, or illustrations.

Perhaps realizing the problems with treating so much in so little space, the author offers a way out by promising to focus on principal ideas and issues: "This modest-sized text covers over four hundred years of Canadian history. Necessity dictates that there be a compression of data and a distillation of material. The emphasis here is clearly on presenting the main ideas, illustrated by strong examples, in the most efficient and economical manner." (p. 4)

But here, too, the author is unable to treat ideas of environmental history either clearly or in a well-rounded manner. In the chapter "Economic Growth and Conservation," for example, he introduces the "commons," meaning a place that is not privately-owned, such as Crown land, and distinguishes between continental, national and local interests in these areas. He takes the side of the local, concluding: "As we have seen in numerous examples from this chapter, conservation measures and multiple-use development came most often at the expense of local residents." (pp. 66-7) In this, he seems too influenced by recent Canadian journal articles that indicate the exclusion of First Nations and lower-class people from provincially or federally administered Crown lands or fisheries. These articles provide a necessary corrective to the earlier assumptions about the progressive nature of the early 20th-century conservation measures. But they do not invalidate what legislators were trying to do, which was to stop the widespread waste of resources and degradation of the environment through unfettered capitalism and local opportunism. This "tragedy of the commons"—where individuals' hunt for short-term gain undermines the communities' long-term survival—is underemphasized in this chapter.¹ Missing, too, are examples of where local and wider environmental objectives coincide, ideas expressed by Stan Rowe,² an author ignored in this book.

There are numerous gaps, which will annoy those with any knowledge of the subject. The author tends to emphasize central Canada; the West and the North get short shrift. Readers of this journal may wonder how the author could omit reference to Peter Lorenz Neufeld's

"Bison Conservation: the Canadian Story"³ and instead present a garbled account of wood bison and the origin of national parks. (p. 81) As a former British Columbian, I wonder how he can mention Martin Allerdaile Grainger, the second head of the BC Forest Service, and omit H. R. Macmillan, the first and enormously important head of the provincial forest branch, or give space to Roderick Haig-Brown and not mention Ian McTaggart Cowan, Canada's first professor of ecology. Ignored is the very significant First Nations participation in the west coast fishery through organizations like the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia and the Northern Native Fishing Corporation, as well as the participation of First Nations groups in the trapping industry, such as Quebec's Cree Trapping Association or the Iqaluit Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board.

Too much jumbled information and an unsteady focus on ideas doom this expedition into a challenging field.

C. J. Taylor
Ottawa

Notes

1. There is extensive literature on this subject, largely stemming from Garret Hardin's seminal article "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* vol. 162 (13 December 1968), 1243-1248.
2. Stan Rowe, *Home Place: Essays on Ecology* (Edmonton: NeWest, 1990).
3. *Manitoba History*, No. 24 (Autumn, 1992).

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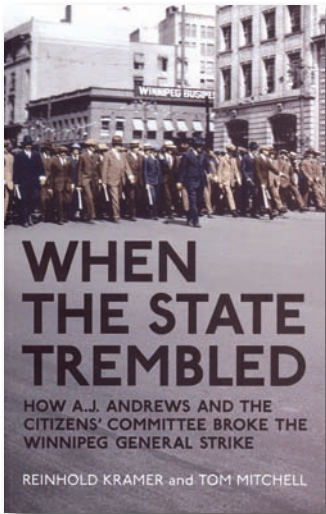
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Reinhold Kramer and Tom Mitchell, *When the State Trembled: How A. J. Andrews and the Citizens' Committee Broke the Winnipeg General Strike*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010, 464 pages, ISBN 978-1-4426-1116-0, \$35.00 (paperback)



There is no doubt that the participants and the events surrounding the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike have generated considerable academic and popular attention over the years. One tends to forget, however, that the standard accounts by scholars such as D. C. Masters, Kenneth McNaught and David J. Bercuson were published over thirty-five years ago. Consequently, the time for a new and refreshing examination of the Winnipeg

General Strike is long overdue. With their recent publication and evocative title, *When the State Trembled*, the co-authors from Brandon university, English professor Reinhold Kramer and Archivist Tom Mitchell, have presented their audience with an extraordinarily well-researched and revitalized interpretation and analysis of the Winnipeg General Strike.

If one harkens back to the earlier historiography, one might recall that the strike leaders in May 1919 were relatively well known and sympathetically portrayed, particularly by that generation of labour historians. Students of the events understood the role of the state primarily through the lens surrounding the participation and actions of the acting Minister of Justice, Arthur Meighen and his hard-nosed colleague, Minister of Labour, Gideon Robertson. What Kramer and Mitchell have accomplished in their publication is to pull the reluctant leadership of the Citizens' Committee back on the main stage to illustrate how they exerted a dominant influence over the events during and after the Winnipeg General Strike. Specifically, this leadership would be in the persons of Isaac Pitblado, Travers Sweatman, James B. Coyne, Edward Anderson, Ed Parnell and especially A. J. Andrews. Ironically, Kramer and Mitchell set out to demonstrate that a "history from above" — focussing upon the intricate machinery of class domination — is no less applicable to a historic narrative than writing what, in their introduction, they call "history from below."

The methodology broadly applied by the authors is a chronological narrative beginning on 15 May 1919 when the General Strike began throughout Winnipeg. It proceeds to trace the events involving the key participants through to 24 December 1919, when the trials of the strike leaders were

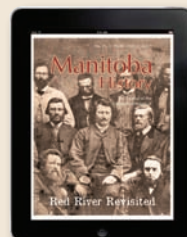
winding down. The actions of the strikers and the reactions of the citizens and politicians are described and analysed as day-by-day responses to the situation on the ground.

One must warn readers that this technique, coupled with the exhaustive review of archival sources and a growing body of oral history accounts, results in a very elaborate read. To add to the complexity of the narrative, Kramer and Mitchell often digress from the events in Winnipeg to the broader context in Russia, Europe and elsewhere in North America where labour unrest was taking place after the First World War. While this certainly places the Winnipeg event in a more global context, it sometimes acts as a distraction from the key arguments.

Overall, however, the result of this narrative and analytical technique is a very learned and comprehensive portrayal of the Winnipeg General Strike. For enthusiasts of Manitoba history, Kramer and Mitchell have tracked down and incorporated recently accessible sources such as the Meighen-Andrews correspondence, in order to demonstrate conclusively how members of Winnipeg's business and legal elite took control not only of the strike situation, but the trials afterwards. We are also reminded of how vulnerable the strike leaders from Eastern Europe were in comparison to their British-born comrades, when the federal government chose to unleash a particular legal interpretation of the Immigration Act.

This publication is a recent addition to the long standing Canadian Social History Series, which is devoted to in-depth studies of major themes in Canadian history. Kramer and Mitchell have certainly reminded Canadians that returning to well-trodden areas of Canadian scholarship can result in refreshing and intellectually stimulating products. *When the State Trembled* is indeed, as its jacket cover suggests, a "masterful, riveting and fresh account" of this pivotal event in Manitoba's history.

Greg Thomas
Winnipeg



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Red River Records, 1812–1870

by Rachel Mills and Joan Sinclair
Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg

The Archives of Manitoba holds records that document virtually all aspects of the province's history. There are three main collection areas: records created by the Government of Manitoba; records of private individuals, families, organizations, businesses and groups in Manitoba; and records of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC).

The first area, records of the Government of Manitoba, consists of records created since 1870, the year of the creation of the province of Manitoba. These records, therefore, are too recent for a paper on the Red River Settlement, even though some of them are over 140 years old.

The third area, the collections of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives (which is part of the Archives of Manitoba), holds many records that relate to the Red River Settlement, given the relationship between the company and the settlement after the establishment of the settlement in 1812. These are not discussed in this article either.

Rather, it is the second of these areas—the records of private individuals, families and organizations—that will be the focus of this article. We will discuss some of the many records relating to the Red River settlement in the Archives of Manitoba's private records holdings. Researchers have relied on some of these records in their research and writing. We hope, however, to present some records that few have seen before and, for the more familiar records, we hope to provide some of the back-story and behind-the-scenes information about where the records came from and how they have been kept.

As archivists, we believe that it is important to know where records came from and to communicate this to researchers. Information about the records from before they came to the Archives allows researchers to assess and hopefully confirm their authenticity. Are the records really what they seem to be? Knowing who gave them to the Archives—a descendant or a stranger, to use a very simplistic example—can help us to evaluate whether they are “the real thing.” Knowing the chain of custody can also help us to ascertain whether they could have been tampered with at any point since their creation. Also, if there are annotations or other marks on the records, it can help us to find out who made them and why. In short, context is important!

There is no question about where to start. We would like to take you back to 1885. The Provincial Library had been established just the year before and from the very start had been interested in acquiring archival documents as well as published material, e.g., newspapers and books. In his first report, for the year 1884, the first Provincial Librarian J. P. Robertson noted that the records made in the decades before the creation of Manitoba had not been maintained well and had fallen into the hands of private individuals.¹ It is unclear whether he knew who these private individuals were but if he did not, he soon would. In February 1885, Robertson received a letter, addressed to Premier John Norquay and forwarded from his office, from a James Taylor offering to sell “some old records of this country commencing from the formation of a government in 1835.”² This James Taylor was the son of Samuel Taylor, a former HBC employee in the Moose Factory area who came to the Red River Settlement with his young family in 1857. Correspondence went back and forth about the 135 documents Taylor was offering to sell to the library (in addition to early issues of *The Nor'Wester*, the first newspaper to be published in the settlement). Robertson requested a full list and inquired about the price Taylor had in mind. At the same time, Robertson contacted Government legal counsel to ask whether there was any legal imperative for Taylor to give these up to the Government, since they were government records. Legal counsel gave Robertson a favourable answer to this and in his 1885 report, Robertson noted that, “the documents of the old Government of Assiniboia have fallen into the hands of a private individual, and legal steps have already been taken to recover them.”³ We assume this refers to Taylor's records but it is unclear exactly what happened next. A colleague of ours, Chris Kotecki, notes in his



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Joan Sinclair is an archivist in Government and Private Sector Archives. She studied English, Religion and Fine Arts at the University of Manitoba. Her recent MA thesis in Archival Studies from the University of Manitoba focussed on the use of Web 2.0 technologies for public programming in archives.

paper on J. P. Robertson that Taylor did finally receive payment for the records of the Government of Assiniboia.⁴ The Public Accounts record \$300 being paid to Taylor for these records in 1890.⁵ Questions remain, however. The letter from legal counsel suggests that Taylor should be made aware of the new legislation and be encouraged to hand them over. (The legislation was *An Act respecting the Department of the Secretary of this Province*, which identified the Provincial Secretary as the “keeper of all registers and archives of the Province, and of all registers and archives of any Government whatever that has had jurisdiction over the territory or any part of the territory constituting the Province of Manitoba.”) Unfortunately, no record remains (or has been found) to tell us what was communicated to Taylor and what his response was. What we know for certain is that these records were acquired from Taylor, for a price, and have been treasures of the Archives’ holdings ever since.

Representing the history of records to researchers is a challenge, particularly when they have been identified in different ways over time. For the James Taylor papers—and we know they were once identified that way since we have some old finding aids—we think that something was lost when these records were put with other records of the same period and described instead as the Red River Settlement papers (and variations on that). A few years ago when we entered them into our descriptive database, “Keystone”, we redescribed the Red River Settlement papers and separated them using their more specific titles, e.g., Council of Assiniboia fonds. (Fonds is a Canadian archival term meaning all the records of an individual or organization.) We included information about who donated the records, if that information was available, including whether they were acquired from James Taylor in 1885. However, we still question whether this was enough, given that they were kept by one individual for a significant time (perhaps 15 years) and were also known as the James Taylor papers for some time. This became significant when we learned more about James Taylor. He was the President of the Veterans of the Fur Trade Association, which worked for compensation from the federal government that it believed the HBC promised to its former employees.⁶ It is possible that James Taylor was not just someone who happened to have these records but that he had actively sought them out to assist with this cause. Why was he willing to part with them as early as 1885 when the fight for compensation continued at least until the first decade of the 20th century? Did he need the money? Did he think they would be safer in the library? We have spent much time digging into this story and many questions remain. There is more work to be done and there are also probably some things that we will never know for certain.

Are the records really what they seem to be? Knowing who gave them to the archives—a descendant or a stranger, to use a very simplistic example—can help us to evaluate whether they are “the real thing.”

The early annual reports of the Provincial Library provide us with some information about the early acquisition of other records. Librarian J. P. Robertson reported that in 1885 the current judicial authorities handed in three volumes of Quarterly Court records from the District of Assiniboia.⁷ Interestingly, these records were used up until 1872; so they include early judicial records of the Government of Manitoba as well as the earlier records of the District of Assiniboia. Evidently, there was some sense that the same work was continuing despite the events and changes of the past two or three years.

In 1889, Robertson also noted that the Library received the Council of Assiniboia minutes dating between 1835 and 1870. It is unclear to what this refers since some minutes, from 1861–1869, were acquired from James Taylor in 1885 and

the other Council minutes at the Archives appear to have been donated in 1949 and 1972. The 1972 donation consisted of records found in Government House. Is it possible that those records had been previously donated to the library at the end of the 19th century and had somehow found their way to Government House? Or did Robertson simply make a mistake in the report?

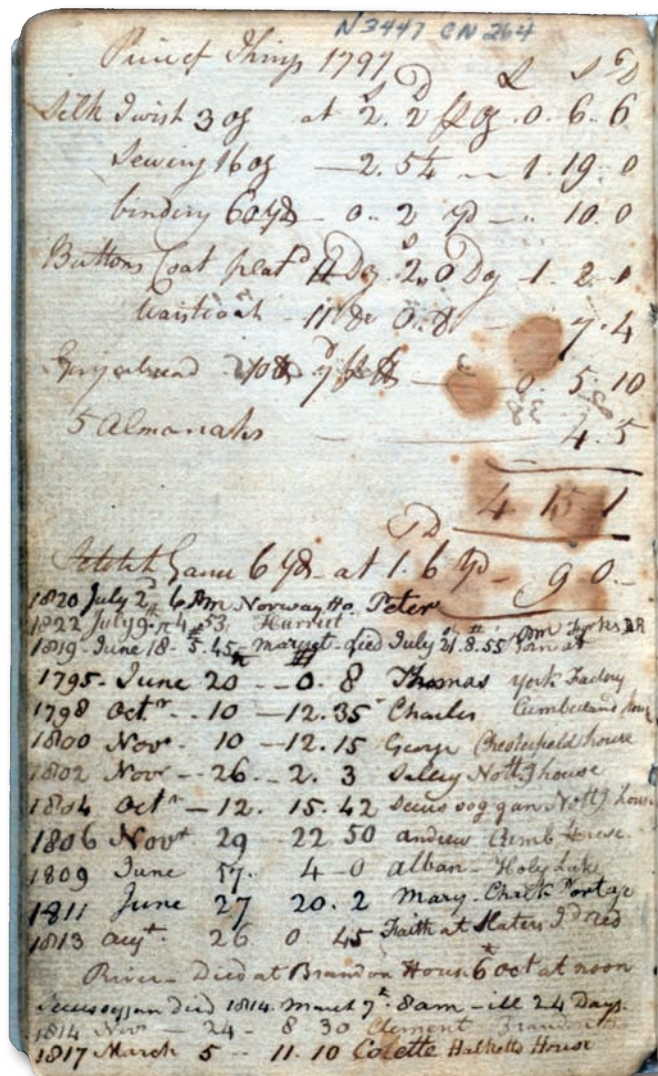
In the following decades, additional records were acquired; however, the documentation on these acquisitions is scarce and few are mentioned in the annual reports in the early 20th century. For some records, we have correspondence noting how and when they came to the Archives. Elizabeth Blight, a retired archivist from the Archives of Manitoba, recalls that one of her first tasks when she came to the Archives in the late 1960s was to go through early Provincial Library correspondence and remove any letters that documented the donation of archival material so that these could be filed in the Archives’ purchase and acquisition files (known as P&A files). This early correspondence includes information about the records of the Kennedy family, including records of Alexander Kennedy, his son William and William’s wife Eleanor and their daughter Mary. The majority of these records were donated to the Archives from the estate of Mary Kennedy in 1949 after Mary’s death in 1945. Much of the correspondence in this collection is from after the Red River Settlement period and the earlier correspondence mostly relates to William Kennedy’s involvement in the Franklin expeditions. There are, however, some interesting glimpses of life in the Red River Settlement including correspondence of Alexander Kennedy who lived in the settlement in the 1820s and correspondence of Eleanor who lived in the settlement after her marriage to William in 1860. In some letters received by Eleanor, friends send their wishes and what help they can in response to news of difficult times in the settlement in 1868 and 1869.⁸ Much of the correspondence in the Kennedy family fonds includes

pencilled annotations, which we think were made by Mary Kennedy, Eleanor's daughter, since we know she prepared calendars of the correspondence (a list of the letters with a summary of each of their contents) presumably in preparation for their eventual donation to the Archives.

For other records acquired before accessioning systems were firmly established in the 1970s and for which the Archives has not been able to locate correspondence, we need to look for clues in various places to find out more about when the records came to the Archives of Manitoba and from whom. Some clues about what we term "the custodial history of records," that is, their history before they came to the Archives, can be found in early published articles and books written by scholars who cite records located at the Provincial Library, and later the Provincial Archives. An excellent example of this is W. S. Wallace's 1952 article on the Peter Fidler notebook.⁹ Wallace begins his article by noting that the Fidler notebook was discovered by the current Provincial Librarian (this would have been John Leslie Johnston in 1952) when he was going through some uncatalogued material soon after he began his duties there. Johnston became Provincial Librarian in 1937, so presumably this Fidler notebook which contains entries from 1794–1822 was acquired by the library sometime before 1937. This is all we know about the Fidler notebook—we do not know who gave it to the Archives or exactly when—but it is a wonderful early record in our private record holdings. Much of its content is from before the arrival of the Selkirk settlers and records Fidler's notes about his survey work for the HBC. The notebook does include entries until just before Fidler's death in 1822, and includes a list of the dates and locations of the birth of his children, as well as details about the deaths of those who died young. The birth of one daughter, Faith, is recorded in 1813 at Red River.¹⁰

Elizabeth Blight, a retired archivist from the Archives of Manitoba, recalls that one of her first tasks when she came to the archives in the late 1960s was to go through early Provincial Library correspondence and remove any letters that documented the donation of archival material so that these could be filed in the archives purchase and acquisition files (known as P&A files).

Sometimes clues can come from other records held by the Archives of Manitoba. We know that the Matilda Davis School collection of correspondence, accounts, journals and other records relating to a school for girls established circa 1856 by Matilda Davis at St. Andrews was donated to the Archives by Charles Gessner of St. Andrews in 1951.¹¹ What we did not know was who Charles Gessner was and how he



Archives of Manitoba, P462/1.

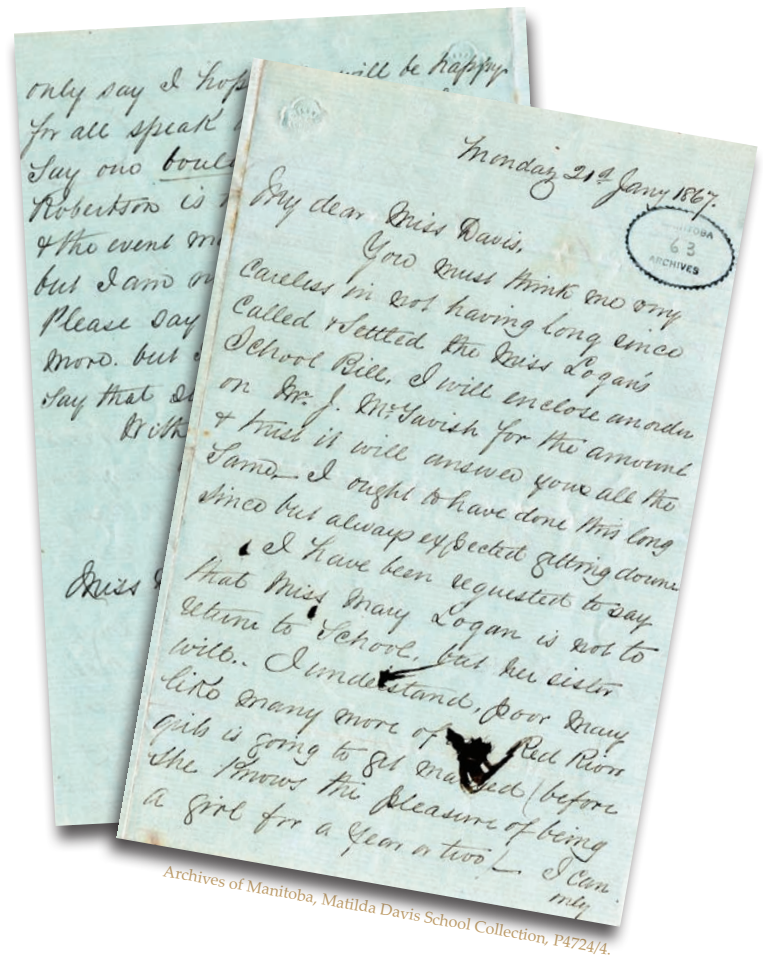
A page from Peter Fidler's diary.

came to have the records. We were particularly interested in Gessner because the Archives also holds the Matilda Davis family fonds, which came from Barbara Johnstone, a name known to many in Manitoba. Johnstone, an historian and the superintendent of Lower Fort Garry in the 1960s (the first woman to hold such a position at a National Historic Site), was given the records by a Charles Hodgson in Edmonton in the 1960s with instructions to dispose of them as she thought appropriate. Johnstone then gave them to the Archives in the 1980s.¹² Having recently worked on both collections we had noted that the records in the two collections are like two parts of a larger whole and thought it curious that it had been separated at some point—one wonders when—and that so much is now safely housed at the same institution. We knew that Charles Hodgson was a relative of Matilda Davis, a great-nephew we have since learned, and wondered whether Charles Gessner was also a family member and whether there had been an earlier decision to divide the records to share them among members of the family.

We had earlier thought of looking into Provincial Library files in the Archives' government records holdings to see whether there was any additional information on archival acquisitions (other than the correspondence that Archives staff had removed in the 1960s and 1970s). We searched in our Keystone database and found a file from the 1950s.¹³ We checked it on the off-chance that the Matilda Davis donation would be mentioned and could not believe our luck when we saw Gessner's name in a 1952 report written by the Provincial Archivist, which noted that Gessner had found the records in his granary and, realizing their importance, had handed them over to the Archives. This does not tell us more about how and why the records were originally separated but it does tell us that, while some were carefully kept by a family member and passed on to a Manitoba historian, others were presumably forgotten and stored in an outbuilding! We will, of course, keep the two collections separate to distinguish between them and their vastly different histories but we will ensure through notes in our database that researchers look at both sets of records if they are at all interested in Matilda Davis or her school.

As mentioned above, Matilda Davis' school for young girls started in St. Andrews in the mid-1850s. In 1858, a stone building was erected to house the school; it was called Oakfield but was usually known as the Matilda Davis School or Academy. This house still stands in St. Andrews and has, since the 1930s, been known as Twin Oaks. Many of the records in both of these collections provide considerable detail about the school, the staff, the students and the curriculum and also shed light on the characters, events and life in the Red River Settlement. An account book from 1862 contains a list of things to order from England. There are more than forty similar notebooks containing a variety of information in the school collection. A letter from A. G. B. Bannatyne to Matilda Davis in 1867 promises to settle Mary Logan's school account, and notes that she will not be returning since "poor Mary like many more of the Red River girls is going to get married (before she knows the pleasure of being a girl for a year or two.)."¹⁴

The collections also contain records from before Matilda's arrival in Red River and document her life in London, with her sister Elizabeth, where the two girls had been taken by their father in 1822 or 1823 to receive an education. (They were both very young; Matilda was born circa 1820 and Elizabeth was probably born in the following year). Tragically, their father, John Davis, a HBC officer, died in 1824 while travelling to assume a new post with the HBC and his Métis wife Nancy and the other children moved to the Red River Settlement after his death.¹⁵ Matilda and Elizabeth remained in England and, after receiving an education, worked as governesses. The girls corresponded with their family in the Red River Settlement, and these letters tell us much about the family, the settlement, the postal system (one letter dated in May notes that they had recently received the letter of last year!) and life in London working as governesses. In an 1843 letter to her brother George, Matilda asks him to tell their mother that she will



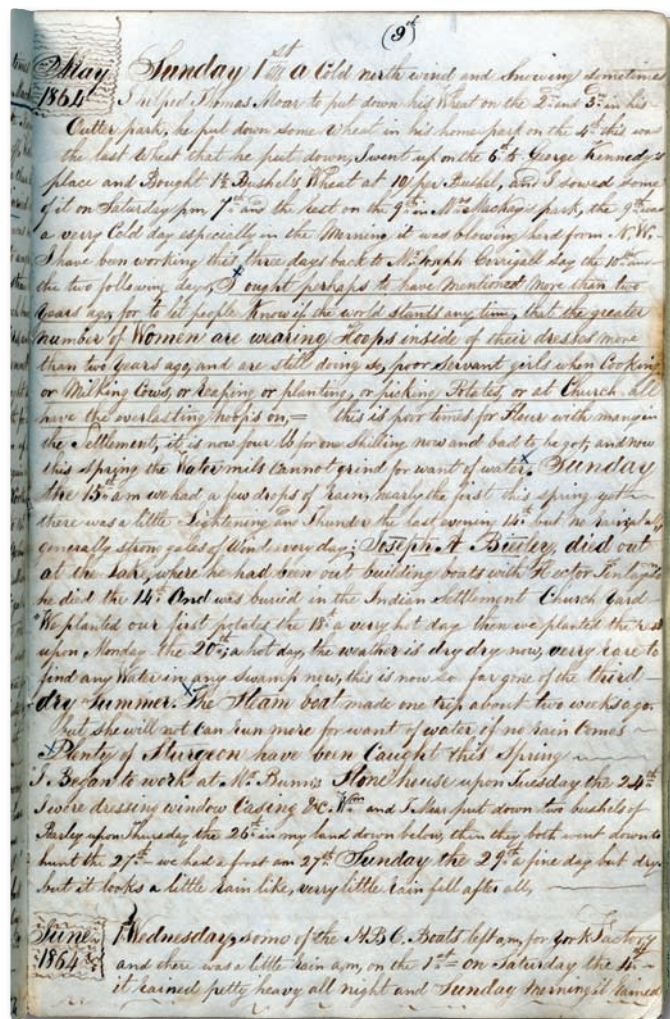
A letter from A. G. B. Bannatyne to Red River school teacher Miss Matilda Davis explained that Mary Logan would not be returning to school because she was to be married.

not write separately this time since she does not have much time for writing; she is engaged in her "various duties often until a late hour". She also tells him: "I often wish I were with you all, and have a desire to go to America and live with you but the want of money quite prevents the wish being executed. We must live in hope."¹⁶ George was born in 1824, so we assume that Matilda and Elizabeth had never met their brother. It also seems likely that they did not remember their mother or other siblings and had never been to the Red River Settlement. Still, Matilda wished to go there to be with them.

A letter of 1850 from Elizabeth to George acknowledges receipt of his letter informing her and Matilda that their mother had died in 1849. In this letter, Elizabeth speaks of her own illness, which has her confined to her room and writes that Matilda had left her situation and is finding it difficult to find work as more and more was expected of governesses—"if they cannot speak three or four languages fluently and know everything, they get but small salaries."¹⁷ Elizabeth died in 1854 and Matilda finally came to the Red River Settlement a couple of years later. It seems that her uncle's death a few years earlier might have made this financially possible for her. Matilda operated the school until her death in 1873. These are very rich records and

we are glad that both collections found their way to the Archives, along their very different paths.

More recent acquisitions to the Archives can also shed light on earlier ones. Here we return to James Taylor. We were recently offered two scrapbooks of newspaper clippings made by Taylor. We had never been contacted by this particular descendant, donor Mary Taylor (James' granddaughter), but soon realized that the Archives of Manitoba had been offered these same scrapbooks in the 1970s. At the time, the Archives was interested but nothing was ever sent. It turned out that the original donor, Vern Casebeer, Mary's cousin by marriage, after offering the scrapbooks to the Archives, became very sick and gave them to Mary's mother. More than thirty years later



Archives of Manitoba, Samuel Taylor fonds, P4641/2, page 9.

Samuel Taylor's journal for the period from 1863 to 1869 included, among other things, his observations about women's fashions at the Red River Settlement: "I ought perhaps to have mentioned more than two years ago, for to let people know if the world stands any time, that the greater number of Women are wearing Hoops inside of their dresses more than two years ago, and are still doing so, poor servant girls when cooking or milking cows, or reaping or planting, or picking Potatoes [sic], or at Church all have the everlasting hoops on, ..."

Mary contacted us and the scrapbooks finally came to the Archives.

The books are an interesting record of Taylor's work for the Veterans of the Fur Trade Association but most interesting for this article, they include a 1907 article clipped from the *Winnipeg Free Press* containing some highlights of the holdings of the Provincial Archives in Manitoba. We had not come across this article before. Among other things, it lists the journals of Samuel Taylor (James' grandfather) as already being held by the archives. This was a great discovery for us. This means that they were here by 1907 and since James Taylor did not die until 1924, it seems possible that he was the donor although it is unlikely we will ever be able to prove that with complete certainty.

The Taylor journals are a treasure. As well as containing lots of interesting details about Taylor's work for the HBC in the Moose Factory area until 1857 and his life in the Red River Settlement after that, the diaries are beautifully written. Reading them draws you into Taylor's world, which is obviously quite different from ours but which feels so familiar because of Taylor's entertaining, easygoing voice. In an entry from May 1864, Taylor records something he apologizes for not mentioning earlier—the current fashion for women. And in November 1865, Taylor included a poignant entry about the death of his son.¹⁸ If you have not read these journals, we encourage you to come to the Archives to do so. They are an excellent source of information about the Red River Settlement written by a great diarist.

One further Taylor mystery remains. The most recent donor, Mary Taylor, asked us whether we knew what happened to James Taylor's personal records which, she heard, he was working on in the months before his death in 1924 to prepare them for donation to an archives. We do not have these records and it does not seem that they went to Library and Archives Canada or the provincial archives in Saskatchewan (where he lived for the last years of his life). What happened to these records? Will they ever turn up? On the one hand, it seems unlikely after all this time. On the other hand, the Taylor connection to the Archives of Manitoba seems so strong that it might just happen.

William Coldwell is another example of how records pertaining to one individual or family are often acquired over a long period of time as descendants gradually divest themselves of family papers. Coldwell came from London, England to Toronto in 1854 and then to the Red River Settlement in 1859 to publish, along with William Buckingham, *The Nor'Wester*, the first newspaper in the settlement. The paper's ownership changed several times and Coldwell went back to Toronto for a time before returning to the Settlement in 1869 just in time to be named as clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia on 23 March 1870.

Coldwell and his second wife, Jemima MacKenzie Ross, the widow of William Ross, lived in Ross House at the end of Market Street overlooking the Red River in Winnipeg. William Coldwell suffered from poor health

in his later years and eventually moved to Victoria, BC where he died in 1907. His wife, Jemima McKenzie Ross, moved back to Manitoba to live with her daughter's family in Rosser. In 1912, she passed away at the home of her grandson, Edward Ross James. His son, E. Renouard James, is presumably the E. R. James from whom the Legislative Library bought the Sessional Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia for \$40 in 1939. The journal marks the activities of Riel's Provisional Government leading up to the proclamation of the Manitoba Act and the end of the Red River Settlement.¹⁹

In 1958, the Archives purchased a collection of William Coldwell's papers from E. R. James,²⁰ which consisted of items relating to the estates of William Ross who was the first postmaster of Red River and his wife's first husband and Roderick MacKenzie, Jr. who was his wife's father. The papers span the period from approximately 1856 to 1903 and document the administration of the estate which was not to be divided during the lifetime of Roderick's heirs—his daughters—but could be willed upon their death. It is interesting because it shows how complex the financial and property dealings could be in the settlement and also how interconnected the families living in the area were; Jemima had sisters that married into the Taylor and Kennedy families. The collection also includes notebooks with some entries in shorthand kept by Coldwell from 1885 to 1904. In 1975, the Archives again acquired records from an E. R. James in Grosse Isle that pertained to Coldwell. These included correspondence, accounts, poetry and papers relating to the Market Street East property. Lastly, in 1997 the Archives was contacted by a descendant of Coldwell's son through his first marriage who was living in Prince Rupert, BC and offered the Archives a diary kept by Coldwell from the period 1867 onwards.

Other clues about the earliest records acquired by the Provincial Library and the Provincial Archives (a distinct office after 1946) can be found in an inventory of the records, which was completed in 1955.²¹ This is often the only way we can definitively say how long something has been at the Archives. We can know that it was here as of 1955. The inventory also provides some acquisition information where this was known and so is a very useful record for researching the history of our holdings.

Unfortunately, photographs and other still images do not seem to have been captured in the 1955 inventory; so the acquisition of some of this material is even more mysterious. Here we are fortunate to have the advice of former colleague Elizabeth Blight who started working at the Archives in 1967 and retired more than 41 years later. She remembers well the filing cabinets of photographs already held by the Archives when she arrived in December of that year.

(Only a couple, she recalls.) She particularly remembers that the Humphrey Lloyd Hime photographs were in those cabinets in the Archives, at the time located in the Archives offices in the Legislative Building. Unfortunately, this is almost all we know about these wonderful photographs, the first to be taken in the settlement in 1858. Hime was the photographer appointed to accompany the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition in 1858—the first Canadian expedition to use photography. Hime struggled to take photographs in the wilds of the North West with the glass-plate technology of the mid-19th century, but had some real success in the Red River Settlement in September and October 1858.²² Some of our personal favourites are the photographs of the early churches and homes, solid, large and tall buildings on the vast prairie. There are also some photographs of people and of canoes, landscapes

and aboriginal graves. As well as 34 original prints, there are mounted and captioned prints of some of the images and glass-plate negatives of four of the images.²³ We know that a few of the mounted and captioned prints were donated to the Archives by Dr. F. C. Bell in 1965 and 1972. For the rest of the collection, we know only that most, if not all of it, was

here before the late 1960s. Our conservators have confirmed that the glass-plate negatives have been made from prints, as a form of copy negative, but we do not know whether the Archives or someone else made them or why there are only four. The collection also contains two additional prints which were acquired from the Toronto Public Library and the Minnesota Historical Society for research purposes only (copies cannot be made) to “complete” our collection. We no longer do this since researchers can more easily access collections in other institutions, either through travel or increasingly via the Internet, and we need to use our limited resources to preserve and provide access to originals.

Other Red River Settlement photographic collections held by the Archives include the Bannatyne family collection—143 photographs of prominent settler families including the Bannatynes, the Ballendens, the Logans, the Kennedys, the McDermots, the Inksters, and on and on. When we were looking into this collection, it took us some time to realize that we should stop trying to find the original prints, as they are not at the Archives. Rather, in 1967, we made copy negatives from the originals and returned them to Mrs. Mary Ferguson who seems to have organized their reproduction on behalf of the owner, Mrs.

The Taylor journals are a treasure. As well as containing lots of interesting details about Taylor's work for the Hudson's Bay Company in the Moose Factory area until 1857 and his life in the Red River Settlement after that, the diaries are beautifully written.

Visit the Archives' website and search the
Keystone database for more Red River records:

<http://pam.minisisinc.com/pam/search.htm>

Shannon. In the few pieces of correspondence we have for these records, Mary Ferguson notes that the photographs had belonged to James and Mrs. McKay. It is unclear from the records we have why this collection became known as the Bannatyne family collection. After the negatives were made, prints were made from the copy negatives. Interestingly, when comparing the negatives to the prints (to check that they were copy negatives), we noticed that the mounts (sometimes with handwritten captions) were left off the prints. A colleague in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Mandy Malazdrewich, notes that this was often done to make the photographs look neater or to fit them to a specific paper size. As we move towards digitizing some of our holdings, we will scan from the negatives in order to show the additional information to researchers. One example of a photograph from this collection and its negative shows the additional information on the copy negative. The woman in the photograph is Margaret Anderson, sister of Bishop David Anderson.²⁴ The negative contains a caption noting that the photograph was taken in 1852. This is useful because having only copy negatives and prints makes photographs difficult to date; we cannot ascertain the original photo process, see any information on the back of the photograph or look for other clues. Mandy also points out that the colour of the original is lost because black and white/greyscale negatives were made from what would often have been sepia prints.

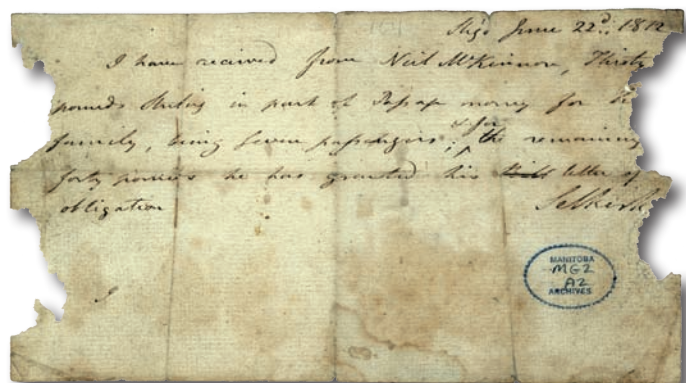
The practice of making and acquiring a copy of photographs or textual records, rather than the originals, was

common in previous decades in archives across the country. This is another example of something we no longer do. We always ask donors to donate the originals, letting them know that they will be well cared for and accessible to the donors and anyone else interested in the records. We were disappointed when we realized that we only had copy negatives and prints of the Bannatyne family collection. It would be wonderful to have the originals and what is the chance that the originals have survived? Then we were just relieved that the Archives made copies of these photos since



Archives of Manitoba, Bannatyne Family Collection, #4, N14603.

A photographic print of Margaret Anderson omitted the details shown on the negative that she was the sister of Bishop Anderson and that it was taken in 1852.



Archives of Manitoba, Neil McKinnon fonds, MG2 A2-1.

Receipt from Lord Selkirk for passage to the Red River Settlement, 1812.

we would not have had anything at all if this had not been done. Of course, it is always possible that these photographs are still in a shoebox somewhere. The Archives gets calls every week from potential donors who are sorting through their parents' papers or disbanding an organization or who found something while renovating their home. While much has either been already acquired or lost, there are also things from the Red River Settlement that families are preserving and which may eventually be offered to the Archives. We had a recent call from a settlement family descendant about donating some family records to the Archives. Things also "turn up." If anyone knows of records from the Red River Settlement period that are not preserved in an archives, please contact us.

While we can look in many different places for information about how records came to the archives, for some records we have to accept that we have no acquisition information at all. One example of this is a small folder of records relating to Neil McKinnon and his family, one of the first families to arrive in the Red River Settlement in 1812. The first document in the file is a receipt for payment of passage for the McKinnon family, signed by Selkirk himself.²⁵ It is not in good shape but it is two hundred years old! We really do not know anything else about this record—for example, who donated it or when. It was not included in the 1955 inventory. Whether it was missed in the inventory or perhaps acquired since then is unknown. The other records in this file include a letter from McKinnon to Selkirk, a fragment of a HBC document and some biographical information on the McKinnons. There is no information on how they came to the Archives, or indeed whether they all came together. We think this illustrates how important information about records is. How can we assess the authenticity of these records when we know nothing about their provenance or history?

As well as records created by Red River settlers during the settlement period, there are also records created "after the fact" which are also an important record of the Settlement. The reminiscences of settlers after the creation of Manitoba, stories told to and written down by descendants of the settlers, and the records of organizations created to

commemorate and remember the settlement are all useful to researchers of the period.

There are many examples of these kinds of records at the Archives including the records of the Lord Selkirk Association of Rupert's Land which are a well-used resource by researchers and descendants of the settlement. Soon after the Lord Selkirk Association records were described in our Keystone database, a couple from out-of-town came into our Research Room with a printout from the database asking to see the photo album in the collection.²⁶ It was retrieved for them and when one of the researchers said this was the first time he had ever seen his great-grandparents, it was one of those moments when we can feel really good about what we do. We would note that after all of the uncertainty of the early acquisitions that we have discussed, we do know how these records came to the Archives. The majority of these records were donated to the Archives of Manitoba by the Lord Selkirk Association of Rupert's Land in 1998. An undated membership list was acquired from Dale Johnstone in 1956 and Anne Henderson donated correspondence with Vilhjalmur Stefansson in 1978. For many collections, particularly more recent acquisitions, we know more about their history before their donation to the Archives.

There are many other records at the Archives of Manitoba—and of course, not just about the Red River Settlement—with amazing stories to tell and amazing histories of their own. We encourage *Manitoba History* readers to explore our holdings, search our Keystone database and come to the archives to see our wonderful holdings. ∞

Notes

1. First Annual Report of the Provincial Library, 1 July–31 December 1884.
2. Archives of Manitoba, James Taylor P&A (Purchase & Acquisition) file, Correspondence from James Taylor to Premier John Norquay, 3 February 1885.
3. Second Annual Report of Provincial Library, 1 January–30 June 1885.
4. Kotecki, M. C., "J. P. Robertson (1841–1919): Foundational Documents," presented at the 44th Annual Northern Great Plains History Conference, 14–17 October 2009, p. 9.
5. Public Accounts, Province of Manitoba, 1890.
6. This is known from newspaper clippings in James Taylor's scrapbooks which have recently been donated to the Archives of Manitoba. These are discussed later in this article.
7. Second Annual Report of the Provincial Library, 1885.
8. Archives of Manitoba, Kennedy family fonds, MG1 D1.
9. W. S. Wallace, "Notes on an 18th Century Northerner", *The Beaver*, June 1952, pp. 39–41.
10. Archives of Manitoba, Peter Fidler notebook, P4642/1.
11. *Public Archives of Manitoba: Preliminary Inventory, 1955*, (Provincial Library, 1955).
12. Archives of Manitoba, Barbara Johnstone P&A file.
13. Archives of Manitoba, CH 0130 Legislative Library operational files, GR1596, Preservation of Public Documents, 1934–1956, G 10509.
14. Archives of Manitoba, Matilda Davis School collection, letter from A. G. B. Bannatyne, P4724/4.
15. This biographical information was collected from the John Davis biographical sheet and search file, Hudson's Bay Company Archives; articles on Matilda Davis on the Manitoba Historical Society website, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/davis_m.shtml and in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, http://www.biographi.ca/EN/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=4931.
16. Archives of Manitoba, Matilda Davis family fonds, letter from Matilda to George, P2342/2.
17. Archives of Manitoba, Matilda Davis family fonds, letter from Elizabeth to George, P4724/2.
18. Archives of Manitoba, Samuel Taylor fonds, Journal, 1863–1869, P4741/2.
19. Archives of Manitoba. Red River Disturbance collection. Sessional Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia, 1870. MG3 A1/15.
20. Archives of Manitoba. William Coldwell fonds, 1856–1904. MG14 C73.
21. *Public Archives of Manitoba: Preliminary Inventory, 1955*, (Provincial Library, 1955).
22. Much of this information about Hime, the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition, and Hime's photographs has been taken from Richard Huyda's work including his book on Hime, *Camera in the Interior, 1858*, (1976).
23. Archives of Manitoba, Humphrey Lloyd Hime collection, C39.
24. Archives of Manitoba, Bannatyne family collection 4, Margaret Anderson.
25. Archives of Manitoba, Neil McKinnon fonds, Receipt from Lord Selkirk for passage to the Red River Settlement, 22 June 1812, MG2 A2/1.
26. Archives of Manitoba, Lord Selkirk Association of Rupert's Land fonds, photograph album, C110.

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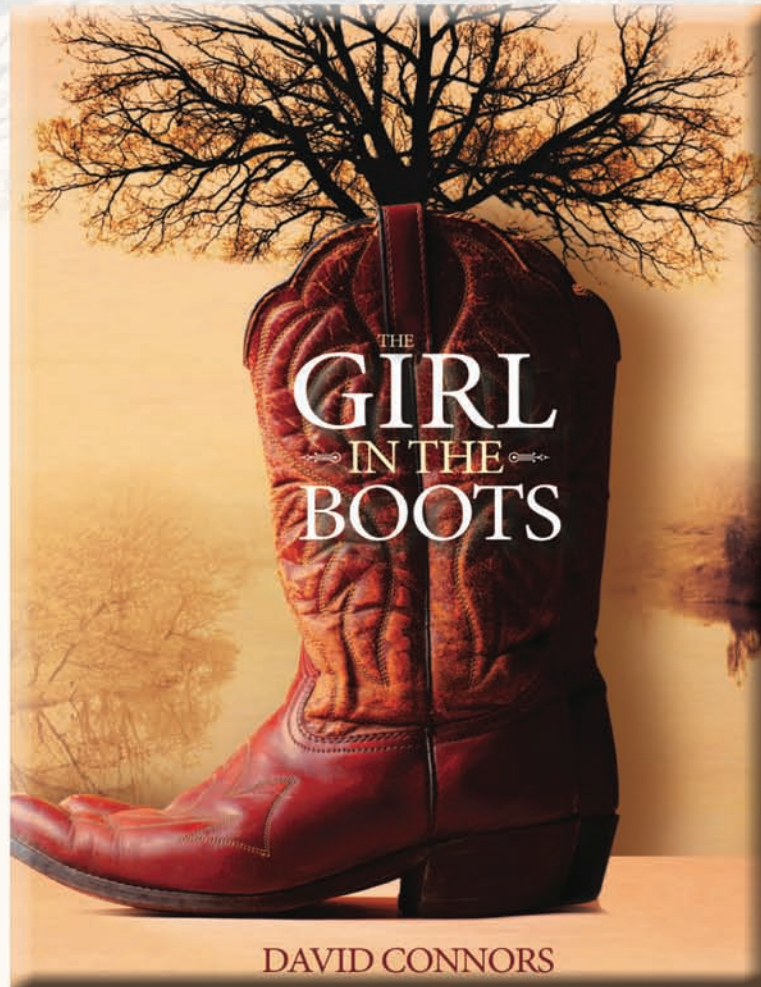
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This rare photograph inside Upper Fort Garry, looking south toward the iron bridge over the Assiniboine River, was taken around 1880 by local photographer Charles Ellis (1844–1921). Its glass negative, along with a collection of others, was still in Ellis' former home in the 1970s and was subsequently donated to the Archives of Manitoba by the estate of rock musician Bruce Decker, who at one time had planned to publish the photos in book form.

