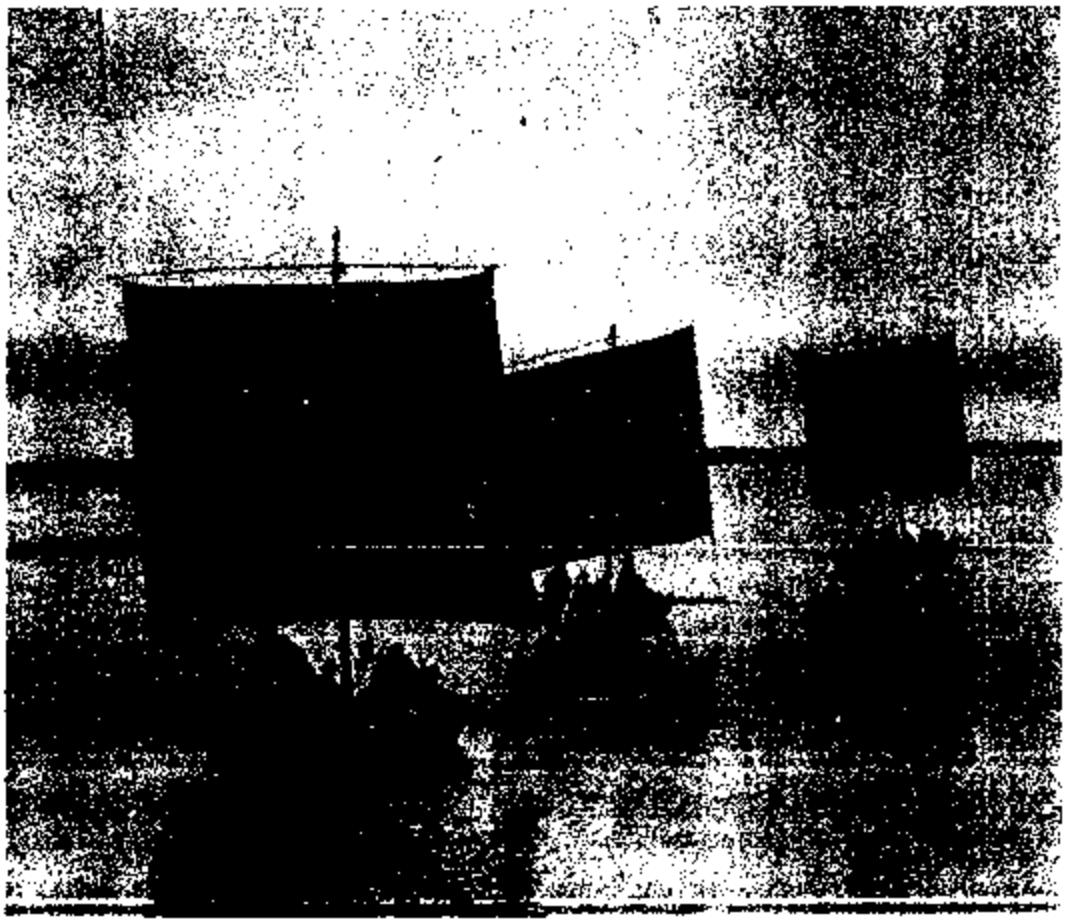
NORWAY HOUSE

A Brief History

From its Beginnings to
Treaty Adhesions in 1908



Raymond M. Beaumont
Frontier School Division No. 48
Reprint 1993

Cover Photo: York boats in full sail at Norway House, circa. 1910.

York boats epitomize the transport industry which dominated economic life at Norway House during much of the nineteenth century. In this photograph, the wind gives the oarsmen a much deserved rest from their labours.

Credit: The Provincial Archives of Manitoba

NORWAY HOUSE

A Brief History

From its Beginnings to
Treaty Adhesions in 1908

Raymond M. Beaumont
Frontier School Division No. 48
Reprint 1993

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to Shirlee Smith and the staff of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives for making available their invaluable record and photograph collection for our study and reproduction. To Leo Pettipas, Historic Resources, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, for so generously supplying us with illustrations and archaeological information on the early native inhabitants of the province. To Rev. Gerald Hutchinson for his insights on the missions. And to Frank Tough for his perspectives on commercial fishing and scrip.

I would like to thank the Manitoba Archives; the Western Canada Pictorial Index and the United Church Archives, University of Winnipeg; the Archives of the United Church of Canada, Victoria University; and the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Visual Records Division, whose photograph collections have furnished us with the pictures in this brief history. Also the Manitoba Historical Society for permitting us to reproduce a rare map in its possession.

I would also like to thank Cam Giavedoni, Area 3/5 Superintendent, Frontier School Division, and the Norway House Native Studies Committee for their continued support and direction; Janet Locken and Gail Mireau, Library Services, for sharing their expertise on layout and design; Debbie Ledoux for typing the text into the computer and making the editorial changes; and finally, Cynthia Livingstone for checking the finished product.

This undertaking was made possible from funding provided by Frontier School Division as well as Compensatory Grants from Education Manitoba.

Raymond M. Beaumont
Winnipeg, Manitoba
July, 1989

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

PREFACE

This brief history was written to introduce teachers and community members to the rich heritage of Norway House. While it should be a useful resource in social studies classes, its limitations need to be recognized. Centred in the nineteenth century and based on the records of the Hudson's Bay Company and Church, it is heavily dependent on the point of view of fur traders and missionaries. Because the Cree relied on an oral tradition, and left behind few written documents, their viewpoint can only be surmised. Nevertheless, an effort has been made to include as much information about the early Norway House families as we could glean from written sources, and to qualify bias wherever it was obvious. Additional insight into the Cree perspective can be gained through study of the recorded memories of twentieth century elders, whose knowledge of the past was acquired at the knees of parents and grandparents who lived in those earlier times.

This short study is only a beginning, a framework to encourage research into the many sources of information still unexplored, so that a truly comprehensive history can be written in the future. To aid in that endeavour, every effort has been made to transcribe quotations as they appear in the original records and to acknowledge sources wherever possible.

Cree Hunting and Fishing Camp
(courtesy Historic Resources Branch,
Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation)

Beginnings

Long before Norway House existed, there was only a river and a lake, part of a waterway that started in the mountains far to the west and ended at the great salt water sea to the north. All around, for as far as the eye could see, stretched forest, marsh, and muskeg with patches of bare rock here and there. It was a place untouched by human hands.

Time passed and people started to come in small groups to hunt and fish. For thousands of years, they set up their wigwams and tipis along the river and around the lake, stayed for a time, and then wandered on in search of better hunting grounds.

Eventually, the river and lake were named, as well as islands and points of land. The people needed to be able to tell others where they had seen animals, so that hunters could go out and catch them. They also needed to tell one another where the best fishing spots were. Different peoples passed through Norway House and each brought its own names for places.

The river and lake were part of a land mass which spread out for thousands of miles in every direction. The people dwelling in this vast area spoke different languages and followed different customs. They lived as traders and artisans in large cities of brick and stone, or as farmers growing corn, beans, and other food crops. Some hunted the buffalo on the prairie grasslands, others the caribou in the northern forests and barren lands. At times they lived in peace with one another; at other times they quarrelled and wars broke out. If defeated, they fled their enemies and moved to new places for safety. Sometimes, they used the river to escape.[1]

To the east, west, and north lived the Cree. Further north and west lived their enemies, the Chipewyan. Both were hunters and fishermen who had wandered from place to place for generations, always on the move in search of food. To the south and west lived the Assiniboine, who survived by hunting and fishing, too. Sometimes as fall approached, the Cree would paddle south and join the Assiniboine to hunt the buffalo. During the summer these animals roamed the prairie grasslands by the millions, but in the cold months many of them moved in among the trees of the parkland for shelter. There the hunters made fenced enclosures called pounds, chased the frightened animals into them, and killed them with bow and arrow before they had time to escape.

Later in the winter the Cree separated from the Assiniboine and moved north again, where they killed moose for food. In the spring their families set up fishing camps along the rivers and lakes of the region, while the young men sometimes headed south once more to join the Assiniboine in war parties against the Sioux. Occasionally, the Cree may have gone with the Assiniboine on their long fall trip to the Missouri [2], where they traded meat and fat for the corn

1. For more detailed information on the pre-European period, see Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 10-21.

2. Ibid., p. 28-29 and Arthur J. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 40-43. Descriptions of migration patterns date from the 18th Century, and it is assumed they were similar to those of earlier times.

and beans the Mandans grew in their farming villages.[3]

From earliest times, people traded with their friends and allies. Each group had something that was prized by its neighbours, and sharing meant that everyone was richer. When people came together to renew their friendship, gifts were always exchanged, and when they departed, there was general satisfaction with the new things they had obtained.

Thus the Cree and others paddled back and forth along the river in search of food or trade. And it was trade that changed the river and lake forever.

The Traders (courtesy Historic Resources Branch, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation).

For many years the vast lands that stretched forth in all directions had been unknown to anyone but the people who lived in them. Then strangers began to arrive from across the ocean to the east. At first the Cree did not know about them because they were far away. But as the years went by, they began to hear stories from their relatives, the Ojibway, who lived to the southeast along the shores of the great lakes. The Ojibway had seen and talked with these strangers, who were called Frenchmen, and spoke of the wonderful things they had to trade. The Cree were skeptical, but when they saw axes and chisels, knives and files, all made of a hard and unfamiliar substance, they were impressed, and eager to find out if they were as good as their own tools. Even more interesting were the weapons that could kill at a great distance. At first the Cree were startled by the noise made by them, but once they understood their use, they wanted them. These new weapons could be used to hunt for food or to protect them from their enemies.

Soon they were trading fur for the goods the Ojibway had received from the French. But not for long. They quickly learned that their furs were highly valued, and they could get more for them by trading with the strangers themselves. As the French moved further and further west, the Cree and their Assiniboine friends joined the Ojibway in trading directly with them.

Other strangers, called Englishmen, arrived on the shores of the great salt water sea to the north. Like those before them, they renamed the sea Hudson's Bay, and the body of water to the south of it James Bay. Trading posts with odd names like York Factory, Fort Albany, and Severn were built at the mouths of rivers flowing into those waters, and trade in furs began. The French, old enemies of the English, wanted exclusive control of the fur trade and tried to drive the English away. Sometimes they were able to capture their posts, but then the English would

3. Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, p. 18, 29 and Ray, Indians, p. 38-39. It is not proven beyond doubt that trade existed between the Mandans and the northern Indians prior to European contact. See Ray, Indians, p. 88-89.

take them back again. This went on for many years until the French finally gave up and signed a treaty with the English. After that, only the English had trading posts along the coast, while the French were confined to the interior around the great lakes and the western lands beyond.

The Cree and their allies were quick to see the advantages of trading with both sides, so that the best possible terms could be obtained. Moreover, they controlled the rivers that flowed down from the interior into Hudson Bay. No one could trade with the English unless they had permission from the Cree and Assiniboine to pass through their lands.

As news of the Englishmen's arrival on the northern sea spread across the prairies, other people became anxious to see them and the marvelous things they had to trade. Because of distance, visits were infrequent, but the Blood, Blackfoot, Mandan, and possibly the Sarci and others, may have made the long journey down to the Bay. If they did, they went in canoes manned by Cree and Assiniboine captains who knew the way, and undoubtedly passed by the place that was to become Norway House many years later.[4]

When the canoe brigades arrived near York Factory after their long journey, they stopped out of sight a short distance up the river and prepared themselves to meet the traders. Once ready, they set out on the last part of the trip. Ten or more canoes, with the captain in the middle one, shoved off and headed downstream side by side. A few moments later, a second line set off, followed by a third, until the entire number, sometimes as many as a hundred canoes, was in the water. They were impressive when they hove into sight. Guns were shot into the air by the paddlers, and a cannon at the factory boomed a welcome reply. A young company employee hoisted the flag, which flew all the time the visitors were there. The factor, who was in charge of the post, and his chief officers hastened to the shore to welcome the arrivals.

As soon as they landed, the captain and a few others were invited into the post, while the women and the rest of the men prepared the camp. Once everyone had smoked a pipe, the captain made a speech. He told the factor how many people had made the journey. He added that they had brought good fur for which they wanted a fair exchange of trade goods. Then, the factor made a welcoming speech, telling the visitors how glad he was to see them and that he had the best goods available to trade for their furs. After that, he gave the captain a fine suit of clothes, with shoes and hat to match. He also gave him food and other items for the rest of the people. When the formalities had been completed, everyone rose and went outside in a procession led by a drummer. The gifts were given to everyone, and for the next two or three days, there was much singing and dancing. At the end of the merrymaking, everyone entered the trading post, and the pipe of peace and friendship was smoked. More speeches were made, and gifts exchanged, including furs from the captain to the factor and more food for the visitors. At 4:00 o'clock the next morning trade began and continued until 8:00 o'clock that evening.

The visitors took their furs to a trading room and bargained for the best possible deal. Once the bargaining was over, they passed their furs over a counter and received goods from the warehouse in exchange. In those days there was no money. Because there were no dollars or cents to use when people wanted to buy something, everything was exchanged by trading or bartering. In the Hudson's Bay Company, the price of everything was described according to

4. Friesen, Prairies, p. 29 and Ray, Indians, p. 13, 59. Recent historical research places more importance on the role of the Cree and other native peoples as middlemen in the trade during the 17th and 18th centuries.

how many beaver skins it was worth. A Made Beaver was a unit of value just as a dollar is today, and all other furs were valued as they compared to beaver. For example, a gun could be purchased if the buyer had fourteen high quality beaver skins. In other words, a gun was worth fourteen Made Beaver. If it took ten muskrat skins to equal one Made Beaver, then one hundred and forty such skins were necessary to buy a gun.

It was the job of the captain to make sure the people received as much as possible for the furs they had to trade. If they were unhappy with him, they would look for another captain the following year. Likewise, if the people were pleased with the amount and quality of goods they had received from the Hudson's Bay Company, they promised to return. If dissatisfied, they threatened to go to the French traders. The Company had to be careful that its customers went away happy.

When the trading was complete, the captain received more gifts, which were meant for him alone, but which he generally shared with the rest of the people. Also, as the Company had a vested interest in keeping the trappers healthy, medicine chests were distributed as well. Then, the entire brigade of canoes headed back upstream on the return journey to the hunting grounds.[5]

Every year the same pattern of trade was repeated. The Cree and Assiniboine became the main travellers to the Bay. The Blackfoot, Sarci, and other far off people did not like the long journey away from their own hunting areas, where they were sure of something to eat. They

A Man & his Wife returning with a load of Partridges from their Tent, c. 1804-1811. Artist: William Richards, native of Moose Factory, watercolour (courtesy Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba).

5. Arthur J. Ray and Donald Freeman, Give Us Good Measure: An Economic Analysis of Relations between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 55-59.

preferred to obtain European goods through the Cree and Assiniboine, some of whom gave up trapping altogether and became middlemen in the trade. They took furs down to York Factory, traded them for goods there, used those goods for several months, and then sold them to the inland people for furs. A gun which had been traded for fourteen Made Beaver at York Factory sold to the Blackfoot for fifty Made Beaver; a kettle purchased at eight Made Beaver sold for twenty. In this way, the prosperity of the Cree and Assiniboine increased.[6]

Other changes happened, too. Around Hudson Bay, some of the Cree were encouraged to stay near the trading posts to hunt and fish for provisions to feed the Hudson's Bay Company employees and their families. These families grew in number and size as more and more lonely young Orkneymen from Scotland, and a few Englishmen and Irishmen as well, married the daughters of the Cree hunters nearby. A new people was being created. Some stayed near the trading posts and their children entered the Company's service. Others eventually rejoined their relatives and returned to the Cree way of life.[7] The Home Guard Cree, as they came to be known, still wandered from place to place, but did not travel as far as they had done in the past. Quickly adapting to the new goods provided by the European traders, they were soon wearing clothes made of European cloth and hunting with guns. According to reports from the time, they adapted so rapidly that some had forgotten or become less skillful in the use of the bow and arrow by 1716. According to one English trader, this loss of skill in traditional weaponry led to the destruction of a band of Assiniboines. Having run out of ammunition for their guns, they were apparently no match for the more competent bowsmen among their enemies.[8]

Sometime, however, the possession of guns did gave their owners an edge in battle. The Cree engaged in a bloody war with the Chipewyans in which several thousand were reputed to have died. Having guns, the Cree were able to inflict heavier losses on their enemies than they themselves sustained. The Assiniboine, too, may have used the gun to some advantage against their enemies, but there is increasing evidence neither group expanded its territory beyond traditional boundaries as has been believed in the past.[9] War interfered with the trade everyone wanted, and this must have been abundantly clear to Cree and Assiniboine traders who could see the merits of their geographical position.

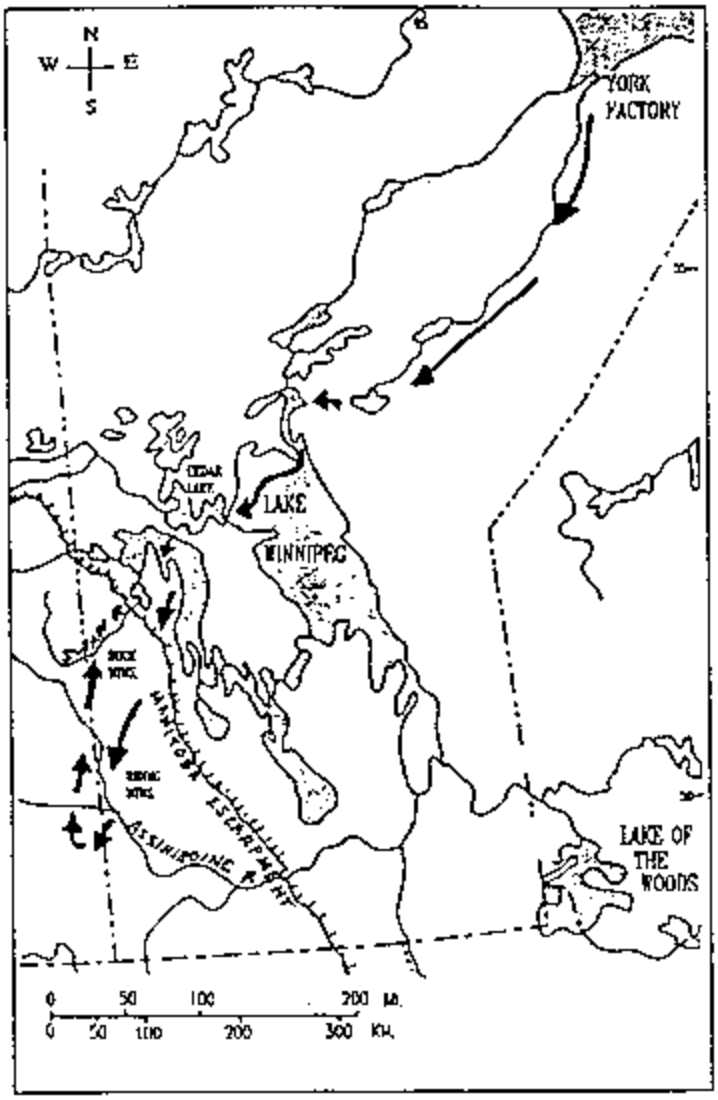
The Sturgeon Cree, for example, whose name derived from their seasonal use of the sturgeon fishery at Grand Rapids, took advantage of their position on the Lower Saskatchewan River to become middlemen in the expanding trade. They travelled extensively in a cycle which took them from York Factory as far away as the prairies of Southern Saskatchewan. Hudson's Bay Company men went with them inland from York Factory in the years 1756, 1757, and 1763. On one trip, they left York Factory on August 23, 1756, and headed up the river in a southwesterly direction for the next two months, hunting and fishing as they travelled. By October 18, they had crossed Lake Winnipeg and were travelling up the Saskatchewan River, when shallow water caused them to give up their canoes. They walked to Cedar Lake, arriving there on the

6. Friesen, Prairies, p. 29-30 and Ray, Indians, p.69.

7. Friesen, Prairies, p.66-68.

8. There is conflicting opinion on the degree to which people lost traditional skills with the advent of European technology. See Ray, Indians, p. 19-21, 73-79, Friesen, p. 33-34, and Paul C. Thistle, Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840 (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1986), p. 37-39.

9. New evidence suggests the Cree were in Manitoba and Saskatchewan much earlier than supposed. See David Meyer "Selkirk Archaeology: What Westward Movement of Cree?" Papers of the 18th Algonquian Conference (Ottawa: Carlton University, 1969), and Dale R. Russell, Eighteenth Century Western Cree and their Neighbours (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991). The Cree and Assiniboine may only have used guns to confirm control of lands in which they had hunted for generations.



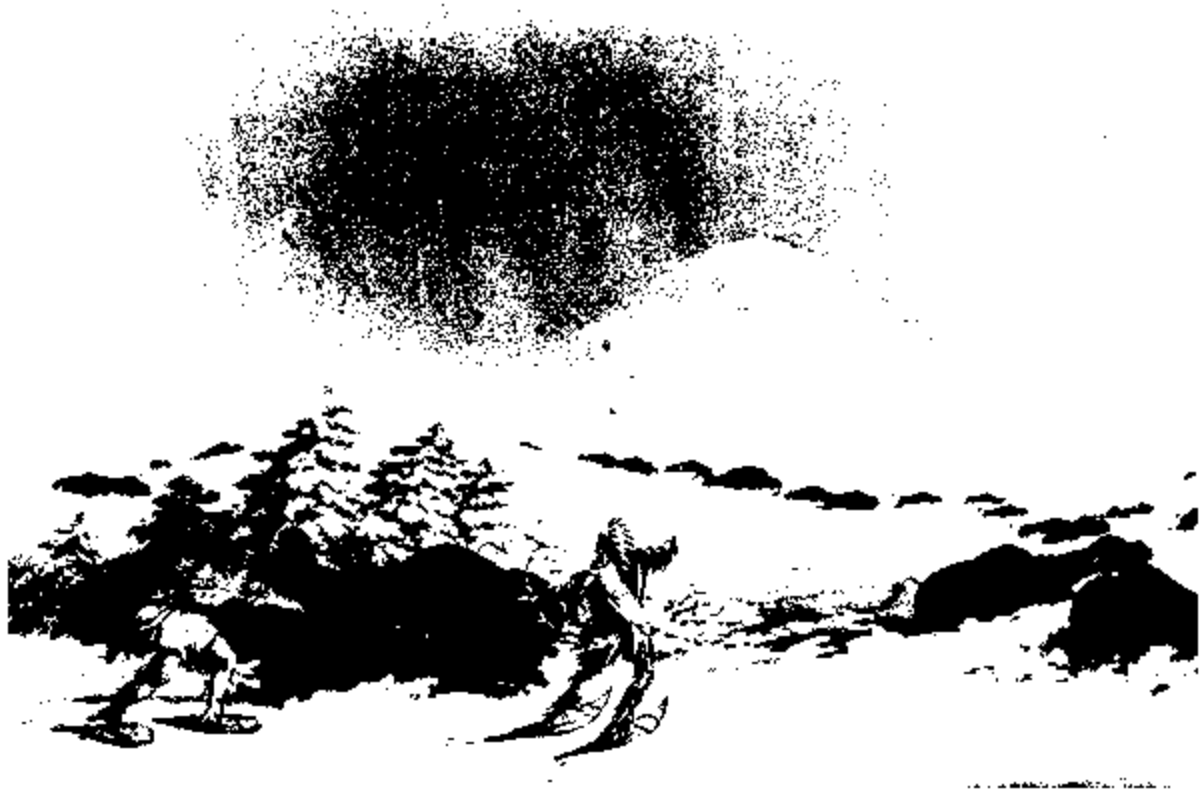
Travels of the Sturgeon Cree, 1756-1757

thirty-first, where they remained for eight days in an old French fort. From there they walked for three days before arriving at the Manitoba Escarpment. Continuing on their journey southwest, they lived on moose and fish. On December 1, they met up with a buffalo herd and killed them until the fifth. Then, they moved south again, stopping on the eighteenth when they came upon a large herd of buffalo. This was probably southwest of the Riding Mountains in the vicinity of the Assiniboine River. They stayed there until January 9, 1757, living on the buffalo they were able to kill and trapping for fox and wolves as well. On the seventh of February, they started north-northeast and lived on moose which were abundant in the wooded uplands they crossed. By March 3, they reached Swan River, where they trapped and made their canoes, and on May 5, they set out again to York Factory on their annual trading expedition.[10]

Westward movement was encouraged by the fur trade. The French moved further and further into the prairies because they wanted to trade with the Cree and Assiniboine before they had a chance to go down to York Factory. This movement was encouraged by Pierre de La Verendrye, one of the most famous of the French explorers and fur traders. During his time and afterwards, trading posts were established at various points along the rivers and lakes almost as far west as the forks of the Saskatchewan River. The Cree and Assiniboine were willing to trade some of their furs at the French posts before making the long trip to York Factory. The French preferred to get the lighter and more valuable martin, fisher, mink, and prime beaver, and let the heavier and less valuable wolf, bear, and moose hides go north to York Factory. Eventually, the Assiniboine stopped trading with the English altogether, partly because they were content to trade with the French and partly because they were moving out onto the prairies and acquiring horses.[11] Horses had been introduced to the region in the 1740s from the south, and many of the prairie people had given up the canoe in favour of this animal. Aided by the horse, the Assiniboine and Plains Cree lost interest in fur trading as they began to hunt the buffalo in earnest. They soon became the chief suppliers of pemmican which was so important as a food item among the voyageurs working for the fur trading companies.[12]

10. Ray, Indians, pp. 40-3, 49 n 31.
11. Ray, Indians, pp. 69-70, 90-91.
12. Friesen, Prairies, p. 39 and Ray, Indians, pp. 131-133.

After Canada became British in 1763, the Montreal fur trade was reorganized under new leaders who competed vigorously with each other for a share of the trade. This rivalry was counterproductive and eventually led in the winter of 1783/84 to the creation of the North West Company which obtained nearly total control of the Montreal trade in the next few years. The new company improved the transportation system through the rivers and Great Lakes which separated Montreal from the interior. It also expanded the warehouse facilities at Grand Portage, its transshipment depot at the western end of Lake Superior. Here the voyageurs obtained supplies in the spring and returned with furs in the late fall. Through a system of profit sharing and annual meetings with the traders, the Company was able to make sound business decisions and maintain morale. Soon its trade had stretched west into the far reaches of the continent and its explorers overland to the Arctic and Pacific Oceans.[13]

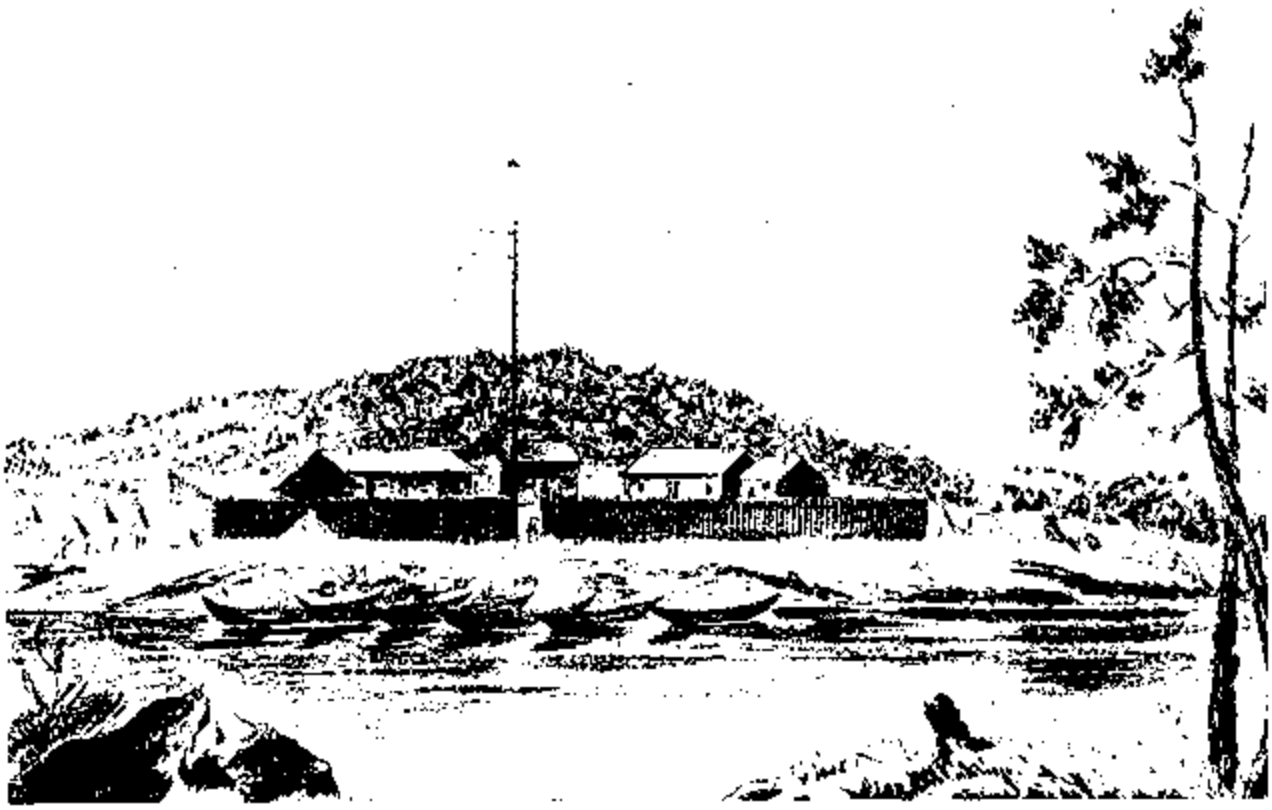


Winter Buffalo Hunt on the Prairies. Artist: George Catlin, 1844, lithograph (courtesy Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba).

While the North West Company was experiencing a rise in its fortunes, the Hudson's Bay Company was facing a decline. Its headquarters in London were isolated and its leaders unresponsive to the advice given by their fur trading employees. It was not until the fur returns had declined to new lows in the late 1760s/early 1770s that the company was roused from its sleep to take decisive action. The policy of maintaining forts on the Bay and waiting for the Cree traders to come to the Company no longer worked. The Cree and others had turned more and more to the North West Company traders whose goods were equal in quality to those of the Hudson's Bay Company. They also saw no need to make the long journey to York Factory as the buffalo hunt not only provided them with subsistence, but also with pemmican and fresh meat for trade with the Canadians.

13. Ibid., Friesen, pp. 56-61.

As the first step in its changed policy, the Hudson's Bay Company sent Samuel Hearne inland from York Factory in the spring of 1774. He established Cumberland House west of The Pas on the Saskatchewan, the first of many posts which were to dot the river systems as far away as the Rockies by the turn of the century.[14] Nearer the Bay, Rock House was built in 1794 by Joseph Colen.[15] Located at the first rapids on the Hayes River above York Factory, this warehouse served as a depot for European goods brought each year from London for the inland trade. Two years later in 1796, Henry Hallett established a house at Jack River to oppose a North West company post built there the year before. Located at the upper end of the Hayes River System and twenty miles below the outlet of Lake Winnipeg, this house was strategically placed to dominate the trade in that vicinity. Finally, when Oxford House was built in 1798, roughly half way between the other two posts, the chain was complete. The Hudson's Bay Company was now in a position to take the next step in its challenge to the North West Company for domination of the fur trade. Though it was to be wracked by inefficiency and declining returns for another decade or more, it was eventually to succeed. And in those first stages of the struggle, with the establishment of a post at Jack River, the written history of Norway House began.



Rock Depot on the Hayes River, September 21, 1821
(courtesy Hudson's Bay Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

14. Ibid., Friesen, pp. 61-62.
15. Reference in a letter dated 15 Sep 1794, from Joseph Colen to Thos. Stagner, Search File, Rock Depot, HBCA, PAM, and B239/a/96 fo. 30d-39, York Factory Post Journal, 1794-1795, HBCA, PAM.

Jack River House

On August 10, 1796, Henry Hallett and a company of men arrived at Jack River, a place known as Keenosayo Seepie or Gun-isao to the Cree.[1] They came in sixteen large canoes loaded with trade goods, most of which were taken inland by the traders bound for the upper posts. Hallett remained behind to build a house to oppose the nearby Canadian traders of the North West Company. He called his establishment Colen's Cot in honour of Chief Factor Joseph Colen, but after the latter was recalled to England in 1798, it became known as Jack River House.

Chief Factor Joseph Colen
(courtesy Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

The exact location of the house is unclear. It was described in 1796 as being in "the Jack River near Buskawoggan Lake," [2] and James Sutherland stated in 1815 that it was "on a small Island in the south east side of Play Green opposite the mouth of Jack River about 20 miles from the outlet of Lake Winnipeg." He said further that it "had been settled several years back" and added that "Jack River empties itself into the southeast side of Playgreen Lake opposite to the Island upon which Jack River House is situated."[3] Whether the house remained in the same place from 1796 to its closure in 1817 is uncertain. Confusion is also created by the fact that the river has the same name as the lake which is its source. On August 8, 1800, William Sinclair, factor at Oxford House, recorded

> embarked two canoes with three men in each canoe, with good assortment of trading goods. These men has instructions to proceed on to the Jack Lake and their to errect a Settlement. I flatter my self that this post will draw many natives from the poplar river with the produce of their hunt. The Canadian traders is has that part of the country for these many years past without any opposition which has been a great loss to your honours Interest.[4]

While Sinclair may have recorded Jack Lake when he meant Jack River, it is more likely he was referring to the founding of Jack Lake Post which was still of minor importance in 1815 when it was listed as an outpost of Jack River House. Whatever the case, the two locations were

1. B154/a/1, Colen's Cot, Jack River Post Journal, 1796-1797, HBCA, PAM.
2. B239/a/99, York Factory Post Journal, 1795-1796, HBCA, PAM.
3. B154/e/1, Jack River Post Report, 1815, HBCA, PAM.
4. B156/a/2 fo.1B, Oxford House Journal, 1799-1800, HBCA, PAM.

clearly distinguished by Thomas Swain, when he made a surveying trip up Jack River to its source in Jack Lake between the seventeenth and twenty-seventh of May 1807.[5] Nearly twenty years later, when Norway House Post was being built at its present site, Jack River was described as being four miles away. Consequently, its location can be pinpointed quite closely.

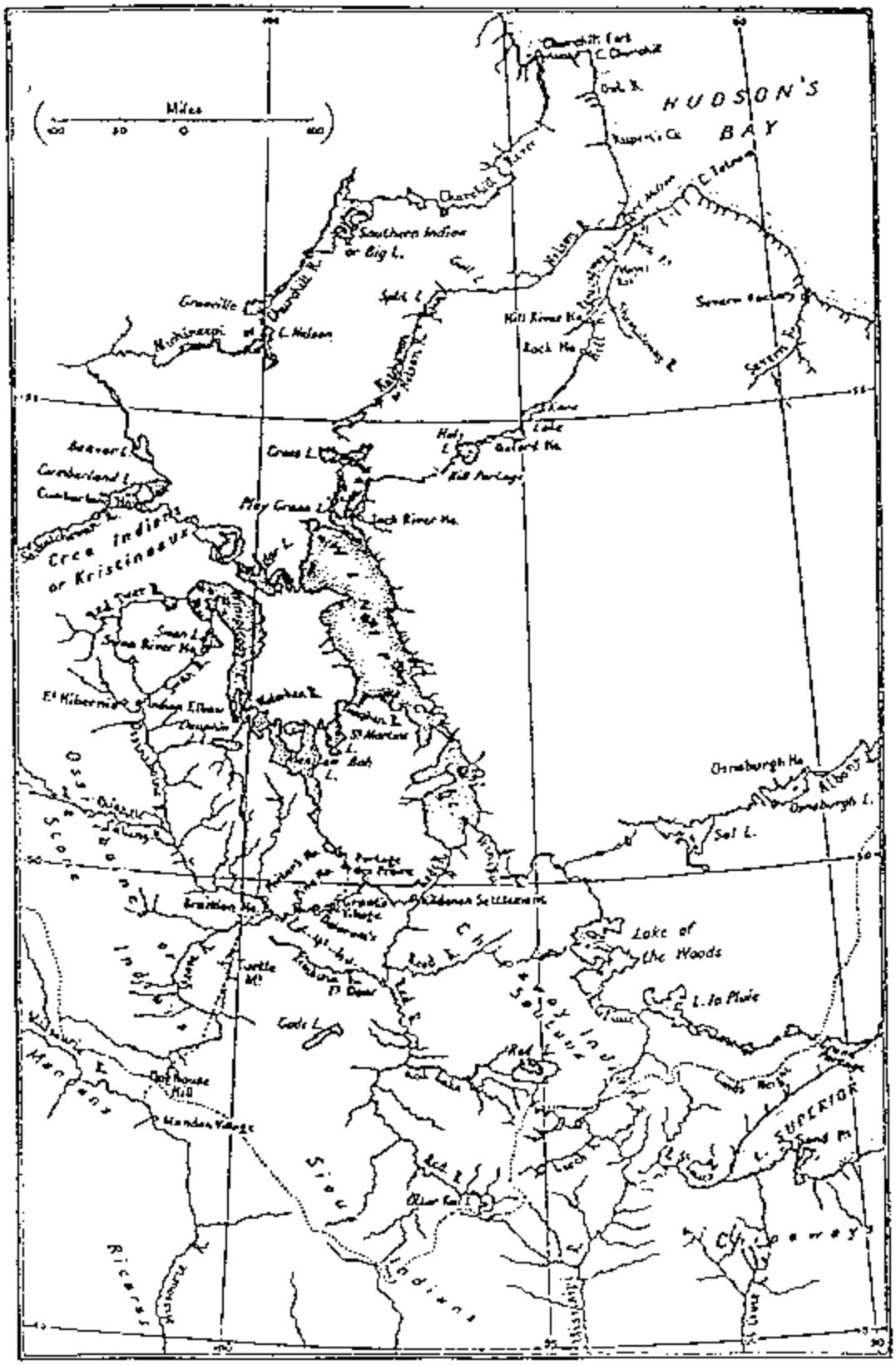
Whatever the case, Hallett and his men certainly knew where they were in 1796. They made and set their own nets for white fish, and one man hunted for ducks and geese in the spring and fall. An Indian and his family were hired briefly to hunt before being sent out to trap, and additional meat was sometimes obtained in trade, but for the most part the men survived on their own. They produced their own soap, and the tailor made "Indian clothes." Canoes were manufactured and repaired, using local wood, pitch, and roots for that purpose. In the spring, they made a beaver press and packed the few furs they had obtained.

According to Hallett's calculations, there were only about seventy hunting men in the neighbourhood, and they were accustomed to trading with the Canadians. William McKay was the local North West trader, and his post was close enough to be under the surveillance of Hallett's men. Both companies sent men out to the Indian camps in order to get furs, but although there were tensions between the two trade rivals, there was no violence as in other places. McKay even came to the Hudson's Bay post once and insisted on taking back a labourer named Joseph Stone, who was heavily in debt to him. Hallett acceded to his demand without a confrontation.

Charles Thomas Isham took charge in 1797 and remained until 1799, carrying on the trade in much the same fashion as Hallett had done.[6] McKay, his opponent, went to Grand Portage each spring, returned in late August with his winter supplies, and established flying posts[7] at points he considered most conducive to the trade. Each trader tried to outwit the other in order to obtain the most furs. In 1798, for example, McKay moved to Cross Lake, so that Isham was forced to send five of his men to set up a post at Sea River Lake to divert hunters who might be tempted to go to the Canadian post. Still, there was occasional cooperation between them. At one point, Isham kept two chests for Mr. McKay, and at another he gave him two pounds of twine, claiming it was all he could spare. There was no thought of denying his rival the twine altogether.

Except for a meteorological and astronomical journal kept at the post by Thomas Swain in 1806/1807,[8] there is a gap in the records of Jack River House until the fall of 1812, when William Sinclair, the former chief at Oxford House, arrived from York Factory.[9] Considerable changes had occurred in the fur trade since the turn of the century. Lord Selkirk, Andrew Colville, and John Halkett gained control of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1809 and established a more efficient administration, including profit sharing with its traders. These changes revitalized the trade and increased its revenue, but Lord Selkirk's main concern was elsewhere. He had been deeply moved by the suffering of the Scottish crofters, who were being driven from their lands to make way for sheep, and he sought a new home for them. In 1811 he persuaded the company shareholders to grant him a large piece of land at Red River. In return

5. B3/3 fo.50, Peter Pidgeon - Journal of Exploration and Survey, 1794-1808, HBCA, PAM.
6. B154/a/2 and 3, Jack River Post Journal, 1797-1798 and 1798-1799, HBCA, PAM.
7. Flying posts were temporary establishments built near the hunting grounds of trappers to provide the latter with supplies and obtain their furs before a rival trader did.
8. B154/a/4, Meteorological and Astronomical Observations at Jack River, 1806-1807, HBCA, PAM.
9. B154/a/5, West Winnipeg Factory Journal, 1812-1813, HBCA, PAM.



Routes to Lake Winnipeg, circa 1820
(courtesy Manitoba Historical Society, Winnipeg, Manitoba)

he agreed to a number of provisions, one of which was to provide labourers for the company. The first of these arrived at York Factory in the fall of 1811, remaining there until the summer of 1812 when they headed south to Red River. A second group of Scottish and Irish colonists arrived in the summer of 1812,[10] and their journey south was documented by Sinclair who travelled with them much of the way to his new posting at Jack River.

Sinclair was not impressed by these "new servants" and "colonizers." The Irish in particular he described as "bad subjects" who had caused a "deal of trouble" on the trip to Jack River. An Irish labourer was forced to run the gauntlet near Sea River Carrying Place for stealing from his fellow servants. And an Irishman was forced to run the gauntlet the following day at Black Water Creek, just north of Jack River, for "impertinent language to his officer."[11] In a letter, dated 27 December 1812, to Mr. Auld at York Factory, he said

> I have been now 30 years in the Honorable Company's Employ but I never saw such a number of helpless Creatures in my life . . . that they have entirely Disgusted the old hands and I doubt much you will not get a Single old hand another year who has time out to undertake to Navigate up the Rivers such another ragged set as they did this - I beg leave in this place to say that the Old hands did everything in their power to get on, it is but Justice to them that you should be acquainted with their exertion.[12]

Auld in his reply referred to the thefts and said, "one would rather have thought them intended for Botany rather than Hudson's Bay."[13]

Once the colonists were safely on their way to Red River, Sinclair settled down to look after the post and supervise the fur trade. Life at Jack River was similar to what it had been when Isham was there. The fall fishery provided the house with its main staple of whitefish, eleven thousand of which were in storage by December. Fresh meat was often obtained from the local hunters who came in to trade, and there was the usual fall and spring goose hunt. Aside from domestic chores around the house, the servants, including such men as George Robertson, John Waller, George Innes, and Oman Thompson, assisted the trade by going out to the hunters' campsites to get their furs.

Although no longer trading in the immediate vicinity, the North West Company was causing trouble at Moose Lake and Cumberland House by giving out more generous fall debt, which, in Sinclair's view, forced the Hudson's Bay Company to do the same. For years it had been the custom of the companies to provide goods and equipment in the fall to hunters, who paid for them in the spring by taking their furs to the respective trading posts. It did not take the hunters long to realize they could take advantage of this situation to improve their own bargaining position, and the companies were forced to increase the amounts of goods and equipment given out to secure trade. Alcohol was one item distributed in greater quantities as the trade war intensified, and this practice had a negative effect on the people. Sinclair was particularly angered by the trouble it caused at Cumberland House, where one of the best hunters

10. Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 71-73.
11. B154/a/3 fo.3,4, West Winnipeg Factory Journal, 1812-1813, HBCA, PAM.
12. Ibid., fo. 10d, 11.
13. Ibid., fo. 12d. Botany Bay, located in New South Wales, Australia, was the place to which Britain transported her convicts.

connected with that place had died of overindulgence, and hunting had almost come to a standstill. Indeed, the post employees at Cumberland were near starvation as a result. At Moose Lake, the Canadians went right into the Hudson's Bay post and forced the hunters to leave, claiming they had received their fall debt from the North West Company and had to give up their furs in payment. Sinclair called the Canadians "blackguards" and "robbers" and felt that George Flett, the man in charge there, would have been justified in shooting them when they entered his establishment. The rivalry had an effect on Jack River, too, as news of the terms the Canadians were offering moved rapidly up and down the river system and enticed the local hunters to go south rather than trade locally.

Other news was much slower to arrive. Indeed, Mr. Hillier wrote Sinclair in December 1812,

> The Americans Declared War against England the 17th June - The British have taken Michillimackinac and Niagara, at the latter place the loss on both sides was 900.[14]

A lieutenant in the Canadian Chasseurs, who fought at Michilimackinac, was Joseph MacGillivray.[15] He became the chief trader at Norway House just ten years after Sinclair received this letter, and at a location not more than twenty miles away.

If trade was a source of concern to William Sinclair, the colonists were another. Miles Macdonnell, Governor of the Red River Colony, wrote of the safe arrival of the colonists in the late fall of 1812, and although civil enough, there was just a hint of dissatisfaction with the assistance he had been given by the Company when he added,

> I have found the Gentlemen of the N.W. Co. most civil and attentive on every occasion - they have given me every assistance in Different little matters than those of the H.B. Co.- the reason is that the last mentioned could not do it.[16]

While Mr. Sinclair did not reply directly to this barb, it must have rankled, especially in view of the difficulty of getting the settlers to Red River in the first place and the intensity of the trade rivalry in the second. To receive a letter from Macdonnell praising the North West Company when its traders were causing so much trouble at Moose Lake and Cumberland House must have been galling indeed. Sinclair's only response was to write John McKay at Brandon House with instructions for him to send an exact account of everything given to Macdonnell. One can only guess his initial response to a second letter requesting one thousand to fifteen hundred shoes, which Macdonnell believed the local Indian women about the place could be employed in making. Sinclair replied rather mildly that he would do his best to obtain the shoes, but he wished he had known earlier of the need for them.[17]

Although Sinclair spent a productive winter at Jack River, he left on June 15 and arrived at York Factory June 25, 1813. After many years of service, he was aging and had complained of ill health. It was time to leave the rigourous business of the company to younger men.

14. 26w8, fo. 9d.
15. Hudson's Bay Record Society, Vol. I, pp. 450-451.
16. B154/a/5 fo. 9, West Winnipeg Factory Journal, 1812-1813, HBCA, PAM.
17. Ibid., fo. 19, 23d, and 25d.

A Cree Fisherman
(courtesy Historic Resources Branch,
Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation)

There are no journals for the next couple of years at Jack River, but it is likely that James Sutherland was in charge there during both those years. Certainly this is implied in his report of 1815.[18] In it, he mentioned two outposts, one at Jack Lake and the other at Winipegoosish (Molson Lake). He described Jack River as having five dwelling houses, a kitchen, a trading room, and two store houses "scattered promiscuously among the rocks," a more positive description than that of Colin Robertson in the same year, who described it as "a miserable looking place, they call it a fort, but it is only a couple of Huts stuck between two large Rocks."[19] About an acre of land was under cultivation and planted to potatoes. Since only fourteen bushels had been harvested from a half acre lot the previous year, Sutherland did not consider the place to have much agricultural promise.

In addition to giving a detailed account of the navigation system, Sutherland also named and described the uses made of various trees common to the region. The common pine or Canada Spruce, for example, was described as measuring four to five feet in circumference and fifty to sixty feet high in well drained soil. It produced lumber for building, and pitch or gum for sealing boats. Its bark was used for covering houses, making a light roof which lasted for years. Finally, its roots yielded watape, a thread for sewing together and repairing birch bark canoes.

Fish was the main source of food. Sturgeon and titameg (whitefish) were caught during the summer, but the major fishing season began in October when the titameg collected and spawned in shoals around the lake. The fishermen put out their nets and fished until the middle of December. A net of forty fathoms would catch an average of twelve hundred fish of three and a half pounds each, and an active fisherman could look after four such nets. A few jack, perch, and suckers could be caught throughout the winter and in great numbers in April and May during the spawning season. Ducks and geese provided a change of diet in the spring and fall, but Sutherland discouraged the local hunters from going after them because the hunt used up valuable ammunition and diverted them from trapping. Eggs were found in great numbers during the summer on the islands that dotted the lake. Moose and "grey deer," or caribou, were scarce, but the hunters generally killed a few of them in August for their own use, and

18. B154/e/1, Jack River Post Report, 1815, HBCA, PAM.
19. Colin Robertson's Diary, 1814-1817, entry for 31 July 1815, pp. 155-156.

sometimes provided the post with a little fresh meat during the winter months if they were lucky in their hunts.

There were twenty-six families living in the region, consisting of thirty-four men and lads, as well as women and girls, or roughly half the number of hunters recorded by Hallett in 1796. Part of this group was from the sea coast around York Factory, while the rest were from the headwaters of the Severn River. The original inhabitants had moved westward, and several more families had moved to Swan River and Cumberland House in the recent past. The local people were poor. Because of the scarcity of game, they could not clothe themselves properly, and were consequently more severely affected by the winter cold. During the summer season, they were able to gather eggs, spear sturgeon, and catch young game, while in the winter they lived mainly on fish. According to Sutherland, they were not in the habit of drying fish for winter storage. Therefore, they often went hungry when the winter fisheries failed. Sutherland was critical of the way women were treated, noting that they did much of the labourious work while their husbands hunted, but he praised native families for the care and attention given to their children. Young men joined the families of their wives, a custom borne out by the numerous references in the journals to young men hunting with their fathers-in-law.

There were no chiefs, but the older people did act as advisors. Hunting grounds were held in common - even strangers could use the same grounds without any interference - and hunting parties of a family or two wandered anywhere they felt inclined to go. Among the leading hunters who came to the post were Mis-a kik-aneb, Quesqueka hoo, and Papapathakish, whose names in variant forms still exist in the area today.

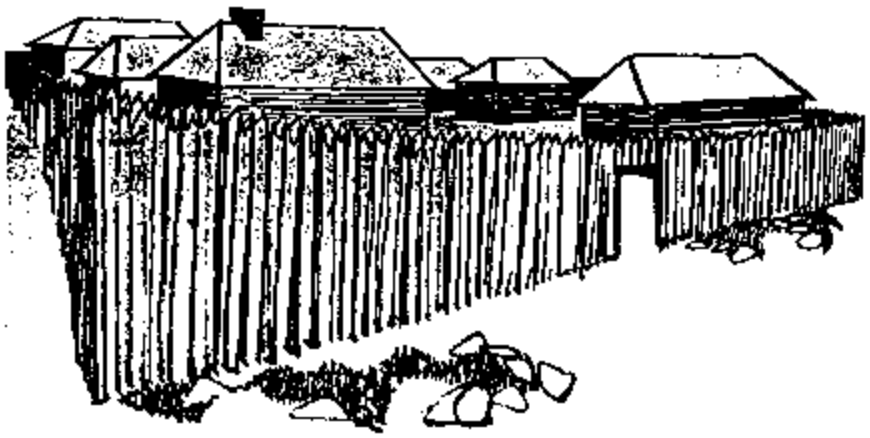
Otters and martens were numerous, but Sutherland did not consider Jack River to be a promising trade centre because the beaver was nearly extinct and muskrats were scarce. The location was excellent, however, as a transportation centre because three trips a summer could be made to York Factory, and since there was no opposition locally from the North West Company, few men were required to look after the post. Sutherland's observation was timely as the governors of the company in London were already considering how they could improve the transportation system between York Factory and its inland trading posts. The advantage of the site would not have been missed by them, and although Jack River was to be closed permanently two years later, the area was destined under another name to play a major role during the next half century or more. It was to become a focal point in the expanded transportation system developed by the Hudson's Bay Company to promote the fur trade.

While the specific daily events at Jack River from 1813 to 1815 are unknown, there must have been considerable excitement when a third group of Selkirk settlers passed through in the summer of 1814 on its way to Red River. The arrival of these pioneers from Kildonan in Scotland encouraged the beleaguered settlers at the colony, but it increased the tension between the two rival fur trading companies, a rivalry that would affect Jack River a great deal.[20] The North West Company was extremely upset that the Red River Settlement had been established. It feared that a farming community would interfere with the fur trade and everything seemed to confirm that fear. In January 1814, Governor Macdonnell issued an order banning the export of pemmican from the colony. This Pemmican Proclamation was followed by others which made the North West Company and its Métis allies angry. The North

20 Friesen, Prairies, p. 74.

West Company was offended because pemmican was an essential food for its voyageurs and post employees. The Métis were upset because they lived by hunting the buffalo and acting as voyageurs in the great brigades that went west from Fort William on Lake Superior. During the summer of 1814, under the leadership of Cuthbert Grant, they seized by force the supplies they needed to carry on the trade. The battle was on.[21]

The increased hostility between the two companies and the expansion of the colony prompted the Hudson's Bay Company to take action to improve its transportation system. In August, Miles Macdonnell left Peter Fidler and Archibald McDonald in charge at Red River and set out for York Factory to reorganize the system of transport.[22] Based on a report received from Thomas Thomas, Chief Factor at York Factory, The London Committee had authorized such improvements.[23] Five main depots were to be built at the most difficult portages on the water route, and cattle and gardens established at each of them. They would provide accommodations for people and their horses on a winter road yet to be built. At intermediate points along the route, log houses would be constructed to serve as shelter and resting spots for travellers. The winter road was to follow the river system but cut through wide bends in its course when necessary to shorten the distance. It was felt that once completed, the road would carry three times as much freight in a winter as could be carried by the boats during the short summer months.[24] It was also a desire of the company to improve the transportation to Montreal as well; therefore, the first depot was to be built at the outlet of Lake Winnipeg.[25] Located on the water routes to York Factory and Montreal, this spot was strategically placed to fulfill the needs of the improved system. Consequently, Macdonnell studied the area in late August and marked a place on which to build. By so doing, he began another chapter in the development of the area. At the same time, events were occurring in Europe that would give the area a new name.



Norway House, 1817
(courtesy Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

21. Ibid., p. 75.
22. J.G. MacGregor, Peter Fidler: Canada's Forgotten Surveyor, 1769-1822 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), p. 193.
23. HBRS, Vol. 1, p. 421.
24. B239/b/85 fo. 1d, Letter from Thomas Thomas, Governor of the Northern District, to Peter Fidler, 8 Sep 1814, HBCA, PAM.
25. HBRS, Vol. 1, p. 421.

Norway House I

On May 29, 1814, eight Norwegian labourers embarked from Gravesend, London, aboard the company ship *Prince of Wales*, and arrived at York Factory September 3.[1] They were under the direction of Enner Holte, a Swedish naval officer, who had been hired as their overseer and interpreter.[2] On the evening of their arrival at York, Mr. Holte was entertained at "the Chief's Table"[3] and undoubtedly received instructions from Mr. Thomas about the work ahead of him. He was to proceed inland with his men to the site of the first depot on the winter road. The Norwegians, reputedly expert axemen, had been hired to clear from fifty to sixty acres of land and plant them to potatoes. Then they were to move to the site of the second depot at White or Robinson Falls to clear more land and plant it to rye. If they were able to clear and plant fifteen acres each, they would be considered to have completed the requirements of their three year contract. It had been the intention to have Peter Fidler, the company surveyor, direct the work, and Thomas wrote him a letter of instructions on the eighth of September,[4] but it was not to be. Fidler spent the winter at Brandon House and did not arrive at the depot site until the summer of 1815.[5] Holte was destined to be alone, just one of the many unexpected turns that were to plague him all winter.

During the next week, Mr. Thomas explained the terms of the contract to the Norwegians, who seemed pleased with the arrangements. Hoes, manufactured by the local blacksmith, were loaded onto the boats along with hatchets, spades, and other equipment needed for the project. Then, on the tenth of September, Holte left in two boats accompanied by James Kirkness, clerk at Jack River, the Norwegians, and a few Irishmen. Trouble was immediate. That same evening, the Irish returned to the Factory, refusing to go further on the grounds they could not eat pemmican. The following day, they went back to "the Old Country" on the company ship[6], while Holte and his men continued on in an adventure that was to add one frustration after another. Describing the journey to Jack River in his journal, Holte said,

> On the passage the men were so stubborn and obstinate, that it was with the greatest difficulty I and Mr. Kirkness could make them obey our Orders, and one Day they actually intended to take their things out of the Boat and return to the Factory, which however, I succeeded in persuading them from. I must allow their behavior often brought me into a passion which I could not master.[7]

Holte's temper was to be stretched to the limit on many occasions during the upcoming months.

Arriving at Jack River on October 10, after a journey of a month, the men were greeted by James Sutherland, the master in charge. They rested for two days, then left for the depot site, taking with them two Orkney fishermen and two Irish labourers as replacements for the men

1. Their names were Hans Rasmussen, Peter Isaackson, Peter Dahl, Niels Hansen, Peter Michaelson, Niels Muller, Ole Olson Rust or Roost, and Johann Frederick Svendsen. See C.1/781, Ships' Records, Prince of Wales (1), May 28 1814 - Nov 22, 1814, HBCA, PAM, and A30/14 fo.33, List of Servants in Hudson's Bay, 1814-1815, HBCA, PAM.
2. B239/b/85 fo.1, Lester Jones Thomas Thomas to Peter Fidler, 8 Sept 1814, HBCA, PAM.
3. B239/a/124 fo.68, York Factory Post Journal, 1812-1816, entry for 5 Sept 1814, HBCA, PAM.
4. B239/b/85 fo.1-2d, Thomas Thomas, Governor of the Northern Department, to Peter Fidler, 8 Sept 1814, HBCA, PAM.
5. MacGregor, Peter Fidler, pp. 196, 203.
6. B239/a/124 fo.68d, York Factory Journal, 1812-1816, HBCA, PAM.
7. B164/a/6 fo.1, Norway House Journal, 1814-1815, HBCA, PAM

who had returned to York Factory. Progress was slow. Headwinds forced them to stop at Play Green Point, where Holte had to reduce liquor rations when the men became drunk and troublesome. After the weather cleared, another irritant arose. The guide took them to the wrong place, and it wasn't until the next morning when Sutherland and Dr. Holdsworth arrived from Jack River that the error was corrected. They moved to the proper site at Mossy Point on the west bank of the Nelson River, opposite a place known as Warrens Landing and put up a hut that first day. Nevertheless, problems persisted. Labour unrest and other delays prevented the completion of the men's house until November 30. The Norwegians complained about the food as well as the work. When threatened with a reduction of their wages, they protested that they would work better if they were fed better. Throughout December and January, the complaints and slowdowns continued, until Holte finally sent for more supplies from Jack River. It was on one such trip in March that James McKinley died suddenly. In April, Hans Rasmussen was drowned. And in May, the men refused to work altogether. It was not until June, after Kirkness and Holdsworth had met with them and more provisions were brought from Jack River, that they returned to their jobs.

After a winter of frustration, Holte concluded in his journal that even the potatoes and barley would probably not grow. And to make matters worse, his left hand, wounded accidentally by a pistol shot, gave him so much pain he could not write well. Labour problems, lack of proper equipment, and poor provisions had led to death and near mutiny. Norway House, the name given to that humble establishment, could not have begun under less auspicious circumstances. Indeed, when Colin Robertson arrived there in July 1815, he recorded in his diary,

> Mr. Holt and his Norwegians have cleared about an acre of land here, he has only erected two small huts, Mssrs. McDonnell and White had not both a shed to cover the property they brought from Red River...[8]

One can only speculate at the reaction of Mr. Thomas when he heard that disappointing news.

In the meantime at Red River, conflict had escalated. In the spring of 1815, the North West Company was able to persuade one hundred and forty colonists to go to Canada. The Métis harassed the remainder by trampling their crops and burning houses, forcing them to flee north under the leadership of Peter Fidler. They stayed for a short time at the Norwegian site before returning to the colony with Colin Robertson.[9] John MacLeod was there to greet them, having in their absence successfully defended the Hudson's Bay Company fort against an estimated eighty attackers with only a handful of men, a few guns, and a five pounder cannon.[10] Meanwhile, Fidler was sent north to begin construction on a large depot at Knee Lake and from there he went to York Factory to guide Governor Robert Semple and eighty Sutherland settlers down to the Red River Colony. Their arrival boosted the morale of the harried colonists, whose crops had survived the incursions of the Métis and had produced a bountiful harvest.[11]

Although the winter of 1815 was somewhat more comfortable for the colonists, the North West Company was more determined than ever to challenge the supremacy of the Hudson's Bay Company. In May 1816, Cuthbert Grant and his men captured the Hudson's Bay pemmican

8. Colin Robertson's Diary, 1814-1817, entry for 31 July 1815, pp. 155-156.
9. Selkirk Papers, letter from Miles Macdonnell to Selkirk, 15 Sep 1815, p. 1425.
10. MG 1, D.5, Diary of John MacLeod 1811 - 1848, PAM.
11. Friesen, Prairies, p. 75-76.

Old Fort Garry in the 1830s (from George Millward McDougall, The Pioneer, Patriot and Missionary by John McDougall, Toronto, 1902).

boats on the Qu'Appelle and started east with them. After capturing and looting Brandon House, they proceeded along the Assiniboine and unloaded the boats onto Red River carts well above the Forks where Governor Semple and his enemy forces were located. From there, the intent was to go overland to Lake Winnipeg, but it was so wet and marshy that the carts had to go around many spots and ended up within a short distance of the Forks. Alerted to what was going on, Governor Semple rushed out to confront Grant at a place known as Seven Oaks. Angry words were exchanged, and shots fired. Within minutes, Semple and twenty of his men were killed. Grant lost one man.[12] Among the dead was Enner Holte, the Swedish naval officer, who had taken such an active role in founding Norway House.[13]

At the news of these deaths, the settlers fled again. One hundred and fifty went north to Jack River, where they survived on fish until the following year. In December they received an encouraging letter from Fidler, informing them that Lord Selkirk had captured Fort Douglas.[14] Selkirk had come west from Canada with ninety members of the de Meuron Regiment, captured Fort William, and arrested some of its leading officers before moving on to the prairies. These new developments prompted plans among the colonists to go back south. In February and March 1817, the first group returned to Red River. In June, Peter Fidler arrived to assist the remainder, and on the thirtieth of that month the post of Jack River was closed. Its stock and equipment were moved to the new post of Norway House which was still unfinished, in spite of the fact that nine of the colonists had worked there during the previous winter and into the summer.

James Kirkness was in charge at Jack River from 1815 to its closure in 1817. Without doubt, he was relieved when the last of the refugees were gone, as their presence had placed a great burden on the limited resources of the post. By comparison, the years from 1817 to 1819 were

12. Ibid., p. 78-80.
13. Biography, Enner Holte, HBCA, PAM. Also A.16/36, p. 123.
14. MacGregor, Peter Fidler, p. 217. Fort Douglas was located on the west bank just below the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers.

quiet indeed. There were no North West Company traders nearby, their absence due perhaps to the scarcity of furbearing animals in the area, but more likely to the increasing strength of the Hudson's Bay Company. Elsewhere the trade war continued unabated after the Seven Oaks Tragedy. In 1818, Colin Robertson led nearly two hundred men into the Athabasca Region to successfully challenge the control of the North West Company there. William Williams humiliated it further by arresting several wintering partners and their men at Grand Rapids on the Saskatchewan. Without a reserve fund to compensate for its losses, and increasing dissatisfaction among the wintering partners, who felt they received inadequate compensation for the risks they took to acquire furs, the North West Company found it more and more difficult to cope. When its agents met with the winterers at Fort William in 1820 and failed to reach an agreement on the terms of their partnership, the stage was set for a significant change.[15]

Meanwhile, the major concern at Norway House in the fall of 1818 was the Jack River fishery directed by Alex Birston.[16] Until the first ice, the fish were hauled by boat, and with sledges drawn by dogs and horses after the lake had frozen. Robert Rendal, Magnus Work, Thomas Kipling, Joseph Lafriguen, and Richard Cunningham all served as labourers, as did Charles Ross, Oman Thompson, and Hugh Campbell, who had been sent from York Factory for the winter. Besides hauling fish, these men made sledges and harness, cut and gathered hay, cleared garden land, and built palisades. Using building materials obtained from Kettle Island, where logs were cut and sawn into boards throughout the winter, they also made repairs, built a new kitchen for Robert Garson, the cook, tore down a old store, and erected a new one in its place.

Aside from the brigades coming up from York Factory with supplies for the inland districts, there were few events to break the daily routine of the fort. Occasionally, mail arrived from one of the nearby posts, or James Robertson, the assistant trader, returned from one of his trips to the Indian camps. Local hunters came in periodically for ammunition and supplies or to trade fresh meat, small game, and furs. Since Kirkness had lived in the region for several years, he knew the people and faithfully recorded in his journal such names as Weggemawappew, Keekeechutthinisk, Miscannoowan, and Appithtownipin, names which most young clerks found exotic and difficult to spell and best explains why they seldom chose to record them.

Life was hard for the local people, who subsisted on what the rivers and forests provided and who rarely obtained work with the company. During the winter of 1818/19, Mistenesk and Huggemawappew came to the post with their families in search of food, but no cases of starvation were reported for that year.

Just how many people were living at Norway House in 1819 is difficult to determine as the journal only mentions those people who had direct contact with the Company. There are no references to the wives and children of company employees, and freemen John Scarth and William Leith are mentioned only twice. Freemen were generally retired company employees, or men whose contracts had not been renewed for some reason. Most of them had families and were often related by marriage to local trappers. They lived by hunting, fishing, or the occasional jobs the Company had to offer, and eventually many of them moved to the Red

15. Peterson, Prairies, p. 81-82.
16. B154/a/7, Norway House Post Journal, 1818-1819, HBCA, PAM.

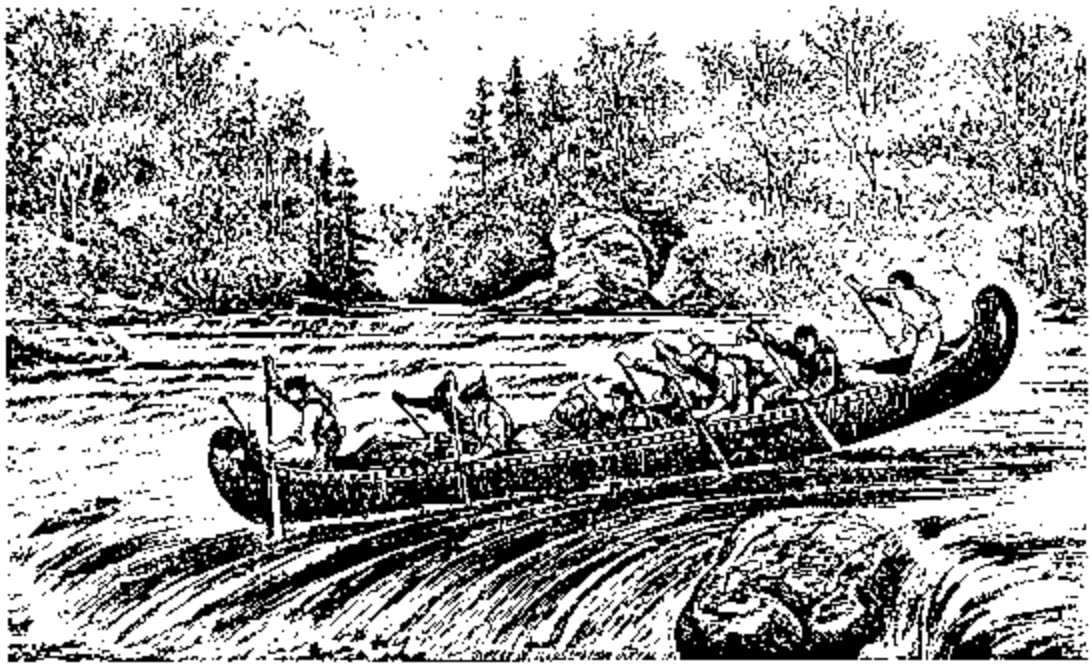
River Settlement. According to the 1823 Report, there were six women, twelve boys, and eight girls receiving rations at the post.[17] Among them were the families of James Sutherland, who was on furlough in Europe, and John P. Holmes, who had returned to Europe permanently, but provided funds to support his wife Kesse cow e cumacoat (also know as Elizabeth or Betsy) and their four children.[18] Besides the families of resident employees, there were also two children described as 'belonging to' men resident in Canada. One was probably a son of John MacGillivray, the other a daughter of Pierre de Rocheblanc. By the winter of 1823/24, the number of women and children living there had more than doubled from twenty-six to sixty-two, some of them in families "not belonging to the establishment." In the spring, their numbers were reduced when five families, including four belonging to company servants, moved to Red River Colony. Apparently, the population fluctuated as company employees were transferred from one post to another and as people came and went in search of temporary employment.

For the winter of 1819/20, James Kirkness was replaced by Thomas Swain.[19] In early October Captain John Franklin made the first of two visits to Norway House, the second being several years later in 1827, when he was returning from his second Arctic expedition.[20] Other than his visit, it was a relatively uneventful year, although one local incident does stand out. In November Pa pah nah kise arrived to inform the factor that his father-in-law, the Porcupine, was near death. Mr. Swain wanted him brought to the house, but he was told that the man could not live much longer. And indeed, news of his death reached the post the next morning. Later in the day, his body was brought in for interment, arriving "at the same moment" as his two sons, who had earlier accompanied James Sutherland to Swan River. As Swain noted, "the scene was truly distressing, to a sympathizing person." The grieving men were dangerously ill themselves, having been reduced to skeletons by the effects of whooping cough and dysentery. The reports they brought from Swan River indicated that measles and whooping cough were rampant in that country and had already resulted in many deaths. Two children and a woman from the same family showed symptoms of the illness the following day, five more children were down with measles a week later, and a Mrs. Taylor and two of her children became dangerously ill with measles and whooping cough a week after that. But no deaths were recorded - remarkable because as many as half the Plains Assiniboine and perhaps as many Plains Cree were reported to have died from the combined effects of the disease.[21]

In October 1820, Mr. Swain was replaced by Alexander Kennedy.[22] That winter was to be significant in the fortunes of the Hudson's Bay Company, and the changes which resulted were to have a profound effect on the future of Norway House. Earlier in the year when the wintering partners had been unable to work out new terms with the North West Company at Fort William, they decided to send two of their number to London to see if other arrangements could be made. It was a timely move as both companies were tired of the strife which wasted valuable resources and reduced profits. Moreover, the British Colonial Office had investigated the disturbances at Red River and was pressuring the companies to work out some solution to the conflict. After lengthy negotiations, they finally agreed to join forces in a compromise which created a Hudson's Bay Company more powerful than ever. This new company was

17. B154/e/2, Norway House Report, 1823, HBCA, PAM.
18. B154/d/29 fo. 51d, Norway House Account Book, 1827-1828, HBCA, PAM; and Biography, J.P. Holmes, HBCA, PAM.
19. B154/a/8, Norway House Post Journal, 1819-1820, HBCA, PAM.
20. A sun dial similar to the one Franklin made while at the post can still be seen on the grounds of the Hudson's Bay Store at Norway House.
21. A.J. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p 106-111.
22. B154/a/9 fo. 6, Norway House Post Journal, 1820-1821, HBCA, PAM.

granted a monopoly over the fur trade in all British lands north and west of the Red River Colony for the next twenty-one years. Most important of all, Fort William, the main North West Company depot on Lake Superior, was abandoned in favour of the Hudson's Bay route into the interior.[23] Shortly, Norway House was to become a major distributing centre in the trade.



Shooting the Rapids (from The Field and the Work: Sketches of Missionary Life in the Far North by Rev. John Semmens, 1884).

June 1821 had been a busy month at Norway House. At least twenty-four boats, four light boats, nine canoes, and four light canoes arrived, then made their departure for York Factory. There was more activity in September and October as boats came up from York with supplies for the next outfit. The practice of reorganizing these supplies at Norway House had already begun. As Simpson explained in a letter to the London Committee in 1826, "The ladings and crews of all Craft passing this place are equalized in order to ensure the transport of all the returns to York" and the same "from York", so as to maximize efficiency. Otherwise, it would have been necessary to hire "Red River Carriers or Indians" to transport the excess.[24] With Governor Simpson, as always, the bottom line was cost.

In keeping with its role as a gathering place for the brigades, Norway House needed expanded facilities, and Kennedy supervised an ambitious building programme that year. Between January and June of 1821, the men built a new canoe house, fifty by twenty-four feet, a new store, sixty by twenty-two feet, and replaced the roof of the big house with weatherboards which had been gathered during the winter. They also completed a "lighter," a boat built entirely from lumber they had cut the previous winter at Kettle Island. With difficulty, it was launched onto the ice in the spring, and on May 10, Kennedy was able to report with some humour, "The

23. Friesen, Prairies, p. 82-84.
24. D4/12, George Simpson, Correspondence Book Outward (General), 26 Aug 1826, para. 52, p. 56, HBCA, PAM.

weather which has been very fine for some time past has wasted the Ice round where the Barge was laying and in the evening we warped her out in deep water - where she now lies at Anchor an ornament to the Lake and a terror to our Enemies."[25]

Agriculture was becoming more important as well. The South Garden below the house had been cleared the previous year. Piles of poplar were hauled onto the plot and burned in the hope that the ashes would destroy the grubs. Then it was ploughed and harrowed before being planted to barley, wheat, and potatoes. Under Kennedy's direction, the North Garden was established in 1821. Once cleared of stumps and ploughed, it was planted to barley and potatoes also. A liberal application of manure was applied to a third plot of land, the kitchen garden, which was planted to radish, turnip, mustard, cress, parsley, onion, carrot, and "turnip-radish." Cucumbers and melons were planted in the hot bed, and cabbage and lettuce grown in boxes. Pines and raspberries were planted in the south garden, while gooseberries and black currents were attempted on a trial basis. Clearly, considerable experimentation was going on at that early date.

The local fur trade in 1821 was confined to a nearby area. The Cree hunters included young Markark, who was hired specifically to hunt for the post, and Nee ay coo wayoo, ancestor of the Neckaway, Moody, Wesley, and related families of Norway House. Me me na wa hun, son of Uchegan, forebear of the Muminawatum Family, trapped north of Playgreen Lake and east as far as Poplar River where his father spent the winter. Other hunters included Necanee, Caishap, Kae Kee, Ekanescum, and Awashish, who hunted and trapped at such well known places as Sea River, Jack River, and the "Each a way Mah miss" River. They made regular trips to the Hudson's Bay Company Post, and their names were recorded in the journal kept there.

Kennedy remained at Norway House for only a year before being moving to Cumberland House to act as chief factor there. One year tenures, which Colin Robertson felt were "prejudicial to the trade," coincided with the period of company reorganization and instituted a pattern not broken until the 1826 appointment of John MacLeod, who stayed for four years. Other changes in the company were directed by George Simpson who arrived at York Factory in 1820 and became governor of the vast Northern Department the following year. At his insistence, old rivals had to be reconciled, including Kennedy and Alexander McDougall, who had once wounded each other in a duel. Simpson reduced wages and prices and fired incompetent employees. He reduced the amount of alcohol to be used in the trade with the Indians, but compensated them for this loss by giving them more goods for their furs. He made Norway House the depot for the outfits bound for New Caledonia and Mackenzie River. Goods were sent down and stored at Norway House in the autumn, or as soon as the rivers were navigable in spring, and picked up by the brigades when they brought down their furs from the interior. This change did not affect the other districts, including Athabasca and Peace River, which continued to get their outfits at York Factory, but it was a significant step toward making Norway House the key distribution centre for the fur trade.

Change produces tension, and this was certainly the case at Norway House in the winter of 1822/23 when Joseph MacGillivray was in charge.[26] His difficulties began almost as soon as he arrived. Within his first month there, he learned how bitterly the reduction of gratuities,

25. B154/a/9 fo.26d, Norway House Post Journal, 1820-1821, HBCA, PAM.
26. B154/a/10, Norway House Post Journal, 1822-1823, HBCA, PAM.

particularly liquor, was resented by the local Indians. His version of the incident was recorded in his journal.

> Whilst in the act of dealing liquor, Old Curly Head and Son, after a good deal of jawing, attempted to seize the Keg - I seized the young fellow and gave him a gentle push with a request to desist - when the rascal retaliated with a blow - and the Father joining in the Fracas - they got me down and dragged me to the door - here I recovered my legs - and they had reason to regret their attempt not only on the property, but on myself - In their exasperated State, he frequently exclaimed - 'What are you - you are nothing more than a Clerk, and a person of no consequence' - these expressions made me presume Some people in the camp have been busy with my name - which makes these Indians 'audacious.'[27]

MacGillivray later stated in his report that these troubles might have been avoided if he'd had a clerk or an interpreter, or if an old trader had been there. He cautioned against innovation of any kind as dangerous to the trade, "particularly when Indians have so little means to purchase their little necessities."[28]

Lower wages and the resulting hard feelings may have been behind an altercation he had in August 1822 with Mr. Todd's crew members, who were on their way from York Factory with provisions for Red River. After they had received their rations, they approached MacGillivray in a body and demanded more. His refusal prompted them to push forward to "lay violent hands" on him, but others stepped forth to prevent further trouble. Later in the month, he noted that "the Highlanders and Irishmen are extremely troublesome, discontented, and mutinous." One instance illustrates his difficulties. Mr. Clark, a man with a reputation as a bully, struck a Mr. McLeod for arguing with an order and told him to remain in Norway House. McLeod disappeared "either in the woods or Freemen's lodges," but returned the next day and "Mr. Clark in course of the day got Satisfaction" by giving him "a Severe drubbing." During the "chastisement," McLeod "still had the temerity of using threatening and insolent language," and the conflict only ended when he was sent to Swan River the following day.

Among the post employees, innovations undoubtedly created uncertainty, and discontent as well. This resentment they directed at the most visible authority of the Company, namely Mr. MacGillivray himself. His connection with the North West Company would not have endeared him to the old Hudson's Bay Company servants, even though their influence may have been reduced by the increased number of Canadians there. The Canadians may have distrusted MacGillivray, but as most were former employees of the North West Company, too, they were unlikely to combine against him on that account. Also attached to the post were a number of women whom MacGillivray considered a nuisance as well as a drain on resources. On one occasion, he sent two men and a party of women to repair the fishing houses at Jack River. The women were "literally starving here - but not withstanding some absolutely refused to go." Later, they apparently attempted to undermine his authority but they "failed in their machinations" and MacGillivray intended to "take good care these ladies shall not remain in the Fort during Summer to breed disturbances."

27. Ibid., pp. 12, 13.
28. B154/e/2, Norway House Post Journal, 1822-1823, HBCA. PAM.

MacGillivray often recorded his exasperation with employees. In describing Sinclair's efforts to make new nets, he said he was "creeping on remarkably slow." In October, three men "go on remarkably slow with inside work of new house." On November 6, he moved into his new house "which took five months, but the work is well finished considering bad wood and indifferent tradesmen." In actual fact, the work on the house began September 2, which may have seemed five months earlier to the harried trader. A clue to his state of mind can be found in an entry November 21,

> The dogs attacked the Sow last evening and bit her very severely - if a similar circumstance occurs again - I shall not hesitate in giving official notice to quit - by this means we shall avoid unpleasant jarrings.

He was to be "jarred" again however when the sow lost her entire litter to cold, and later choked to death on fish bones. Men questioned his orders, hay was in short supply, the fishery at Jack River produced only half of what it had done the year before, and in October he acquired a clerk who was to stretch his patience to the limit.

Throughout the year, MacGillivray had to deal with the obstinacy of Henry Louttit, who slept late, questioned orders, was slow to complete his work, and sometimes refused to obey directions altogether. After one heated exchange, MacGillivray ordered him out of the house, saying he did not care a damn for his threats. He added, "Had such an occurrence taken place with a North West clerk I would not have hesitated to have gone to extreme measures - but in the present instance I am delicately placed - and would wish for many reasons avoiding a serious quarrel." MacGillivray suspected that Louttit's "extravagant remarks and indiscretions" were key to "many petty acts of disobedience during the winter." He concluded by saying, "positively speaking something is wrong in the upper works of Mr. Louttit and I could not refrain telling him so."

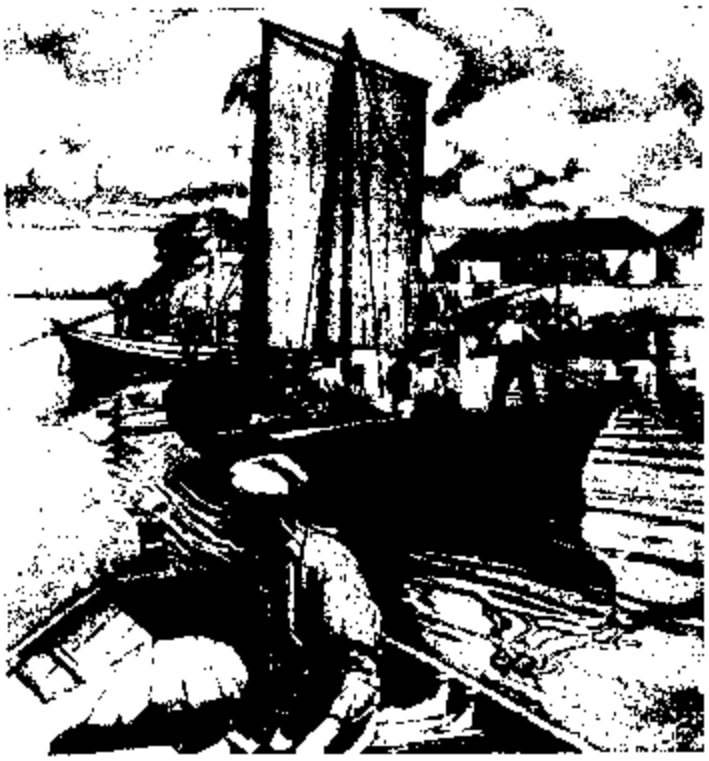
Why MacGillivray felt he was "delicately placed" is not altogether clear, but perhaps Louttit was simply the most vocal of the malcontents. Nevertheless, his caution did not prevent his taking decisive action by firing Louttit when the conflict came to a head. Nor did it prevent him from correcting another employee named Benjamin Proux. Of him he said,

> I had however to dust the jacket of my old friend Proux, who is ever disposed under frivolous pretext of withdrawing to his house, and remaining there for a length of time - It was a fortunate circumstance I had the command of my temper as otherwise he must have seriously felt the effects of my resentment - as it is, he is now laid up and will be probably so for a week.

It is unclear whether a natural cause or the Master's reprimand was responsible for his being "laid up." Later on in May, when Proux and his guide returned from Moose Lake, MacGillvray recorded sarcastically, "he however brought a Keg of Lime much to my surprise - for the Smallest difficulty startles Proux."[29] In his year end report, MacGillivray said of him, "From a long acquaintance with this fellow, I may set him down as inactive, negligent, and careless." And Henry Louttit he described as "disobedient - careless and negligent of the Co's property

29. B154/a/10, Norway House Post Journal, 1822-1823, pp. 4, 9, 10, 11, 22, 28, 31, 34, 48, 58, 59, 66, 68, for the above series of quotations, HBCA, PAM.

- self sufficient - obstinate and headstrong and unfit for the Country." [30]



York boats at Norway House II, typical of the transport industry just beginning its expansion in MacGillivray's day. Artist: W.J. Phillips (courtesy Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba).

Although MacGillivray may simply have recorded more faithfully than most people the standard problems of the man in charge, it does appear that he had more than his fair share of difficulties. Besides those already mentioned, three of his men had serious accidents which kept them from work for a length of time. In the spring, high winds blew the boats from their moorings, and a rapid thaw flooded the kitchen and ice house, threatening the supply of frozen fish. Due to a shortage of hay, the horses had to be put outdoors to forage for themselves. Yet in spite of all his troubles, he was able to inject a little humour into the record when he wrote, "Got the cow shed cleaned - the stench issuing therefrom affecting the olfactory nerves of some of our brunettes."[31] Thankfully, there were a few successes. Besides his own house, another was built for the gentlemen who would be arriving in June. A number of buildings were repaired. And the cow had a calf that lived. All in all, however, these small triumphs were outweighed by the failures throughout the year.

MacGillivray completed a detailed report in 1823 and included a census of the Indians in the district.[32] His description of the boundaries and characteristics of the trading area was much the same as that of his predecessors. He added, however, that dams had been constructed on the "Eats-a-ma-miss" River to enable boats loaded with sixty or seventy pieces to pass with ease. As far as the trade was concerned, Norway House had too few Indians and was too close to Moose Lake to be of much use. But its location made it ideal as a depot for supplies and passing on information from one part of the country to the other. The costs were high, however. Besides the large number of people attached to the post, there was the added expense of feeding the governor and chief factors during their annual visit. The brigade crews also had to be fed on their way to and from York Factory. Since their families were not allowed beyond this point, they were an added burden on the fort's resources. Although there are few references to these families, they could be numerous. An entry in Mr. MacLeod's Journal in 1826 states that four of Mr. Ferries' canoes went off to Montreal with forty-two women, two children, and twenty-four men. The following day, five men left with thirteen women and

30. B154/e/2 fo.10, Norway House Post Report, 1822-1823, HBCA, PAM.
31. B154/a/10, p. 47, Norway House Post Journal, 1822-1823, HBCA, PAM.
32. See Appendix I for a copy of that census. Appendix II containing the 1838 census has been included for comparative purposes.

children.[33]

Governor Simpson had much to say about the expenses incurred at Norway House. In a letter to the London Committee in 1824, he mentioned "large bodies of people collecting there throughout the season, and no craft passing up or down without making a stay of several days, thereby occasioning much loss of time and unnecessary consumption of Provisions."[34] He modified that conclusion in 1826 when he stated in another letter to the Council that "all Families taken from the Interior are left here during the Summer where they are maintained at no expense on Fish."[35] Whitefish was the main source of food to meet the demands of the local establishment and the people of the whole Northern District who stayed for days sometimes before their departure to Canada or York Factory.[36] When whitefish ran out, rations of dried provisions were given out.

Besides providing details on the organization and management of the post, as well as the people living there, MacGillivray also gave an account of the Indian people, whom he described as Algonquins, "Kinshencaixs" and Maskaigons. All were freemen without chiefs, each an independent agent, unacquainted with controls, and not easily corrected. In other words, they did not always agree with MacGillivray or the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company. They were described as straight and well proportioned, living on fish as they were unacquainted with cultivation. Sometimes in the winter when their nets failed, they wandered from lake to lake in search for food, and if they could not find any, they starved. MacGillivray knew very well the horrible consequences of hunger, as he recorded in that year a "remarkable circumstance" at Poplar River involving the freeman Calvet,[37] but it did not make him any more charitable to the people for whom, he alleged, gathering fur was "the least of their thoughts." He said that "the Winter is the Season devoted to pleasure" (another post manager said it was the summer) and "an immoderate love of play predominates." According to him, gambling was common and men would often stake all they owned, including their guns and ammunition.

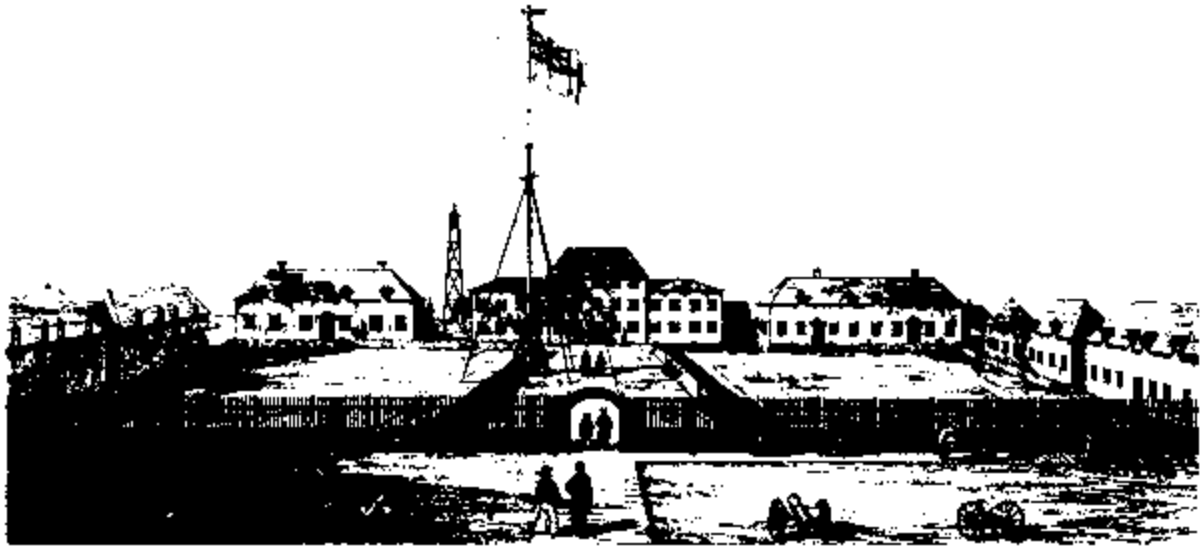
> Their games are invariably followed with a song in which every individual joins, and the drum is incessantly beating as an accompaniment to their voices - to say the least of their vocal powers, it is by no means fascinating - but there is a certain something, which gives animation and encouragement to the gamblers - action and boisterous exclamations, well suited to their occupations form a prominent feature.[38]

MacGillivray wrote that "no people exceed them in tenderness and care" for their children, but the men he judged to be cold and indifferent to their wives, whose work load was severe. This sentiment is so close to one expressed by Sutherland in the 1815 Report that it requires comment.

It was a fact that wives, and women in general, were treated like property in those days, and if

33. B154/a/12 fo.7d, Norway House Post Journal, 1826-1827, HBCA, PAM.
34. D4/87, Gov. Simpson-Official Reports, etc., 10 Aug 1824, para. 60, pp 58-59.
35. D4/89, Gov. Simpson-Official Reports, etc., 20 Aug 1826, para. 52, p 66-67, HBCA, PAM.
36. B154/e/2 fo 8, Norway House Post Report, 1822-1823, HBCA, PAM.
37. Calvet reputedly killed and ate members of his family when crazed with hunger.
38. Ibid., fo.15d.

their lot was difficult among the Indians, it was equally hard among the traders, who often left their wives - and children - to fend for themselves when their usefulness had come to an end. MacGillivray, like many before and since, took to his observations of the Indian people all the biases of his own background. He did not speak their language, understand their culture, or appreciate their suffering, and made no allowances for his own shortcomings when evaluating what he perceived to be theirs.



York Factory, 1853
(courtesy Hudson's Bay Company Archives,
Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

In 1823, MacGillivray went to York Factory, being replaced by Colin Robertson,[39] who recommended in his report[40] that the staff of Norway House be reduced while its role as a depot be retained, adding that its buildings and gardens had been completely repaired and extended to give it the necessary facilities to function as a transshipment point. He noted that the local fishery provided large quantities of whitefish at relatively low cost. Na tor wes cum and Thomas Isham, the contracted fishermen, had produced twelve thousand fish for which they were paid ten shillings a thousand, and the fort nets had yielded nine thousand more. Robertson felt the fishery was capable of greater production in the future. Split Lake had been used the year previously as the depot for the New Caledonia Brigade, and Robertson urged that this not be repeated. Norway House, he argued, was ideally situated on the route inland from York Factory, it had better access to provisions, and it was not subject to late ice as was Split Lake.

Even though Governor Simpson had a low opinion of Colin Robertson, he must have read this report with considerable satisfaction as the recommendation for staff reductions was in

39. B239/0/1, p.44, Minutes of Council, York Factory, 1821-1831, HBCA, PAM.
40. B154/e/3 fo.3, Norway House Post Report, 1824, HBCA, PAM.

keeping with the resolution of the 1823 Meeting of Council at York Factory. In a letter to the London Committee on August 10, 1824, Simpson said that the trade at Norway House did not "require the attention of a Chief Factor with the retinue of Clerks, Interpreters, Servants, and Families which have been usually attached to it." Consequently, he reduced the staff for the district to two clerks and six men, to be divided equally between Norway House and Berens River. This contrasted with the previous season when there had been a chief factor, four clerks and post masters, and seventeen men.[41] Colin Robertson was transferred to Churchill and replaced by Alexander Robertson, clerk, who was in charge until the following year.[42]

A fire occurred on the nineteenth of November 1824, the first report of which was conveyed to Simpson at Island Lake as "the entire destruction of Norway House and Depot of goods which was valuable. The provisions consisting of about 90 bags of pemican being in a store by itself escaped the flames." In fact, the loss had been less severe and was confined mainly to damaged and unsaleable articles that had been in storage, although Simpson noted that "the loss to individuals however was very considerable as it was the Wardrobe repository of almost every person in the country and I have no doubt that the destruction of private property amounted to several thousand pounds." An investigation found the fire to be accidental and Robertson was exonerated of any blame.[43] He was sent to Oxford House the next season and J.P. Pruden, Chief Trader, placed in charge with four men winter and summer. Pruden was directed to reduce the expenses of the visiting brigades by keeping no general mess and holding "no balls or convivial parties" during the summer.[44] Norway House continued to serve as a depot for the Athabasca and Mackenzie River Outfits, and Red River also had goods stored there, but its trade role became insignificant with the transfer of Berens River to the Winnipeg District. Norway House appeared to be moving into obscurity.

John Peter Pruden (1778-1868) c. 1860, James Reid Collection (courtesy Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba).

Pruden made an inspection of the place and ordered major renovations.[45] Old

41. D4/87, Gov. Simpson-Official Reports, etc., 10 Aug. 1824, para. 60, pp. 58-59. HBCA, PAM.
42. B239/k/1, p. 79, 90, Minutes of Council, York Factory, 1821-1831. HBCA, PAM.
43. Ibid., p. 111.
44. Ibid., p. 124-125.
45. B154/a/31, Norway House Post Journal, 1825-1826. HBCA, PAM.

buildings were demolished and the wood reused for repairs as well as to build a new house. There was the usual coming and going of brigades, but since there was no common mess, Pruden supplied the men with nets, so that they could do their own fishing. During the winter his men made two huge nets which were used the following summer. It is unclear how many extra families remained at the post. When a local Indian went to Red River for medical treatment, two women and three children "from the establishment" accompanied his family. Whether they returned is not recorded, but they may have stayed in the colony. When Corrigal, Sinclair, and Benoit went to Jack River to prepare the fishery, they took seven women and nine children with them, indicating that there were still extra people around. Of the local Indian people, Quesques coo hoo and The Cask were hired to hunt for the post and carry packets, which contained mail and company orders. Their families were fed at the post when they were not out hunting or fishing. Pai to way, a brother to Quesques coo hoo, lived with his family below the fort. Nee ay coo way or Neek oo wayo and Eggenescum lived there also. Ma ma ne wattum, Pekecan, Badger, and Huggy Isham were the only others mentioned by name. People seemed to be moving away to other places, leaving behind just a few families of home guard Indians to support the local Hudson's Bay post.

There was one reference to starvation that year. Curly Head and his two sons arrived in February, leaving behind his eldest son, three women, and four children, as they were too weak to walk further. They had been starving for some time and were much reduced by hunger. Pruden sent two men with provisions for these people, who arrived back at the fort soon after and remained a couple of weeks until they regained their strength.

Pruden did not return to Norway House for a second year. He was replaced instead by his son-in-law John MacLeod, mentioned earlier in connection with the defence of Red River. MacLeod, who remained for the next four years, was destined to remove the post to its present site as high water and unstable banks had resulted in serious erosion at the original location. Pruden had recorded that garden stockades had fallen over the bank after severe storms undermined the shoreline, and MacLeod wrote that portions of the garden had been completely washed away.[46] When Simpson passed through on his way to Canada in 1826, he appraised the situation and ordered the post be moved to higher ground.[47] MacLeod took charge of locating a site for the new post and supervised its construction during the next years. The first phase of Norway House history was over. The next few years would see its facilities expanded in recognition of its growing importance as a transshipment centre.

46. B154/a/12 fo.9, Norway House Post Journal, 1826-1827, HBCA, PAM.
47. D4/90, Governor Simpson-Official Reports to the Governor and Committee in London, 25 July 1827, para. 39, p. 66, HBCA, PAM.

Norway House II

After his arrival in July 1826, MacLeod spent the next few weeks supervising the summer transport. Brigades came from all directions, bringing furs down river from the interior or supplies up from York Factory, all of which had to be sorted and repacked for the next leg of the journey. It was an exciting time, when people renewed acquaintances and exchanged gossip after a long winter's separation. Occasionally, the revelry got out of hand. MacLeod complained of one of his men, Canada by name, who was unfit for work the next day because he had spent the entire night carousing with one of the brigades. Because this brigade also left a fire unattended, MacLeod felt the fort needed its stockade rebuilt in order to keep the men further away from the buildings. The measures ordered by Simpson, however, were much more comprehensive and meant the entire establishment had to be relocated.

Chief Factor Donald Ross, 1846,
by Paul Kane, oil on card
(courtesy Provincial Archives of British Columbia)

In the fall MacLeod inspected the shoreline of Playgreen Lake and chose a site four miles below old Jack River House. By spring, several buildings had been constructed and the trade goods moved from the old site.[1] Simpson had hoped that the new location would be near good soil because he meant to try "the experiment of bringing the natives gradually into habits of civilization by diverting their attention to agriculture."[2] Two years later, he was thinking of moving the fort again to Sea River portage, twenty miles further down river, because it was better adapted to agriculture.[3] He gave up this plan, however, because the winter road did not proceed as planned.[4]

MacLeod's site had many advantages which were listed in the 1831 Report[5] of Donald Ross, who had replaced MacLeod as chief trader the year before and was to remain at Norway House for the next twenty years. He described its harbour as "safe and commodious...for crafts of any size and in all weather." The best fisheries on the lake were within one to four miles distance. Timber in sufficient quantity and size for boat and house building could be found on the islands and along the lake shores within five to eight miles distance. The major disadvantage of the place, in Ross's view, was its confined nature due to rock outcrops and swamps. He would have preferred his buildings

1. B154/a/12, Norway House Post Journal, 1826-1827, HBCA, PAM.
2. D4/90, George Simpson, Official Reports to the Governor and Committee in London, 25 July 1827, Para.39, p.66, HBCA, PAM.
3. D4/96, Simpson to Governor and Committee, 30 June 1829, para.33, p.32, HBCA, PAM.
4. D4/97, Simpson to Governor and Committee, 26 August 1830, para. 41, p.30, HBCA, PAM.
5. B154/e/4 fo.8, Norway House Post Report, 1831, HBCA, PAM

spaced further apart because of the ever present danger of fire.

As early as 1828, Simpson had written the London Committee about employing local Indians on the brigades between York Factory and Norway House.[6] By 1830, he was able to report they were being employed as tripmen during the summer months.[7] In 1831, Ross stated that there were only four or five families attached to the post, most of whom subsisted on fish, although the ones that did hunt produced as much as hunters in other districts. He added that "Indians are serviceable in tripping , going with packets, and acting as guides," which was a growing recognition of their worth to the trade.[8] Indeed, their importance grew until there were nearly two hundred men from Norway House employed in the freighting business by the 1870s. This was in contrast to the 1830s, when the main concern was keeping the local people from moving away. As Ross said, "People have been gradually moving to Moose Lake, Swan River and Red River where muskrats are more numerous and living easier."

Norway House became increasingly important in the 1830s and 40s as the depot expanded. In the winter of 1831, for example, eight new boats, a new store for the Athabaska outfit and returns, a powder magazine, and a stable had been built. By the mid 1830s, most of the original buildings had been replaced, and Norway House took on the appearance it was to retain for well over a century. A young clerk named Augustus Peers passing through in 1843 described it as follows,

> The fort, which is built of wood, is enclosed with high stockades. The houses are all of one storey high and being whitewashed present a very neat and pleasing appearance. In front is a green enclosure, intersected by platforms, the main one leading down to the river through the principal store.[9]

Other changes were occurring as well. While Donald Ross was concerned about manning the brigades so necessary to the fur trade, he was also interested in the "moral and religious instruction and education of the Indians and the people of the establishment." So said Simpson in 1840 when he wrote to say that a missionary was to be sent to Norway House and that Ross should render his situation "as comfortable as possible."[10] Although there had been tension between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Church in the past, and Simpson was far from pious, times were changing. A growing number of company people were concerned about the futures of their large families. With the expansion of the mission schools at Red River, they saw opportunities for their children beyond the narrow confines of the fur trade. Unless schools were established at the posts, they would leave the Territories in ever increasing numbers. The Indians were also unsettled. No longer able to control the forces around them, they had suffered much from poverty, disease, and starvation. Because the old ways had not met their needs, they were ready for change and a better life such as promised in the new religions at Red River. Consequently, when a missionary arrived at Norway House in the spring of 1840, they flocked for more information. During Robert Rundle's short stay, his many visitors included six chiefs from York Factory who had come "with the sole purpose of inquiring about this new Great Spirit."[11] It was the hope of the Company that a mission in Norway House would keep its people in the North.

6. D4/92, Simpson to Governor and Committee, 10 July 1828, para. 50, p.95, HBCA, PAM.
7. D4/97, Simpson to Governor and Committee, 26 August 1830, para. 41, p. 69, HBCA, PAM.
8. B154/e/4, Norway House District Report, 1831, HBCA, PAM.
9. W. B. Ready, "Norway House" The Beaver, Mar 1949, p.32
10. D4/25, George Simpson - Correspondence Book Outwards (General), p. 144, HBCA, PAM.
11. Nan Shipley, The James Evans Story (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1966), p.59.

Governor Simpson had earlier denied Roman Catholic requests to found missions, and the Church of England, already established in Red River Colony, lacked resources for expansion. Thus, Simpson worked out an agreement with the British Wesleyan Missionary Society by which the Society appointed and paid the salaries of three missionaries, while the Company provided board and lodgings for them. Although he had met with James Evans and Thomas Hurlburt, two Methodist missionaries from Upper Canada, it was probably his friendship with Dr. Robert Alder, the secretary of the Wesleyan Society, that had the greatest influence on his decision.[12]

Robert Rundle
(courtesy United Church Archives, University of Winnipeg)

James Evans
(courtesy Western Canada Pictorial Index, University of Winnipeg)

Three young men, Robert Rundle, William Mason, and George Barnley, were ordained in March 1840 and sent out to Canada where they were placed under the direction of James Evans. A seasoned missionary who had worked among the Ojibway for several years, Evans was an excellent choice. Not only had he demonstrated organizational and leadership ability, he had developed a written form of Ojibway and published some of his translations into that language. Evans chose two native teachers, Peter Jacobs and Henry Steinhauer, to act as his assistants. Toward the end of April, Jacobs, with his family and two of the missionaries, Rundle and Mason, came west from Montreal with Gov. Simpson's brigade, while Steinhauer travelled with Evans shortly thereafter. In the meantime, George Barnley went separately to Moose Factory, where he remained for several years. Circumstances required that Steinhauer be left

12. Gerald Hutchinson, "British Methodists and the Hudson's Bay Company 1840-1854," Prairie Spirit (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), pp. 28-29.

at Lac la Pluie with William Mason, while Jacobs travelled on with Evans to Norway House where Robert Rundle had organized the mission and performed his first baptism by the end of May. When Evans' boat docked there in July, he found everything in order. By October, he had sent Rundle to Fort Edmonton and acquired the services of Thomas Hassell as interpreter. The work had begun.

Under Evans' direction, a flourishing mission, named Rossville in honour of the factor, was established on a point of land roughly two miles distance from the fort. Before long, a church, a school, and a house for Peter Jacobs, the teacher, had been built. Among the earliest converts were members of the Sinclair, Wesley, Muminawatum, Curleyhead or Budd, Coustatag, and Papanekis families, all of whom lived nearby and worked for the company in one capacity or another. Henry Budd, who was a company fisherman, acted as Evans' dog driver and accompanied him on many missionary journeys. Thomas Mestagon, Johnny Oig, and Harry Coustatag were among the young men employed as guides and interpreters. So successful was the mission that Rev. George Young was able to record in a report over thirty years later,

> I found the first baptism recorded on the 28th day of May 1840 by Mr. Rundle, and the last on the 3rd January 1875 by myself. Between these dates one thousand five hundred and sixty baptized were registered...probably one thousand Indians now consider this place and neighbourhoods adjacent, their home...At present, there is a membership of 381, of whom 47 are on trial, making a net increase of sixty-four. There are eighteen classes with leaders and assistant leaders, one day school and one Sunday School at Rossville, and one day school and a Sabbath school at Crooked Turn, about 8 miles away, in these schools there are about 150 scholars.[13]

Evans had a powerful impact on the missionary work. Armed with an inventive mind and resourceful to an extraordinary degree, he developed Cree syllabics within months of his arrival, so that the people could read the scriptures in their own language.[14]

> Obtaining the thin sheets of lead that were around the tea-chests of the fur traders, he melted them down into little bars, and from them cut out the first type. His ink was made out of the soot of the chimneys, and his first paper was birch bark.[15]

Using a modified fur press, and aided by Jacobs, Hassell, and others familiar with the Cree language, he printed and bound a hundred copies of a small volume of hymns. News of this "talking birch bark" spread rapidly up and down the river systems, and people of all ages were soon learning how to read. By the mid 1840s, syllabics were in common use as far away as York Factory where they appeared regularly in the Church records from that date. When Jacobs was transferred to Lac la Pluie in 1842, Mason and Steinhauer came to Rossville, where the latter worked with John Sinclair on the translation of the Bible. Sinclair, who had some education, was a minor clerk in the company prior to his work as a translator. When Mason married Sophia, a daughter of Gov. Thomas Thomas, another valuable assistant was added. Fluent in her mother's language and educated, Sophia rendered excellent service over the years. Still, progress was slow.

13. Egerton Ryerson Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams and Northern Campfires, p.287.

14. Recent research suggests the Algonquians may have possessed a syllabic script in ancient times. Dr. Barry Fell, an internationally known epigrapher, claims to have used Cree syllabics to decipher ancient Basque inscriptions from Europe. If his assertions are correct, the symbols used by Evans in his system of writing were already known. This possibility raises a host of unanswered questions. See Barry Fell, Bronze Age America, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1982) pp. 146-152. and The Epigraphic Society Occasional Publications, Vol. 16, 1987, pp. 101-108.

15. Young, Indian Wigwams , p. 141

INITIALS.	SYLLABLES.				FINALS.
	ā	e	oo	ah	° ow
a	ᐁ	ᐃ	ᐅ	ᐊ	X Christ
p	ᐯ	ᐱ	ᐳ	ᐸ	' p
t	ᑌ	ᑎ	ᑐ	ᑕ	ˊ t
k	ᑫ	ᑭ	ᑯ	ᑲ	ˋ k
ch	ᒉ	ᒋ	ᒍ	ᒐ	- ch
m	ᒣ	ᒥ	ᒧ	ᒪ	‹ m
n	ᓀ	ᓂ	ᓄ	ᓇ	› n
s	ᓭ	ᓯ	ᓱ	ᓴ	^ s
y	ᔦ	ᔨ	ᔪ	ᔭ	ᕐ r
					ᓬ l

The dot over any syllable lengthens the vowel sound.

The Cree Syllabic Alphabet

Teaching and other duties demanded attention, and a proper printing press did not arrive until 1845. Nevertheless, the work of translating, editing, and printing continued until the entire Bible was eventually written in the Cree language.

Evans journeyed all over the west, from the prairies to the Athabaska, supervising the work and learning more about the native people. He went by dog team or canoe, and here again his inventive mind was at work. While at York Factory on a missionary visit, he made a canoe of sheet tin, which was called "Island of Light" by the Cree because it reflected the sun's rays as it glided along the lakes. Donald Ross was apprehensive about this latest invention. In a letter to James Hargrave he said, "I would not even cross the river in that Tin Machine, not for all the gold that it could carry. It has been remade here, and now looks like a canoe, but it will never be a safe craft." Evans was to prove him wrong, however, as he travelled thousands of miles using that light boat, always taking a soldering iron along just in case there was a need for repairs on the way.

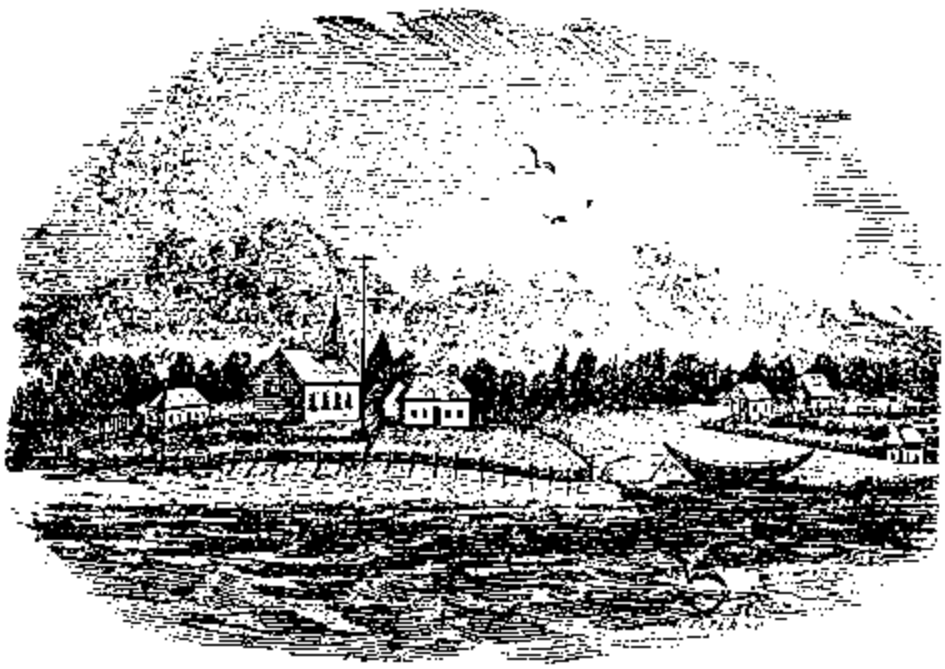
For a time, relations between the mission and the Hudson's Bay Company were cordial. Evans banned the use of alcohol among church members, an imposition which met with approval from Donald Ross locally and the governors in London as well. He also urged an end to the custom of doling out rum when the brigades arrived at the fort, arguing that it led to quarrels and fighting. He suggested food or clothing be used in its place, an idea to which Ross was sympathetic, although he feared it would offend the brigades. On another matter, however, the views of the Church met with greater resistance from officialdom. Evans taught that it was wrong to work on Sunday, an idea which interfered with a long standing policy requiring the tripmen to work seven days a week during the short summer season. Uncompromising on principle, Evans challenged the company on the matter, and the Christian tripmen were caught between the demands of their employer and the requirements of their religion. At one point in the dispute, when Ross was unable to obtain a crew to take him to the council meeting at Red River, he complained to Simpson, who was furious at this challenge to his authority. Evans had earlier moved his family from the fort to Rossville as relations deteriorated between the Church and the Company. Now Simpson wanted him gone altogether and wrote Alder for his recall.

Besides troubles with the Company, Evans had to contend with William Mason, who differed with

him on a number of matters, and Peter Jacobs, whose moral conduct was not above reproach. Indeed, Evans himself became the subject of vicious gossip on the same grounds and although he was cleared, the issue roused bitter controversy in the community. In poor health and still grieving for his friend Thomas Hassell, whom he had accidentally shot the year before, Evans welcomed the letter recalling him to England. In the weeks that followed, measles invaded the land and carried off thirty people before it spent itself. Included among its victims were some of his chief accusers, and people were led to speculate that it was divine retribution for the evil that had been done. Evans and his wife worked day and night nursing the sick and burying the dead, while at the same time preparing for their own departure to Canada. As the day came closer, people arrived to say their good-byes. When the Evans shoved off for the last time, they lined the shore and wept.

Once in England, Evans met with Society officials and cleared his name. Later, while on a lecture tour in support of the missions, he died suddenly of a heart attack. His intent had been to return to Norway House; now his work had to be carried on by others. Evans was never forgotten, however, for his part in establishing the mission and giving the Cree a written language, and in 1955 his ashes were returned to Norway House where they lie near the church that bears his name.

William Mason remained in charge of Rossville for the next eight years and supervised the translation of the Bible, ably assisted in the effort by his wife Sophia, Henry Steinhauer, and John Sinclair. After he returned to the Church of England and transferred to York Factory, he published the Cree translation under his name alone. This deeply offended the Methodists, who



Rossville Mission, 1856
(from The Field and the Work, Semmens, 1884)

felt quite rightly that Evans and others had not been properly acknowledged. Years later, Mason wrote,

> In the translation of the Bible into the Cree language, I was assisted by Henry Steinhaer and John Sinclair who were at the time school master and interpreter at Rossville Station where I was minister, and by other Indians. The final revision was the joint work of myself and my wife. I never claimed to be the inventor of the Cree syllabary, that honour belongs to the Rev. James Evans.[16]

Mason's defection to the Anglicans upset the Methodists, who saw him as a turncoat. But the return to the Church of his birth was understandable. Barnley had gone to England in 1847 and Rundle in 1848, leaving him alone of the original group of missionaries sent to Canada. The British Wesleyans transferred the mission to the Canadian Methodists with whom Mason had no close contact. He had married into the Red River Establishment which was predominantly Anglican, and numbered among his friend some of the Colony's ministers. Finally, by the 1850s, when the Anglicans were ready to resume missionary labours in the North, Mason was ready to join them.

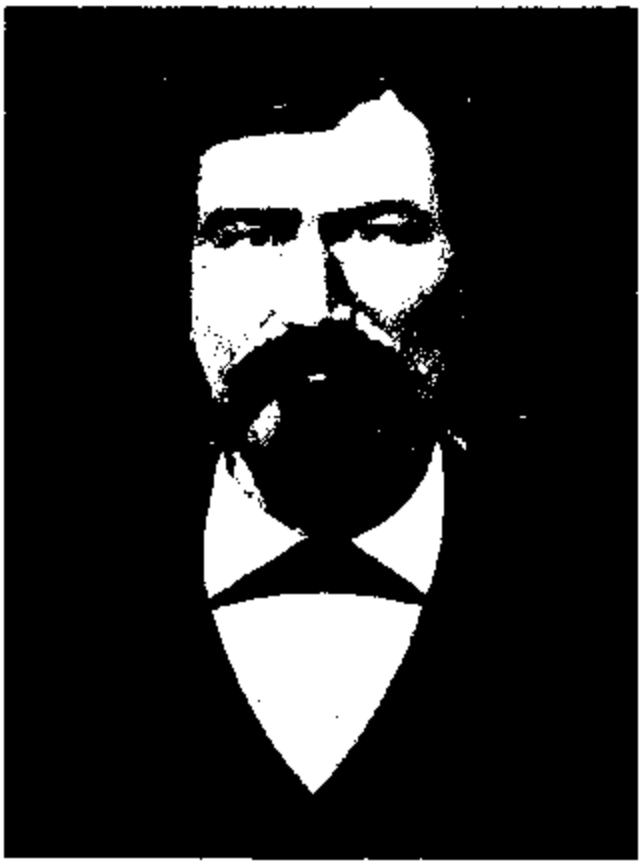
The Church of England Mission at York Factory became well established and numbered among its members such stalwart families as the Apetagons, Keamawinineus, Arthursons, and others, who later migrated to Norway House and established the church there. The Anglicans adopted Cree syllabics with enthusiasm. Much translation work was done jointly by the Rev. James Hunter and his wife Jean Ross, eldest daughter of Donald Ross, who had learned the syllabics at Norway House as a young woman.[17] Indeed, Norway House people made a significant contribution to the missions, both Methodist and Anglican, a fact not generally known.

Henry Bird Steinhauer
(courtesy United Church of Canada, Victoria University)

Henry Steinhauer remained at Norway House or nearby for several years after Evans returned to England. While there, he continued to work in his quiet way as teacher and translator. And it may be that this remarkable man never received the credit he deserved. As an orphaned Ojibway boy, he had been raised by the famous missionary William Case and educated by an American whose only stipulation was that the boy take his surname. This Henry did. A highly intelligent student, he received an excellent classical education, living proof, in a

16. G. Hutchinson, British Methodists, p. 37.
17. Ibid., p. 39.

day when it was commonly believed otherwise, that a native Indian was capable of learning. He had a working knowledge of Cree, Ojibway, English, Greek, and Hebrew, which no doubt served him well in the translating work he undertook. At the age of fourteen, he assumed his first teaching position at the Credit Mission in Upper Canada and lived with the Evans family there until they came west to Norway House. In 1846, he married Jessie Muminawatum at Norway House and fathered five children before moving to Saskatchewan. Two sons later became well known Methodist ministers in Western Canada, and a descendant became the first native lieutenant governor of Alberta. In 1850, he opened the mission at Oxford House, and after a speaking tour to England in 1854, he was ordained the following year. When the Canadian Methodist Conference took over the missions in Western Canada, he was appointed to resume the work begun in Alberta by Robert Rundle. In 1855, he joined his old friend Ben Sinclair, who had been sent out west earlier by William Mason to assist Rundle. Relocating the mission from Lac la Biche to Whitefish Lake, Steinhauer and Sinclair developed a native Christian community over the next thirty years. After years of service, these good friends and Christian workers died the same weekend and were buried in a common grave.[18]



Benjamin Sinclair
(courtesy United Church of Canada, Victoria University)

Both men were pioneers in the new Christian movement. John McDougall, who taught at Norway House in the early 1860s, met Ben Sinclair at Whitefish Lake Mission many years later, and described him as follows

> Big, strong and honest, and a mighty hunter, was old Ben Sinclair. In his use of English he made "r" "n," and "t" "d," and used "he" for "she." For instance (introducing his wife), he said, "He very fine wo-man, my Mangened," (Margaret being his wife's name.)[19]

And as for Henry Steinhauer, people still spoke of him with love and respect at Norway House, when E.R. Young was there in the late 1860s/early 1870s. Many attributed to him the influence that changed their lives.[20]

The mission was successful in drawing people to Norway House, much to the satisfaction of the

18. Ibid., p. 41.
19. John McDougall, Forest, Lake and Prairie: Twenty Years of Frontier Life in Western Canada - 1842-62, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press), p. 152.
20. E. R. Young, By Canoe and Dog Team, p.20-21.

Company. Throughout the 1840s, the community experienced a boom of sorts. More freight than ever - much of it belonging to free traders Andy McDermott and Thomas Sinclair - passed through by York boat on its way to the expanding colony at Red River. Freighting provided summer employment for the local people as well as newcomers from York Factory, Oxford House, and other northern places. It was not to last, however, as alternate routes, new

Norway House, 1858, from a watercolour by W. H. E. Napier
(courtesy Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

methods of transport, and changes in Hudson's Bay Company policy dealt a blow to freighting from which it never recovered. By the 1860s decline had set in; by the 1870s the era was over. When the company decided to bring in its supplies for the inland trade by Winnipeg, instead of York Factory, and shifted from York boats to steam navigation, it put between 130 and 140 men out of work at Norway House. Another 40 or 50 more were added when the yearly brigade to the Mackenzie River District was discontinued as well. It was a disaster to the local economy because freighting had been the chief support of these men and their families. While fishing for subsistence had been practised by most, agriculture had never advanced beyond gardening. The soil was poor and the season too short, so that crop failure was common. Commercial hunting had never been able to employ more than a handful of the people in the area. Commercial fishing was just starting on Lake Winnipeg, and it was already under the control of others.[21]

The community was united in its desire to respond to the crisis, but divided as to what should be done. Most of the people wanted a treaty with the government, so that they could get some

21. For more information on commercial fishing, see Frank Tough, "Manitoba's Commercial Fisheries: A Study in Development." (Dept. of Geography, McGill University, Montreal, 1980).

assistance in making the adjustment to the loss of the transport business, but argument occurred over the location of a reserve. One group wished to remain in Norway House, while the other wanted to relocate to Grassy Narrows in order to begin farming. This had been advocated first in the 1840s when James Evans and some of the chiefs went to explore the area.[22] When the treaty was signed on the twenty-fourth of September, 1875, the division between the two groups was recognized and provisions made for two reserves, one at the mouth of the Fisher River, about forty miles north of Grassy Narrows, and the other at Norway House. An exodus of people to Fisher River began shortly thereafter and continued for several years. By 1878, the size of the reserve at Norway House was determined on the basis of a population of 567 people at 32 acres each for a total of 18,144 acres, which was a quarter of the allotment specified in Treaties Three and Four and "provided less resources to deal with the post 1870 conditions" these people had to face.[23]

It was not from generosity that the government cooperated in settling a treaty with the people at Norway House. It wanted to end native land claims, so that there could be no challenge to the development of steam navigation on Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan River. And no challenge to the establishment of saw mills, mines, and commercial fishing ventures either. Even the location of the Fisher River Reserve was altered because the desired spot had been designated for Icelandic settlers. Sadly, the government only negotiated at its convenience. The Cree from such places as York Factory, Nelson House, and Oxford House had to wait until after the turn of the century before their requests to enter into treaty were addressed. In the meantime, they continued to move south to Norway House in search of work as well as better opportunities for their children. The end of freighting had hurt them badly and the resources of the country were too limited to provide a means of survival. In 1908, two hundred and twenty-seven more names were added to the treaty pay lists at Norway House, while the remainder were absorbed into the mixed blood population and given the chance to apply for scrip.

Halfbreed Scrip was a one time payment in money or land in compensation for any claims the people of mixed race might have on the government. It had been used in Manitoba in 1870 when it became a province, and in 1885 when the Hudson's Bay Territories were transferred to Canada. There were many reasons why people did not enter treaty. Some had intermarried with Hudson's Bay Company employees for generations and considered themselves a separate group. Others felt there would be disadvantages in taking Indian status. These people were often encouraged in their fears by people who came into the North from Winnipeg and elsewhere to buy up scrip at very low prices. Hudson's Bay Company people also became involved in this unsavory business, and to the credit of the company, they were censured for it. When persons proved their right to scrip, they were issued certificates which could be exchanged for money or land, whatever they had chosen. Unfortunately, land scrip was good only for a homestead on the prairies far away from the isolated northern posts. Consequently, it was of little real value to the people unless they intended to move hundreds of miles away and become farmers. There was no thought at the time of giving the people hunting land near their own homes, and no doubt for the reason that it might be of some future value to the government. The people sold the scrip for what they could get for it, often much less than its face value, and the buyers took the certificates south and sold them again at huge profits to settlers who were going into Saskatchewan and Alberta. It is not much wonder that a whole generation of mixed blood people were embittered by the way scrip was

22. Shipley, James Evans, p. 178.

23. See P. Tough, "Economic Aspects of Aboriginal Title in Northern Manitoba: Treaty 5 Adhesions and Metis Scrip," (University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon 1987) for a detailed study.

handled. The injustices created have yet to be redressed.

There were real difficulties in obtaining scrip as three instances from Norway House will show. One involved the sons of Edmund Beioley, who had to go to great lengths to prove their mixed heritage.[24] They were required to obtain sworn statements from several people who had known their family for three generations, and to enter into lengthy correspondence with the government

DUPLICATE.

No. 1530 Form A.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, CANADA.

NORTH WEST HALF-BREED COMMISSION.

Norway House 23rd Aug. 1887

I hereby Certify, under the powers vested in me by an Order in Council dated 21st March, 1887 that Alexander Budd a Half-Breed, has proved to my satisfaction that he was residing in the North West Territories previous to the 15th day of July, 1870, now ceded by the Indians, and under Sub-clause (E) of Clause 81 of the Dominion Lands Act, 1883, and the Orders in Council of the 30th March, 1885, and the 1st March, 1886, is entitled at this date to Scrip to the amount of Two hundred & forty dollars.

The Scrip called for by this Certificate, amounting to Two hundred & forty dollars, will be payable to bearer, and will be delivered to the person producing this Certificate. Said Scrip will be accepted at par in payment of Dominion Lands.

A. Gordon
Chairman Half-Breed Commission.

Money Scrip issued to Alexander Budd at Norway House in 1887

24. Dept. of the Interior, Applications of 1886-1906, R.G.15, Volume 1336, Bellcourt - Boiley, Claim nos. 2012 and 2013, PAC.

before their case was proven. John Bilton of Fisher River was given scrip after involved bureaucratic wrangling, while at the same time his brother Thomas was accepted into treaty at Norway House.[25] Generally, physical characteristics, life style, and community acceptance had a bearing on the case, but not always.

In the case of Donald and Alice Grieve, an injustice occurred because the spirit of the law was violated.[26] They were denied scrip because they had not been living in Red River in 1870, but were living there in 1885. According to the letter of the law, one had to be living in Red River in 1870 to be eligible for scrip there. And in order to be eligible for scrip in 1885, one had to be living in the Hudson's Bay Territories at the time.

The Grieves did not fit into either category. Donald and Alice were the children of Thomas Grieve and his wife Jane Setter, both of mixed European and Cree background. These two children were born at Norway House in the early 1870s when Thomas was working for the Hudson's Bay Company; consequently, they were not entitled to scrip at Red River. But the family moved to St. Andrews in the Red River Settlement around 1875 and remained there, so that they were ineligible to receive scrip at Norway House, which was part of the territories the Hudson's Bay Company turned over to Canada in 1885. It was not enough to be born in Norway House, they had to be living there in 1885 in order to receive scrip. In short, even though they met all the other criteria, they were never in the right place at the right time.

Probably one of the saddest consequences of the government's handling of the situation at Norway House was the creation of two separate peoples by decree. It is relatively easy to prove that the people of Norway House, whether treaty or non-treaty, are the result of a mixing of two races over three hundred years, a mixing that continues today. By separating them on the bases used, the community was divided, creating barriers which ultimately weakened its voice. During the twentieth century, when it has been essential for small, isolated communities to fight with every resource they have to obtain recognition from government, this division has often worked to the detriment of everyone involved.

From its small beginnings, Norway House rose to a prominent place in the fur trade and became a centre of the western missions by the middle of the 19th century. With the decline of freighting and the end of the trade route to the north, it went into decline from which it had not recovered by the turn of the century. The 20th Century has seen a growing community, but one which has not as yet been able to regain the status of the past. It is to be hoped that in the 21st Century its people will find the key.

25. Ibid, Claim nos. 863 and 867.
26. Ibid, Claim nos. 1489 and 1490, PAC.

APPENDIX

Appendix I: 1823 Census of Norway House District

The following census is extremely difficult to read in the original; consequently, the spelling of names may be inaccurate.

	NAME				TRIBES	HUNTING GROUNDS
MEN		WOMEN	BOYS	GIRLS		
1	Mistumisk, Head of Family	1	3	3	Maskegon	Northside L
2	1st son	1	-	-	Maskegon	Northside L
3	2nd son	-	-	-	Maskegon	Northside L
4	3rd son	-	-	-	Maskegon	Northside L
5	Uchegun, Head of Family	1	2	1	Maskegon	Limestone Lakes
6	Memenawatum, 1st son	1	1	2	Maskegon	Limestone Lakes
7	Kenaw enemas, 2nd son	-	-	-	Maskegon	Limestone Lakes
8	Kee kee wa thinish, Head of Family	1	1	-	Maskegon	Cross Lake
9	Nuay coowayou, 1st son	2	5	4	Maskegon	Jack River
10	Neman a sethenew, 2nd son	-	-	-	Maskegon	Jack River
11	Musquash	1	1	2	Maskegon	Cross Lake
12	Maccain coonaayou	1	1	1	Maskegon	Cross Lake
13	Akingescum	1	2	3	Maskegon	Jack River
14	1st son	-	-	-	Maskegon	Jack River
15	Quesques Kahoo	2	2	1	Maskegon	Jack River
16	Pritawow, 1st brother	1	1	2	Maskegon	Limestone Lake
17	2nd brother	-	-	-	Maskegon	Limestone Lake
18	Markark	1	-	1	Maskegon	Limestone Lake
19	Nator wes cum	1	2	-	Maskegon	Jack River
20	Pah pe thuckes, Head of Family	1	2	2	Maskegon	Limestone Lake
21	Chamuch	2	3	-	Maskegon	Little Winnipeg
	Widows & Orphans	5	3	6	Maskegon	Little Winnipeg
22	Peke kan, Head of Family	2	-	1	Pelican	Cross Lake
23	Miskika nib, 1st son	2	-	4	Pelican	Cross Lake
24	Nican nee, 2nd son	3	5	3	Pelican	Jack Lake
25	Kee Kitchoras cum, 1st son	-	-	-	Pelican	Jack Lake
26	Namuch, Head of Family	1	2	-	Pelican	Jack Lake
27	Miss chis gruny gis, son	1	2	-	Pelican	Jack Lake
28	Miss Kee, son	-	-	-	Pelican	Jack Lake
29	Tchepewake cappo, son	-	-	-	Pelican	Jack Lake
30	Wakemuch	-	-	-	Pelican	Jack Lake
31	Eachewayan	-	-	-	Pelican	Jack Lake
	Widows & Orphans	3	2	3	Pelican	Jack Lake
32	Thomas Isham, Half Breed	1	-	-	Pelican	Jack River
33	Keg, Head of Family	1	2	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
34	Keg's son-in-law	1	-	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
35	Little Bird	1	-	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
36	Memeakis, Head of Family	2	-	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
37	Sr. 1st son	1	2	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
38	Thomas	1	-	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
39	Jamacas	1	3	1	Pelican	Deers Lake
40	Indian legs, Head of Family	1	-	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
41	1st son	1	-	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
42	2nd son	1	-	-	Pelican	Deers Lake

	NAME				TRIBES	HUNTING GROUNDS
MEN		WOMEN	BOYS	GIRLS		
43	Squirel, Head of Family	1	-	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
44	Bear, 1st (?) son	1	-	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
45	2nd son	1	-	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
46	Bear, Head of Family	1	2	2	Pelican	Deers Lake
47	Je Iess	1	1	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
48	Batees	1	1	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
49	Penitess, Head of Family	1	-	-	Pelican	Deers Lake
50	Mentawesk	1	2	1	Pelican	Thunder lake
51	Kepeass, Head of Family	2	3	2	Pelican	Thunder lake
52	Mantowesk's Son	-	-	-	Pelican	Thunder lake
53	I anke cut	2	1	2	Pelican	Thunder lake
54	Hoskeniyo	1	2	2	Pelican	Thunder lake
55	Hookenass	1	4	-	Pelican	Thunder lake
56	Little Frog	1	-	2	Pelican	Thunder lake
57	Storterry, Head of Family	1	2	1	Pelican	Winnipeg
58	1st son	1	-	-	Pelican	Winnipeg
59	2nd son	-	-	-	Pelican	Winnipeg
60	Little Swan, Head of Family	1	4	1	Pelican	Winnipeg
61	Kene sue	-	-	-	Pelican	Winnipeg
62	Kewe cappo	1	3	1	Pelican	Winnipeg
63	Jacob	-	-	-	Pelican	Winnipeg
64	Nicawatch	1	2	1	Pelican	Winnipeg
65	Pis quachiss	1	2	1	Pelican	Jack Head
66	Gislet	1	1	1	Pelican	Jack Head
67	Newo litch	2	-	-	Pelican	Jack Head
	Widows & Orphans	4	1	-	Pelican	Jack Head
68	White Coats, Head of Family	2	-	-	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
69	White Coats' brother	1	-	-	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
70	Ietum	2	-	-	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
71	Fitty	2	4	2	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
72	Quequn ces	-	-	-	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
73	Sturgeon, Head of Family	1	3	1	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
74	1st son	1	-	2	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
75	2nd son	1	-	1	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
76	Hoskenegas 1st son	-	-	-	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
77	Picus	2	2	2	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
78	Jem	1	-	-	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
79	Brother	-	-	-	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
80	Chis enwapin	1	-	-	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
81	Pickack	-	-	-	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
82	Yellow head	-	-	-	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
83	White head	1	-	-	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
	Widows & Orphans	5	2	4	Moose Indians	Sandy Point Lake
84	Sharp Eyes, Head of Family	1	2	2	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
85	Son	-	-	-	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
86	Warrier	1	3	2	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
87	Son	1	1	-	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
88	Passage	2	2	1	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
89	Namanwayoo	1	-	1	Kings fishers	Bad Lake

	NAME				TRIBES	HUNTING GROUNDS
M E N		W O M E N	B O Y S	G I R L S		
90	Heart	-	1	-	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
91	Son	1	-	-	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
92	Arrow Legs, Head of Family	3	3	4	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
93	1st son	1	1	1	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
94	2nd	-	-	-	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
95	Hookanose	1	3	1	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
96	Kenegum	-	-	-	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
97	Keliahemit	1	-	-	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
	Widows & Orphans	1	1	-	Kings fishers	Bad Lake
97	TOTAL POPULATION	109	106	81		
	Summary of Population Groups					
21	Maskegons or Swampie	23	29	28		
45	Pelicans	51	49	29		
16	Moose Indians	20	11	12		
14	Kings Fishers	14	17	12		
1	Half Breed	1				
97		109	106	81		

Appendix II: 1838 Census of Norway House District

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	HUNTERS	WIVES	SONS	DAUGHTERS	FEMALE RELATIONS	TOTAL
1. Amckescum	Son of #26	1	1	2			4
2. Anganaguas	Son of #7	1					1
3. Boodjum	" " #25	1	1	1			3
4. Custatag	Head of Family	1	1	2		2	6
5. Curly Head	" " "	1	1				2
6. Eacutakeshue	" " "	1	1	2	1		5
7. Eakseesas	" " "	1	1	3	4		9
8. Eggenescum	" " "	1	1	1			3
9. Fooley	" " "	1	2	4	2		9
10. Hugeemawhachach	" " "	1					1
11. Hococheek	" " "	1	1	1			3
12. Kanawethemau Ethinue	Son of #5	1					1
13. Keepitchewescun	" of #26	1	1	1	1		4
14. Kanahappenau	Head of Family	1	1	1	1		4
15. Kamisinahak	" " "	1					1
16. Kakeekeacappo	" " "	1	1	2		2	6
17. Mamenawatum	" " "	1	1	4	2		8
18. Meakcacappo	Son of "	1					1
19. Maskeethuncis	" " #8	1	1	1	1		4
20. Maskepeesquan	Head of Family	1	1	3	2		7
21. Moody	Son of #25	1	1				2
22. Miskeecunit	Head of Family	1	2	4	3		10
23. Misteagun	Nephew of #4	1					1
24. Neneeniwapimousis	Son of #5	1					1
25. Neecaway	Head of Family	1	2	3	3		9
26. Neecanic	" " "	1	3	2	1		7
27. Napesis	Son-in-law of #22	1	1				2
28. Pappapathekess	Head of Family	1	1	5	1		8
29. Peasascuscum	Son of #35	1	1				2
30. Petasse	Head of Family	1	1		2		4
31. Peteacucappo	Son of #20	1					1
32. Peneshue	Son of #6	1	1				2
33. Pemooteassue	Head of Family	1	1	3			5
34. Shawenacappo	" " "	1	2	1			4
35. Sewiassin	" " "	1	2	2	1		6
36. Seweycuniass	" " "	1	2	4	2		9
37. Tepwatum	Son of #5	1					1
38. Te-Equan	Head of Family	1	1	2			4
39. Teteepeccunip	Son of #36	1	1	1			3
40. Ucheepemoys	Son of #28	1					1
41. Whiskeesacco	Head of Family	1	1	1	3		6
42. Uchenahays Son		1	1				2
43. Wisquash	Stepson of #41	1	1			1	3
44. Wiskeneegishee		1	1	1			3

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	HUNTERS	WIVES	SONS	DAUGHTERS	FEMALE RELATIONS	TOTAL
Widows and Children of the following deceased Indians							
Ichaw			1	2	1		4
John Petrie			1	1	2		4
Sheesip			1	3	2		6
Total		44	45	63	35	5	192