he said, and should that happen "we may consider the Snake Party lost."[532]

The exact number of people in the party as it was finally organized is difficult to determine, since Work's statements at different times are not in complete agreement. However, on January 22, 1833, he said the company consisted of 28 men, 22 women, 44 children, and 6 Indians, a total of 100; and this figure was certainly very close to the mark. As late as a few days before his departure from Fort Vancouver Work had not intended to bring his own family with him as he had on his two previous Snake expeditions. "The misery is too great," he wrote in a personal letter.[533] But when the party rode away from Walla Walla his mixed-blood wife, Josette, and their "three little girls" were among those present.

Proceeding in a generally southern direction by a route which cannot be precisely traced from the rather sparse information provided by Work's journal, the brigade crossed the Umatilla River and then traversed the upper tributaries of John Day River over mountainous terrain to the headwaters of Silvies River. Progress was painfully slow due to the continued illness of the people. On the upper waters of Silvies River the brigade paused a day while the men gathered and trimmed lodge poles, an important step before entering the unforested desert ahead of them. As the party descended Silvies River beaver were caught in modest numbers, but hovering Indians stole an occasional trap and threatened the horses.

Following Silvies River nearly to its mouth in Malheur Lake, Ogden went directly south to the north shore of Harney Lake, which he reached on October 7. He had intended to retrace his old route from Silvies River to the Humboldt and then to search south of it for the river vaguely mentioned to Ogden by the Indians. But he considered the season "too far advanced" and feared that the Humboldt would be frozen over and thus not available for trapping by the time he could reach it. So he gave up all idea of going south and of entering the Central Valley of California at its southern end. He altered his plans and decided to proceed "straight to the Bonaventura," that is to Pit River and the Sacramento.[534]

A hard march westward across the desert to Wagontire Mountain and then southwest brought the company to Lake Abert. Continuing south along the west side of the lake, Work marched in the same general direction to Goose Lake, which Work called "pit lake." Provisions began to grow short during this leg of the journey, and four men each killed a horse to eat. Work was critical of this waste, accusing the men of having been "very improvident" in not husbanding their supplies.[535]

Passing down the east shore of Goose Lake, the brigade reached Pit River, which was descended, though not always closely, as far as the present Hat Creek. On November 12 the brigade turned southward up Hat Creek to about the site of today's Hat Creek Ranger Station. Following a route known to two of his men, Work left this stream and crossed the Cascade Range to the southwest between

Burney Mountain and Stony Butte, north of Lassen Peak. Reaching the drainage of Cow Creek, he followed it down to the Sacramento River, where he arrived on November 18, 1832. Game was now quite abundant. "All hands are living well," Work commented with evident relief.[536]

From a campsite about opposite today's Anderson, Work sent his men upstream to fashion canoes from the trunks of large pine trees. This was, in his words, "laborious work."[537] But the bourgeois considered the Sacramento to be too much in flood to be trapped by any other means. At last the craft were finished, and the "canoe party" was started down the Sacramento on November 25. Work and the remaining company set out down the east side of the river the same day.

Some ten miles north of Butte Creek Work was surprised to meet two French-Canadians on their way to Fort Vancouver with messages. These men belonged to the Company's Southern Party under Michel Laframboise, who had been sent into California to hunt along the coast but who had moved to the Sacramento Valley and trapped it from Butte Creek to the San Francico Bay area. This news was a bitter blow to Work. "After all our long journey here," he lamented, "there are no beaver remaining for our party." He was further discouraged to learn that a company of American trappers under Ewing Young was also operating in the valley. Work sent off messengers to find Laframboise with a note "expressing a wish to see him as soon as possible that I may determine . . . where it will be most eligible to winter."[538] Undoubtedly he intended to say

more than that when he saw Michel face to face!

At Butte Creek the canoes were abandoned. The crews had caught few beaver, and there seemed to be no prospect of taking more in the "big river." Turning east on December 9, 1832, the brigade crossed the valley floor to the Marysville Buttes, a prominent landmark which Work termed simply "the bute." Here the party went into camp, held up by a massive rise in the Sacramento River which turned the "whole lower plain" into a lake. Game was plentiful, however, since the animals, particularly elk, took refuge on the [illegible] high ground from the flood.

Michel Laframboise arrived from his camp "below" on December 27. It was determined that the leader of the Southern Party should send off some of his men to scout out a good route to drier land west of the Sacramento. Work was to go farther downstream and cross the river as soon as the weather permitted. With this end in mind, the Snake Party moved to the Feather River on December 31 after the waters had receded somewhat. The next day, being New Year's, each man received a dram of rum and some cakes. All down the valley Work was impressed by the density of the Indian population. "The country must be rich in resources when such numbers of people find subsistence," he observed.[539]

Work scouted down Feather River but was prevented by high water from finding a place where he could cross the Sacramento. Frustrated, he made a short excursion eastward into the Sierra foothills, largely in the hope of finding game and beaver. He was disappointed on both counts and retraced his steps to the Marysville Buttes, where elk

were abundant. On the way he was joined by the Southern Party under Michel Laframboise. It consisted of 18 men, 12 women, 16 children, and 17 Indians, a total of 63. Work assumed command of the combined force.

The Buttes were reached on January 22, 1833, and the people were soon busily employed killing elk and drying the meat. Most of them had been low on food for a considerable time. After a few days the game was frightened away by the heavy hunting, and hunger began to pinch once more. But all in all Work was pleased with his stay at the Buttes. "We have been a month here," he wrote on February 22, "and we could not have fallen on a better place to pass a part of the dead winter season when nothing could be done in the way of trapping on account of the height of the waters." He recorded that while there 395 elk, 148 deer, 17 bears, and 8 antelope had been killed, "which is certainly a great many more than was required, but when the most of the people have ammunition and see animals they must needs fire upon them let them be wanted or not."[540] But with game now scarce, it was time to move on.

The combined brigades broke camp on February 23 and went northward up the east side of the Sacramento Valley. Work's object was to find a safe place to cross the "big river" and reach the Coast Range, where he hoped to find better hunting and trapping. From what apparently was the general vicinity of today's Oroville, Laframboise reconnoitered the Sacramento River and found a spot where it could be approached without too much trouble from the receding flood waters. The camp was moved westward to the river on March 3. Five

canoes, made from elk hides forehandedly dressed by the women at the Buttes, were quickly built, and the stream was crossed on March 5.

Work now marched to the base of the Coast Range and followed the hills south, evidently as far as upper Suisun Creek. Here, on March 18, he split his party, sending "20 men & 11 Indians with their traps and two horses each" to dog the steps of the Americans under Ewing Young who, Work had learned, had headed across the hills toward the ocean about a month earlier.[541] Alexander Carson, the old Astorian and veteran of many Company expeditions, was placed in charge of this group.

That same day Michel Laframboise and five men were dispatched to Mission San Francisco Solano at Sonoma for a supply of ammunition. Work and the main company remained in camp to await Michel's return. On March 26 Laframboise was back. He had been unable to obtain ammunition at Sonoma so had gone on to the Russian American Company's establishment at either Bodega or Fort Ross, where he succeeded in buying only ten pounds of powder, thirty pounds of lead, and ten pounds of tobacco. The Russian "governor" told him that the route northward along the coast was "bad but passable" and said there were no signs of beaver in that direction. Work was suspicious of this last statement. "It may be policy in him to not tell whether there were beaver or not," he commented.

On March 26 Michel and three men were dispatched to find the party which had been sent out on Young's trail and to fix a point for an eventual rendezvous with the main brigade. The next day

Work started southward with the remaining company for San Francisco Bay to "see if there are any beaver to be had along the North side of it which is not known to have been trapped or even visited by any parties of hunters yet."[542]

He had scarcely begun to hunt on the bayshore when, on March 31, Laframboise came into camp with all the men who had been sent after Ewing Young. He had met them returning eastward. Work was shocked. "I am much dissatisfied with these men's conduct particularly in turning back before they had come up with the Americans," he wrote in his journal. He placed much of the blame on Carson: "Indeed the old man who was at their head and who appeared the fittest person among them, is too easy, tho' sufficiently experienced for the task and listens too much to the babling among the people."[543]

The weather, as it had been much of the time since Work's arrival in California, was generally miserable during the stay on the north shore of the bay, and beaver trapping was largely unproductive. On April 1 two Mexican officials from Sonoma visited the camp, and from them Work learned that an American ship was in the harbor at San Francisco. He sent Michel off the next day to see if ammunition could be obtained from that source. Laframboise was back on April 6 with favorable news. Although the vessel had left by the time he reached the south side of the Golden Gate in a rented boat, he was able to obtain 24 pounds of powder and 40 pounds of ball, together with a bottle of rum, from the commandant of the Presidio. That officer, unasked, also threw in a passport for the

brigade to travel and trap in the province. Work grumbled about the "very high price" in beaver pelts which Michel had to pay for the ammunition, but in view of the fact that the expedition was not harassed by the local authorities as Jedediah Smith and other trappers had been, he undoubtedly had received a bargain.

Because April 7, 1833, was Easter Sunday, Work refrained from moving camp. Several of the people rode over to Sonoma to attend Mass at the mission. For some of them this was the first opportunity in many years to avail themselves of the services of a priest.

The next day one of the hunters, Michelle Oteotanin, was severely mauled by a grizzly bear. And at about the same time malaria, together with a "very severe cold" -- probably influenza -- began to break out among the people, and by April 10 several of them were "very ill." Despite these difficulties, camp was moved to the vicinity of Sonoma, where horses, corn, peas, and even liquor were purchased from the mission.

Resuming the march, the brigade traveled westward, but progress was slow because layovers were made to give the sick, who were daily becoming more numerous and now included Work himself, a little "repose." On April 17 the man wounded by the bear died and was buried. He left a wife and two children. The next day the party reached the shore of the Pacific Ocean and crossed the Russian River near its mouth. There they were met by Peter Kostromitinoff, manager of the Russian establishments in California. He attempted to persuade Work not to pass Fort Ross but capitulated when the British trader

pointed out that there was no other route up the coast and promised to keep his people as far as possible from the post. The Russian then invited Work to the fort, where he spent the night and enjoyed dinner the next day. Since Kostromitinoff spoke "a few words of French," the two men were able to communicate, but conversation was rather sparse.

The brigade continued northward along the coast, struggling across numerous gullies and occasional steep slopes that dropped abruptly to the sea. Several horses were lost due to falls or to drowning when crossing streams. The weather nearly the entire time was raw and cold, with abundant rain at intervals. To cap all, no beaver were found -- exactly as the Russians had said. On April 29, somewhere near the mouth of the Albion River, the party crossed Ewing Young's trail from the interior to the coast.

North of today's Rockport in Mendocino County, the route along the shore became extremely difficult because of steep slopes descending to the breakers, so Work turned inland. Crossing the upper waters of the Mattole River, the company went eastward over "rugged" terrain nearly to the Eel River. Here Work once more divided his party. Laframboise, with 17 European and 13 Indian men, was sent to hunt northward along the coast. For some time a group of the trappers, discontented at the extremely poor yields of their traps, had been asking permission to return home. Work "embraced" the opportunity to detach these people, the more so because it would be easier for the remaining persons to feed themselves with the limited yield of the chase.

The two groups parted company on May 13 or 14, and Work with 17 European and 6 Indian men and their families went eastward to the Eel River. Ascending that stream for a short distance, he crossed to the headwaters of the Russian River. A party of men was detached to hunt for beaver farther down this stream, while Work determined to head for the Sacramento Valley by the shortest route available. Reaching Clear Lake, he followed down its western shore. On May 21 the men who had been sent down the Russian River rejoined the camp. They had found no beaver, and near the northern end of Clear Lake they nearly had been surrounded by "an immense number" of armed and hostile Pomo Indians and considered themselves fortunate to have escaped. Continuing southeastward by a rather circuitous course the brigade reached the Sacramento Valley floor, evidently by following Putah Creek for a considerable distance. From here the route was northerly to the Sacramento River about ten miles north of its junction with Feather River.

"Deeming this a good situation to make canoes," Work wrote in his journal, "sent the people to seek wood, which they have found, and some of them have felled their trees." It took several days to complete the craft, during which time, Work noted, the "Muscatoes are like to devour us."[544] On June 6 the party went downstream to the mouth of Feather River and crossed to the east bank. The canoemen were dispatched to hunt beaver along the Sacramento and its tributaries as far as San Francisco Bay, while Work moved southward by land.

Plagued by extremely hot weather, mosquitoes, and sand flies, and by difficult crossings of streams and sloughs, the people were miserable. "Scarcely an individual has been able to sleep these last 3 nights," Work wrote on June 22.[545] And as the party progressed south the Indians became increasingly troublesome. A number of horses were stolen, and pursuit of the accomplished thieves proved fruitless. A noteworthy incident of the march occurred on June 27. The native wives of two of the men deserted, and search parties were unable to overtake them. It was believed they were headed for Sonoma Mission, where one of the women had found friends during an earlier flight. Later their husbands discovered them at one of the mission farms and brought them back to camp, chastened by the rough handling they had received from natives while fleeing.

On June 28 the party reached the vicinity of the present Stockton and French Camp. Work's purpose in stopping on the channels and sloughs in this region was to be as close to the "bay" as possible in order to provide support for the canoemen hunting there. For the next month he maintained a base camp in the area, moving it occasionally to improve hunting for game. He was aware that Alexander Roderick McLeod had camped in the neighborhood in 1829.[546]

During this period harassment by thieving Indians increased. "We will be obliged to destroy a village or two of these scoundrels," Work commented on July 1, but he took no hostile action except to pursue thieves when they were observed. On July 10 one of the robbers was killed during such a chase. Three days later a group of Indians came

into camp and made friendly overtures, but when the natives were discovered running off horses while attention was thus diverted, a short but sharp skirmish broke out. One of the thieves was about to shoot an arrow into Work's back when a woman of the brigade drove the assailant off with an axe. Two Indians were killed, but the rest escaped into the tules. Before dawn the next morning a large party of natives attacked the camp with a shower of arrows, but when they found the trappers prepared to receive them they drifted away into the surrounding foliage.

During the various moves of his camp Work went nearly as far south as the Stanislaus River, but he found very little relief from the heat, insects, and "shyness" of the elk, antelope, and deer.[547] Finally, on July 24, all the boats had returned to the "canoe rendezvous" at the present Stockton. The total returns of the canoemen since June 11 amounted to only 249 beaver and 85 otter. Work was disappointed. "The canoes have [had] so little success," he wrote, "that we have determined to give up the hunt and return to the fort."[548] It is possible that Work intended this expedition to be his last, at least to the Snake Country, for he added in explaining his reasons for deciding it was time to leave: "besides if the people be sent off again in the fall they will have little enough time to gain a wintering [?] ground before winter sets in."[549] The word "we" is conspicuous by its absence.

The homeward march was started on July 25, and one event of that day was an attack on an Indian village near the Calaveras River.

Work believed he had evidence that the inhabitants had staged the assault on his camp on July 13 and 14. The Indians fled after the first fire, so not "much execution" was inflicted, though Work thought "some" had been killed. One of his men was slightly wounded by an arrow.

The next day, farther north, another village was approached with the intention of recovering stolen horses. No attack was planned. But the trappers were met with a shower of arrows as they drew near, so they chased the Indians into a swamp, burned the huts, and took twenty-one horses, among which were four that had been stolen from the brigade. Again Work estimated that "some" natives had been killed.

Continuing up the east side of the Sacramento River on their outward track, the company suffered much from heat, and malaria and an influenza-like disease broke out once more among the people. But as the party advanced northward they were not troubled by hostile Indians. The great pandemic of 1833 had almost depopulated the native villages. By the time the brigade arrived at Battle Creek sixty-one of the people were sick, but Work noticed that the Indians in the northern end of the valley were not as seriously affected by disease as those below. He had long since exhausted his small supply of medicines, and his people had no recourse but to suffer along as best they could. "I endeavour to keep up their spirits as well as I can," Work commented, "but it is become now of little effect."[550]

When Cow Creek was reached, the brigade turned up it and followed their earlier track across the Cascade Range to Hat Creek. There was no trapping now. Work's only thought was to get his people to Fort Vancouver and a doctor's care as quickly as possible and before so many men were incapacitated that the brigade could not move. During the crossing to the Pit River drainage an Indian with the party died, and Work himself fell victim to the fever. The local Indians on Hat Creek, however, were healthy and spoiling for trouble. "Where we are now the natives bear a bad character," Work recorded on August 29. The accuracy of this observation was proved that same night when arrows were shot into five horses, killing one.

"This is the reward we meet for treating these barbarians [?] kindly and endeavouring to conciliate them," wrote Work. "Nothing but severe punishment is of any avail with such savages."[551]

On Hat Creek Work left his fall trail southward. Going to the mouth of that stream, he crossed Pit River and traveled north until he struck Fall River. After ascending that stream northwesterly he traversed Dead Horse Pass to the upper waters of McCloud River. The march was continued in the same general direction north of Mount Shasta to Shasta Valley and then north across the Klamath River and the Siskiyou Range to the Rogue River. Most of this part of the journey was over routes pioneered by members of the Umpqua and Southern parties. On the Klamath River Work came upon evidence that Laframboise had passed that way earlier on his return to Fort Vancouver. The unruly subordinate had not long followed instructions to trap northward along the coast.

On a small tributary of the Rogue River one of the men, C. Groslui, died of malaria on September 17. He left a widow and six children "to lament his loss & all ill with the fever."[552] For some days most of the people had been very sick. "I tremble regularly every night myself," Work recorded on September 11, "and am becoming weaker daily." So many people were ill that a proper watch could not be kept over the horses, and a number of the animals simply wandered off. "Our whole party is now become exceedingly helpless," the leader remarked at one point.[553]

On the main Rogue River the Indians lived up to their name and killed and wounded a number of horses. Work could only fume, since his party was in no condition to retaliate. Before leaving this stream another man, P. Bernie, died. For several days he had been so weak he had to be tied on his horse. He was mourned by a wife and five children, "all ill with the fever." There was good reason for Work to write: "The people are getting more discouraged every day."[554]

From the Rogue the brigade followed a by then well-known route northward by way of the Umpqua River and the Willamette Valley. Along the way, on October 13, they met Michel Laframboise with "four men and some Indians" bound for the Umpqua region. Michel had reached Fort Vancouver during July. From him Work obtained 3 gallons of coarse flour, 3 gallons of Indian corn, 1 pound of tea, and a half loaf of sugar, all of which, he said, were "of the utmost importance to me as I have had nothing of the kind for some time back. I had an ample supply of all these things on leaving Ft.

Vancouver, but our voyage has been long and so many people sick almost the whole time there were frequent demands upon me and a little to one and a little to another soon goes through a good deal."[555] Work sent a letter to McLoughlin by one of Laframboise's Indians, and on October 18 the messenger was back with a reply and more supplies, including "Some bread & butter" -- a luxury indeed on a trapping expedition.

"Sand encamoment," better known today as Champoeg, was reached on October 24. Here Work borrowed a canoe from the leading settler, Jean Baptiste Desportes dit McKay, and used it to help his people across the Tualatin River. When the party arrived at the Willamette Falls where Oregon City was later to rise, Work sent off "all the healthy men" with the horses, which were to be placed "on the island at the entrance of the Willamut," undoubtedly the present Sauvie Island. The men were then to bring the boats which McLoughlin would have waiting back up to the falls for the people and the baggage.

Work hired a canoe from the Indians and proceeded ahead to the depot, where he arrived on October 29, 1833, and received a "hearty welcome." All of the remainder of the brigade came in by boat within two days. Most of the sick had so far recovered during the last part of the journey that only a few of them had to "go under the Doctors care," but Work believed all "were so much exhausted and continue still so debilitated that it will be some time before they are fit for any duty."[556]

It had been "certainly no easy task to get the despairing dispirited people" to keep moving and to get them back to the depot, Work later reported. Two men had deserted in California (one of whom was later brought to Vancouver in a Company vessel) and two men, an Indian, and two children had died from disease. The man killed by a bear near Sonoma had belonged to Laframboise's party.[557] "I was reduced to a perfect skeleton and so much exhausted and debilitated that I could scarcely walk," Work added.[558]

The financial results of the expedition were more than disappointing; they produced a loss.[559] Work brought back only 1023 beaver and otter pelts. These were meager returns indeed for an expedition which had been in the field for more than a year. "Indeed," Work reported to Governor Simpson and the Council, "the country is now so exhausted that little can be done with it."[560]

Work was not alone in this opinion. In 1832 Simpson believed the Snake Country to be so overrun with Americans and the beaver so depleted that the Company should withdraw from it. Even in London the Committee came to the same conclusion after noting the declining returns. On December 4, 1833, the directors wrote to McLoughlin: "The operations of the Snake Expedition have been very unprofitable for several years past, and attended with a serious loss of life; we therefore desire that if not abandoned this year it may be broke up next Summer."[561]

Work's journey of 1832-1833 marked the last Snake expedition of the old type. Never again would the "ragmuffin" veterans of the

Snake Party -- disgruntled, undisciplined, sometimes disloyal, but too fascinated by their wild life to give it up -- march out from Fort Nez Percés in their long caravans for the deserts and ranges that lay beyond the Blue Mountains. There was no major Snake expedition of the old type in 1834, but evidently not because of orders received from Simpson or the committee. Although McLoughlin was well aware of the exhausted state of the region, he seems to have intended to send the men back as quickly as possible. On March 1, 1834, the "Big Doctor" told a friend that there was no party in the Snake Country that year because Work had returned so late in the fall that it was impossible for him to "go back this season."[562] In other words, as Work had feared, the wintering grounds could not be reached in time to make the usual spring hunt.

Work himself spent the winter enjoying the hospitality of Fort Vancouver and recovering his health.[563] In May, 1834, McLoughlin sent him with a party for a six-week "trading and hunting" trip to the Umpqua region, and toward the end of the year he left by ship for the Northwest Coast.[564] He never again had to fight the Blackfeet and chase the troublesome Indians of California. By early 1834 a number -- perhaps most -- of Work's Snake Country trappers were transferred to the Flathead expedition headed by Clerk Francis Ermatinger.[565]

But McLoughlin by no means had given up on the Snake Country. Despite the poor results of the last Snake expedition he told a friend in 1834, "of course we will send" parties there even though

"we cannot expect to make much by it."[566] There were still furs to be found in the region, and American opposition, though now weakened, was still present. His objectives remained the same, but his method changed. For some time American traders had been appearing at Flathead Post, near Thompson Falls, in the present Montana, anxious to exchange their furs for supplies. Sometimes it was the need for food which drove them to this expedient, but they soon came to realize that they could obtain their outfits, even trading goods, more easily and at less cost at Company posts than by going to the American rendezvous or to another American base. The Company had already taken steps to meet American competition in the region by authorizing its agent at Flathead Post to buy furs at the American tariff. In 1832 it took another large step in this direction.

On July 1, 1833, McLoughlin suggested to Chief Trader Simon McGillivray that either he or Francis Ermatinger might accompany the Flathead Indians to the "planes" that summer and perhaps travel with them again during the winter. In this way the Flathead furs could be gathered before the Americans could get them, and Flathead Post, which could not support a permanent staff, could be manned on an intermittent basis.[567]

As it turned out, this duty fell to Ermatinger. He went out during the late summer with the Flatheads, who almost certainly took their usual route to the upper waters of the Missouri River. It is most likely, then, that he intruded into United States

territory. In any case, he met a number of American traders and seems to have conceived the idea that a profitable business could be done by taking goods to them in the field. The "about 400" skins he collected probably were the lesser part of the gain from this expedition.[568]

During the winter of 1832-1833 Ermatinger presented his idea to McLoughlin, who at about the same time was contemplating his discussions with the Boston trader, Nathaniel Wyeth, who planned to supply American trappers in the Rocky Mountains with goods brought by ship to the Columbia.[569] The "Big Doctor" was sufficiently astute to see the merits of this idea, and he must have wondered if the Company could not do the same thing. Thus McLoughlin was prepared to see the value of Ermatinger's proposal and gave it his blessing.[570]

Ermatinger, in company with Wyeth who was returning to Boston to make new arrangements for his trading company, left Fort Vancouver about the end of January, 1833, to go out again with the Flatheads with the objective, as he said, of "looking after American trappers." His main purpose was to trade furs wherever he could, from Americans or from Indians, but his men were to trap whenever an opportunity presented itself. A second expedition, led by François Payette but under Ermatinger's general command, went out from Walla Walla with the Nez Percés for the same purposes.[571]

Thus was established a new pattern of exploitation of the Snake Country. Thereafter two small parties went out annually, one from Flathead Post and one from Walla Walla, the latter being more specifically directed toward the Snake River area. The routine was further

changed in 1834 when Thomas McKay established a post on the Boise River for the Company and when the firm acquired Wyeth's Fort Hall in 1837. Pack trains carried supplies to these posts annually, and trapping and trading parties worked out from these bases until the Company withdrew entirely from the Snake Country in 1855 and 1856.

Occasionally these parties were made up largely of trappers and originated at Walla Walla. At times these groups, generally starting from Fort Hall, extended their operations to the Utah area and even into Arizona. The terms "Snake Party" and "Snake expedition" continued to be used in Company correspondence and accounts. But the regular annual, far-ranging, trapping oriented Snake Brigade was dead. The activities of the new Snake parties, while of much interest, are beyond the scope of this study.[572]

The old Snake Party was remarkably successful in meeting its main objective -- the reduction of the Snake Country to a fur desert. The story is told by the declining returns. From the "nearly 5000" beaver pelts brought in by Ross in 1824, the numbers grew smaller almost every year until an apparent equilibrium was reached: 3577 in 1826; 4000 in 1829; 1295 in 1830; 737 (large beaver only) in 1831; and 788 large beaver in 1832. After the end of the regular Snake brigades the returns for the Snake Country were even more revealing: 350 large beaver in 1834; 220 large beaber in 1835; and 800 large beaver in 1836.[573] For 1844 the returns were 722 large beaver and 272 small; for 1845 they amounted to 978 large beaver and 588 small; and for 1846 they were 897 large beaver and 544 small.[574]

After the early 1830s the Snake Country trade became less profitable for the Americans also, and their numbers began to decline. As Governor Simpson had hoped, the rivals had been, if not eliminated, at least discouraged. And these results had been achieved with financial benefit to the Company. In 1846 McLoughlin estimated that the total profits from the Snake Country between 1824 and 1846 were £30,000.[575]

The Southern Party

While the Snake brigades were scouring the interior for beaver, a parallel series of expeditions was at work on the waters falling into the Pacific south of the Columbia River. Both Astorians and Nor'Westers had sent trappers up the Willamette, and some of these pioneering efforts reached the Umpqua River. In fact, sometime between 1819 and 1821 Thomas McKay, then a North West Company employee, had established a short-lived post on the latter stream.[576]

There is no record of how far these early expeditions penetrated toward the south. Tantalizing hints in the records have led to speculation that some members of these parties may have reached the extreme northern limits of California, but no hard evidence has yet been found. The fact that the earliest Hudson's Bay Company officers at Fort George had little knowledge of the country beyond the Umpqua except for vague reports given by Indians would seem to indicate that such far-reaching explorations were unlikely.

Little is known about possible Hudson's Bay Company activities along the coast south of Fort George for several years after the concern assumed control of the Columbia region in 1821. If there were any organized trapping parties in that direction they have left no noticeable mark in the documents thus far studied for the present paper. It is certain, however, that activity was revitalized during Governor Simpson's first visit to the Columbia during the winter of 1824-1825.

At Fort George late in 1824 Simpson decided that there were too many superfluous employees at that post, and he determined to keep them occupied pending a decision as to future need for them. "The Supernumeraries or extra men in question," he wrote in his journal, "will be equipped for a whole year and sent off from Fort George on a Trapping Expedition in the month of May accompanied by all the Freemen in this neighborhood so as to form a party of between Fifty & Sixty under the command of Messrs Finnan McDonald & Thos McKay their route will be up the Wilhamot River across a Mountainous Country which we know little about to the Umpqua River and from thence Hunt their way to the Banks of the Rio Colorado [probably the Green River] keeping either inland or towards the Coast as the state of the Country in regard to Fur bearing Animals and the means of living may direct; they will . . . return to Fort George in the month of June following year (1826)."[577]

On February 23, 1826, the London directors gave their blessing to the decision to send parties "Southward of the Umpqua, as it is desirable to obtain from that Territory as large a present supply of

Beaver as possible and to allow our other Country to recruit."[578] American trappers had not yet reached the approaches to southern Oregon and California, and evidently the need to thwart such rivals was not as much of a motive for action there as it was in the Snake Country.

Simpson soon decided to give the command of this southern party to John Work and Thomas McKay (and perhaps even to McKay alone), and the latter clerk accompanied the governor up the Columbia as far as Walla Walla to obtain horses for the expedition. But during the boat trip McKay seems to have made some errors in judgment, because by the time Simpson left McKay at Fort Nez Percés and advanced to the mouth of the Spokane River he had altered his decision. "Some doubts having arisen in my mind as to the abilities of Messrs Work and McKay for the conduct of the Umpqua Expedition and as I expect very important benefits to result therefrom if properly managed I have been induced to offer the command to Mr Finnan McDonald," he commented in his journal.[579] Two days later, on April 10, 1825, Simpson wrote to McLoughlin that McKay, "altho' over ambitious of being a Leader," was "not fit to command."[580]

The expedition did not get off in May as Simpson had hoped. McLoughlin detained some of the men to salt salmon, leaving the remainder of the party too weak to leave while two rival native chiefs along the Columbia were quarreling.[581] Not until August 20 did Clerk Finan McDonald, accompanied by Thomas McKay, lead his little band out from Fort Vancouver. In addition to the "gentlemen," the

party consisted of 22 servants, 2 freemen, and 4 or 6 Indians; no women were allowed to go along. Meanwhile, McLoughlin had heard reports of a river "rich in Beaver" three days' march south of the Umpqua and of a large lake "SSW of Walla Walla," probably Klamath Lake. He urged McDonald to visit these places if practicable.[582]

McDonald did not carry out Simpson's grand design. He ascended the Willamette Valley for some distance and then turned eastward across the Cascades, probably by Santiam Pass. It was thought at the time that the Umpqua River extended far inland, and McDonald evidently was attempting to follow his instructions to reach it by striking its upper waters. Instead he reached the Deschutes River, which he ascended southward to its headwaters and then continued, east of Crater Lake, to the Williamson River and Klamath Marsh. Here he turned back, defeated by a shortage of food and by native reports of fierce tribes ahead. Descending the Deschutes, he met Ogden's 1825-1826 Snake brigade near the mouth of Crooked River and joined that expedition as has already been described.[583]

McDonald's chief contibution seems to have been acquiring quite positive information of the existence and general locations of Klamath Lake and the Klamath River. The route he opened across the Cascades was later examined by Ogden but was not found suitable as a path for outfitting the Snake expeditions, although it seemingly was employed later by small parties bringing horses for Company use over the range.[584] Peter Skene Ogden, however, had no hesitation in branding McDonald's 1825 expedition a "failure."[585]

Meanwhile, Governor Simpson, at York Factory on July 11, 1825, had directed that McDonald should be relieved of the command of the "Umpqua Expedition" and replaced by Chief Trader Alexander Roderick McLeod, a fur trade veteran who reached the Columbia in the fall of that year. Simpson, not yet knowing of the manpower shortage caused by the desertion of Ogden's men to the Americans, ordered McLeod to conduct his expedition under "similar instructions" to those given to McDonald.[586] McLoughlin seems to have considered it possible for McLeod to reach the Umpqua with a small party, but nothing was said about going eastward to the Klamath again. The main objective was to be "to collect as many furs as you can."[587]

On May 5, 1826, the main part of McLeod's first Umpqua expedition left Fort Vancouver by boat for Willamette Falls. McLeod remained behind to receive a band of horses being sent down from Fort Nez Percés. He caught up with his men at the falls, but considered it necessary to rest a few days to allow the "fatigued" animals to recover their strength. Finally, on May 21, the march southward began -- slowly. The brigade was small, consisting in addition to McLeod of only thirteen men, including three local Indians.[588] Among them was the interpreter, Michel Laframboise, who during the previous winter had made a trip to the coast "to the Southward of the Umpqua River" and reported finding "many vistiges" of beaver in two small streams in that direction.[589] "To that quarter we shall direct our Course," McLeod wrote bravely in his journal.[590]

Near the site of the present Newberg the party left the Willamette River and traveled west over the coastal mountains and reached the ocean, evidently at the mouth of the Big Nestucca River. McLeod now turned south along the immediate shoreline. Travel was hard going due to the many streams that had to be crossed, to say nothing of the brush, rain, and other impediments to be overcome. As the journey progressed, very few of the beaver promised by Laframboise were seen or taken, a fact which, wrote McLeod, "evidently proves his erroneous judgement." On the rare occasions when beaver were found in modest abundance, faulty traps caused most of them to be "missed, " giving rise to a "very prevalent complaint" that "echoes from every mouth."[591] All in all, McLeod found the returns "poor prospects for a new Country that was seldom if ever hunted."[592]

At one point some of the men coasted the shore in native canoes, but southward travel was halted when the Siuslaw River was reached, still some distance north of the Umpqua. The Siuslaw was ascended for some distance and a camp established as a hunting base. Trapping was only moderately rewarding, but the local Indians said there were many beaver farther on and promised to hunt for pelts to trade to McLeod on his next visit to the area.

Having orders from McLoughlin to be at Fort Vancouver by "the latter end of August," McLeod started homeward on July 31. Retracing his outward path as far as the Willamette Valley, he turned north after crossing the Yamhill River and made more directly for the Columbia River. On August 17 the men reached the western

channel of the Willamette opposite Sauvie Island.[593] The next day, August 18, 1826, McLeod was back at the depot reporting to Chief Factor McLoughlin. The Columbia manager was not pleased. McLeod, he told the London directors and Governor Simpson, had collected only 395 pounds of furs -- 285 beaver, 36 land otter, and 3 sea otter -- a meager haul, and one-third of those obtained by trade with the natives.[594]

McLeod seems to have given McLoughlin the impression that he had actually reached the Umpqua River, although his journal shows clearly enough that he did not. And the "Big Doctor" was interested to hear that the Indians had confirmed the existence of the rumored large river "which abounded in Beaver" only two days' marchssouth of the Umpqua. He determined to send McLeod back at once to investigate. "I consider it of the utmost importance to us that if possible you should have a personal communication with the Natives of the large River South of the Umpqua so as to open a trade with them at the same time keeping in view to endeavour to find a place to employ your men during the winter in hunting Beaver," he told McLeod on September 20, 1826.[595]

McLeod's second Umpqua or Southern expedition left Fort Vancouver on September 15, 1826. Michel Laframboise was along again as interpreter, and the remainder of the party numbered "fourteen Men and four Indians."[596] Some of the men crossed the Columbia by boat, and the rest helped to swim the horses across the river the next day. Going southward to the vicinity of Champoeg, McLeod set up a camp for the final organization and supply of the brigade.

Here he received McLoughlin's final instructions. As finally composed, the party consisted of McLeod, a clerk, LaFramboise as interpreter, "eleven Canadian Servants, five Owhyhees [Hawaiians] & two Native Indians." Also along for part of the journey was David Douglas, the Scot botanist sent out by the Horticultural Society of London to collect plants.[597]

Getting under way at last on September 27 -- McLeod, as usual, having abundant excuses for the delay -- the party went south, roughly along the west bank of the Willamette. Progress was slow, game scarce, and forage slight, because the Indians had burned off much of the grass in the valley. Several freemen met on the way were permitted to join the company. Somewhere in the general latitude of the present Eugene the brigade took a more westerly course and crossed the coastal ranges to Elk Creek, which was descended to the Umpqua. Near the site of today's Scottsburg McLeod set up a base camp and divided his party.

Leaving part of his brigade to hunt in the Umpqua area, McLeod descended the river in native canoes to near its mouth. Along the way men were detached to hunt the various tributaries. The leader had only five trappers and two Indians when in his single remaining craft he landed within sight of the sea. Packing their supplies on their backs, the men started south on foot along the shore, bound for the fabled "big river" south of the Umpqua.

At Coos Bay McLeod could see that the coast ahead was blocked by mountains and dense woods, so he rented a canoe and crew from the

Indians for a dangerous voyage around Coos Head. Once more on foot, he continued south along the beach to the Coquille River. A few days at the end of October, 1826, were spent exploring up this stream by canoe and trading beaver from the natives. The results were encouraging so, planning to return, he retraced his steps to the base camp on the Umpqua. There he discovered that his trappers had been having a difficult time, beset by bad weather and Indian hostility. One man had been killed and the Indian wife of another kidnapped.

Leaving a few men to trap on the upper Umpqua and sending David Douglas and the relatively few furs thus far gathered to Fort Vancouver, McLeod started back for the Coquille River. Traveling partly by canoe and partly on foot, the Coos River was reached and trapped but yielded only fifty beaver in two weeks. McLeod pushed on to the Coquille, but here the water was so high that beaver could not be hunted. While waiting for the river to fall, he decided to find a way to the "Big River" ahead. An attempt by an inland route failed due to rushing torrents on the upper waters of the Coquille's South Fork. He next pushed up the Middle Fork of the same river and crossed eastward to Lookingglass Creek and the Umpqua near the present Roseburg. After visiting some of his men near the mouth of Elk Creek, he returned to his base camp on the Coquille.

Starting south once more along the coast on foot and by canoe he reached the Great River about four miles above its mouth. The local natives called the stream the Toototenez. "It falls short of

the description report has given it, in size and depth," wrote the disappointed McLeod in his journal on January 11, 1827. Because of this "discovery" the Rogue River of today was known briefly as McLeod's River or Tootonez River.

His mission now accomplished, McLeod returned to his camp on Coquille River, only to find that the men left there had been no more successful at taking beaver than had his own party and that the local Indians demanded a higher price for their furs than McLeod was authorized to pay. Since the assigned time for his return to Fort Vancouver was drawing near, he pulled up stakes on January 23 and headed for home. Going eastward by an Indian trail along the northeast branch of the Coquille, he crossed the mountains to Lookingglass Creek. Following down the latter stream McLeod met Laframboise and learned that the interpreter and Jean Baptiste Desportes (Depaty) dit McKay had explored south of the upper Umpqua nearly to the Rogue. Undoubtedly it was their tracks that were observed later by Ogden's men on Jump-off Joe Creek.

McLeod then moved on to the Umpqua, which he reached in the general vicinity of today's Roseburg. Continuing down the Umpqua he learned that a small party he had sent from the Coquille by the coast route had become involved in a tragic incident on Coos River. The accidental discharge of a gun had killed a local native, and one of McLeod's men, Ignace, had been murdered in retaliation.

From his Umpqua base camp McLeod turned eastward to the Willamette Valley. Near the mouth of the Long Tom River the party crossed to

the east bank of the Willamette. That stream was followed, partly by canoe, to the vicinity of Champoeg, where McLeod and his men once more took to canoes and reached Fort Vancouver on March 14, 1827. They had been seven months on the trail, most of the time drenched by the rains of an Oregon winter.[598]

McLoughlin was again disappointed by the results. McLeod's first two Umpqua expeditions together, he told Governor Simpson, produced only 797 "made Beaver" (a "made beaver" was a large, dried beaver pelt in prime condition or its equivalent value in other furs) of which 663 were actually beaver and the rest made up of otter, bear, deer, and other skins. The "Big Doctor" seems to have been unwilling to accept the fact that beaver were relatively scarce along the Oregon coast. He believed that if McLeod had started earlier and if his trappers had been "common able active Men" the expedition could have taken 1200 made beaver?[599] And because Laframboise and Depaty had not quite reached the inland course of Rogue River, McLeod's expedition did very little to clarify the confused notions prevailing among Company officers concerning the geography of southern Oregon.

During June, 1827, McLeod was sent north on a sea voyage, first to assist at the construction of Fort Langley on Fraser River and then to open a maritime trade on the Northwest Coast. He did not return to Fort Vancouver until October 28 of the same year.[600] Meanwhile, Governor Simpson, on July 9, 1827, had repeated his instructions that the country south and east of the Columbia must

be "closely hunted, as the first step that the American Government will take towards colonization is through their Indian traders and if the country becomes exhausted in fur bearing animals, they can have no inducement to proceed thither."[601]

Whether because of these instructions or not, McLoughlin dispatched McLeod to the Umpqua for the third time only eleven days after the chief trader's homecoming from the north. He and his twenty-one men left on November 17, 1827, but McLeod's usual ill fortune dogged his footsteps. The brigade encountered miserable weather, including a severe snowstorm, and passed a cold winter on the Umpqua. The weary hunters limped into Fort Vancouver on March 10, 1828, with only negligible returns.[602]

During the early summer of 1828 McLeod headed an expedition to punish the Clallam Indians of Hood Canal, who had murdered a small party of Company employees. Some of the "gentlemen" under his command felt that McLeod had been too hesitant in his operations, but the Governor and Committee believed the retribution exacted had been unnecessarily severe. The unlucky McLeod had been scheduled for promotion to the much-desired rank of chief factor, but the directors denied him this plum.[603]

McLoughlin still had faith in McLeod, however. On August 7, 1828, he was on the point of sending the chief trader "with the Willamette Freemen, on a Trapping Expedition South of the Willamette." McLeod was told to return during the next year when it suited his convenience.[604] Years later McLoughlin said the reason for organizing

this expedition was the hope of keeping the freemen busily employed and thus remove them "from a place where they were Anxious to begin to farm."[605]

But the very next day Arthur Black reached the depot with news of the massacre of Jedediah Smith's party on the Umpqua River. Smith and two other survivors arrived on August 10. As a result, McLeod's mission was considerably altered. McLoughlin's first reaction to word of the disaster was that the murderers must be punished, otherwise not even the Company's parties would be safe in that region. He also intended to exert "every means in our power" to assist Smith in recovering his property.[606] On August 23 the "Big Doctor" sent Thomas McKay, Michel Laframboise, and a small party to the Willamette Valley to collect horses for a punitive expedition and then, evidently, to visit the Umpqua and gather all possible information about the massacre and to recover as much of Smith's property as possible.[607]

McLeod's party was assigned the task of visiting the massacre site in force and takinge such action against the murderers as seemed indicated and to retrieve such of Smith's horses, furs, and other articles as McKay failed to obtain. But McLoughlin had learned from Smith that there were beaver on the "Bonaventura River" of California [the Sacramento River], and what is more, the American partisan had given the chief factor a map of his route from San Francisco north to Fort Vancouver.[608] The "Big Doctor" decided that after McLeod had finished his assigned tasks on the Umpqua he should continue south to California to test this promising new field. He was to proceed "as far if possible as the Waters of the Bona ventura

& return in 1829 when it suits your convenience . . . at all events it would be desirable you got acquainted with the passes in the Mountains (if possible) leading to the Bonaventura."[609]

Seemingly it took some days to get together the supplies required for this expanded journey, but on September 6, 1828, McLeod left the depot with one boat and a canoe for Champoeg, where the larger part of his brigade was waiting for him. His instructions were "to proceed and hunt in the direction of the Bonaventura & if possible to reach it, on his way he was to endeavour to cause the Indians to restore Mr. Smith's property."[610]

Even for McLeod, it took an unusually long time to get the expedition organized at Champoeg, to sober the men up from their regale, and to collect the horses. McLoughlin was impatient. "As to your progress from this place to the Umpqua it was slower than any other Expedition I have Known since I am here," he later scolded.[611] The exact size of the party is difficult to determine due to conflicting statistics and to changing personnel. Governor Simpson said the brigade at the outset consisted "of 28 Servants and Indians" plus Smith and his three surviving companions.[612] In addition several freemen were picked up in the Willamette Valley. The size of the brigade -- larger than the Snake Party for that year and larger than previous Umpqua expeditions -- reflected the importance and anticipated difficulty of the mission. McLeod termed his party the "Southern Expedition," a name that was to endure with slight changes from time to time for many years.[613]

Reaching the Umpqua, McLeod found Smith's animals and property scattered over a wide territory, and he set his people to recovering them. After visiting the massacre site and burying all the remains of the victims that could be found, McLeod went to the mouth of the river and made short forays north and south along the coast to collect plundered articles. On the basis of accounts given by the Indians, McLeod decided that there may have been some justification for the attack on the American camp, and he concluded that requiring the natives to return their loot was sufficient to demonstrate that whites could not be killed with impunity.

Winter on the Umpqua was miserable as usual, and Smith, thoroughly fed up with McLeod's delays and lack of decisive action, left for Fort Vancouver on November 28. Three days later McLeod himself started for the depot, as he said, for further instructions.[614] When the chief trader turned up at the fort gates on December 14, 1828, McLoughlin, who optimistically had imagined McLeod happily and prosperously wintering on the Klamath or in the Sacramento Valley, was astonished and chagrined. He thought his orders had been entirely clear.[615] Some of McLeod's peers believed the unlucky bourgeois had returned merely to see his family.

Governor Simpson, who was at Fort Vancouver when McLeod arrived, had by then evaluated the import of the information Smith had provided concerning the trapping possibilities in California and the likelihood that he and other Americans might return to exploit that field. Thus on December 29, 1828, he gave McLeod new orders. The

Southern Party was "to work the whole of the Buona Ventura before its return, which may be expected in the Months of September or October 1830." If fresh hunting grounds were discovered, Simpson told the London directors, "we shall take the necessary measures to occupy them."[616]

McLeod rejoined his men on the Umpqua during January, 1829, and with Smith's man, John Turner, as guide, started south. Striking the upper Rogue, he followed Ogden's old track up the Applegate and across the Siskiyou Mountains to the Klamath River, which he ascended to Upper Klamath Lake. Game and beaver were both scarce en route, and the men began to kill their horses for food. To make matters worse, Indians pestered the party by stealing traps and horses, but McLeod felt "too much pressed by starvation" to retaliate. Turning southward past Lower Klamath Lake he reached Pit River on March 26, 1829. Here the brigade was assaulted by a band of Indians, but the attackers were repulsed with a loss of seven or eight dead.

Since no one in the party had been this way before, McLeod continued down the Pit traveling "at random." On April 4 an Indian lad attached to the brigade was killed by the natives while visiting his traps. Three days later two other men were attacked at the same task but managed to fight off their assailants.

The Sacramento Valley was reached on April 9, and ten days later the party camped near the mouth of "Canoe River" -- the present Cow Creek -- to build seven canoes for trapping the Sacramento.

This task completed, the brigade passed down the east side of the Sacramento River as far as the Mokelumne River, enjoying considerable succes in trapping along the way and in the sloughs of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Delta area. During the summer of 1829 one or more base camps were established in the vicinity of the present Stockton and French Camp.

At an unspecified date, seemingly late summer, McLeod moved his party to the west side of the Sacramento Valley about seventy miles from Sonoma. Several contacts were made with American settlers and, through them, with the mission, and McLeod was able to purchase trade goods and horses, of which he was much in need. The British leader also heard that the coast north of Bodega was "rich in Beaver." Evidently when he read of this report in McLeod's account of the journey, Chief Factor McLoughlin received an impression -- false as it turned out -- which he was a long time in shaking.

The brigade started for home on October 8, 1829. McLeod believed himself too short of ammunition to winter in the valley as Simpson had instructed. He seems to have toyed with the idea of spending the cold months in the upper Sacramento-Klamath River region -- an utterly impracticable dream. Ascending the Sacramento to the mouth of Pit River, he discovered that that stream was actually the "Main Branch" of the former, thus lifting one more piece of the veil hiding the geography of northern California and southern Oregon. Following his outward trail eastward across the mountains, McLeod once more fell on Pit River.

On November 26 he moved up a tributary of the Pit coming in from the north -- evidently Fall River. Two days later, somewhere on or near the upper waters of this stream or on the nearby McCloud River, it began to snow. and the party practically came to a halt. By December 4 the snow was so deep that the horses could not get to the grass. Within a week it was seen that none of the animals would survive, and the men "laid by" their meat for provisions and began to make sleds and snowshoes. All the furs were placed en cache in the ground. About 2400 beaver and otter pelts were hidden in this manner after being dried and aired.

At last, on January 14 and 15, 1830, the party started around the north side of Mount Shasta and soon reached Shasta Valley, where all were relieved to find no snow. Evidently leaving most of his men in this spot where game was plentiful, McLeod pushed on ahead to Fort Vancouver to obtain new supplies. Tom McKay had been in this region while detached from Ogden's party early in 1827, so McLeod seems not to have considered it necessary to describe his route northward. Presumably he went largely by way of his outward trail via the Rogue, the Umpqua, and the Willamette. He reached the depot on February 13, 1830.[617]

McLoughlin was at the end of his patience with McLeod. In an official letter he told the bourgeois, "you have neither followed the letter or the Spirit of your instructions . . . you ought to have passed the winter in the Valley of the Buenaventura and . . . this injudicious deviation has been the cause of all the disasters

which has befallen your Expedition and consequent loss the Concern must suffer . . . ."[618] After a bitter exchange of correspondence between the two officers, in which McLeod presented a variety of excuses for his conduct, McLoughlin preferred charges against McLeod with Governor Simpson, and McLeod requested permission to go East to defend himself before the Council of the Northern Department.[619]

Since it would be many months before a reply could be obtained, McLoughlin on March 10, 1830, sent the chastened chief trader back to meet the brigade he had left in the Klamath region, with orders to hunt "between that and this place till the latter end of July when I except [expect] you will come with your party."[620] McLeod got at least as far as Shasta Valley, and presumably it was then he learned that seeping water had ruined the furs he had left <u>en cache</u>. As specified, he was back at Fort Vancouver on July 28, but his men brought few beaver.[621]

Simpson later estimated that the expedition, due to "a whole Catalogue of unfortunate circumstances," produced a profit of only £180, an "unfavorable result."[622] But in the end the "Little Emperor" judged McLeod less harshly than did McLoughlin. As early as 1829 he had realized that McLeod's health had been "injured" by his hard service in the field, and he had planned to relieve him on that account.[623]

McLoughlin was not prepared to give his errant officer any rest, however. On August 8, 1830, less than two weeks after his arrival from Shasta Valley, McLeod was sent out once more, this time

with Tom McKay and eleven men to "explore and hunt" on the headwaters of the Willamette River "which has never been visited by whites." He was to return at the start of the rainy season.[624] After passing at least part of the winter at Fort Vancouver, McLeod "went out" with the express in the spring of 1831 and never again set foot in the Columbia Department.[625]

McLeod's disastrous expedition to California came close to putting an end to the Southern Party. On July 31, 1831, Simpson suggested to the Governor and Committee: "From his [McLeod's] report of the country and the difficulties to which a party could be exposed in hunting it we do not think it advisable to maintain this Expedition."[626] But only a few days thereafter the "Little Emperor" received word of Ogden's return from California with only a moderate load of pelts but with word that American trappers were once more in California. On August 10 he directed that another expedition should be sent to trap on the Sacramento.[627]

Chief Factor McLoughlin also was not yet ready to surrender the California trade. He had not been greatly impressed by Ogden's results in the Central Valley during 1830, but he believed worthwhile geographical information had been gained.[628] Evidently unwilling to give up the momentum achieved, he sent Michel Laframboise and three men "on a trading excursion" to the Umpqua River in October, 1830. Laframboise was to stay out all winter and, if he met McLeod's party in the field he was to pick up as many of the latter's men as could be spared. With these reenforcements, said

McLoughlin, Laframboise could "extend his excursions farther south."[629]

Evidently Laframboise joined with Thomas McKay before the end of December, 1830, because McLoughlin sent them orders to be at "the place" [Fort Vancouver?] by about March 1 if possible and to have their horses at Champoeg.[630] These instructions were complied with, since both men were at the depot by the middle of March, 1831, McKay to ask for a year's leave of absence and Laframboise to request a raise in salary (which was refused).[631]

It is not clear that any expedition went to the Umpqua or beyond during 1831, although it is quite probable that the region was not entirely neglected. It is known, however, that Laframboise was engaged "below" -- seemingly at the mouth of the Columbia -- in January of 1832, and in April of that year he was sent with a party to punish the "atrocious murder" of two Company employees by the Tillamook Indians. The French-Canadian accomplished this task with dispatch, exacting a retribution of six native lives. He then continued southward in accordance with McLoughlin's orders to "proceed on your trapping Expedition and you will either come here this fall, next winter, or send us accounts of your proceedings before the express leaves this [Fort Vancouver] in March."[632]

By May 8, 1832, Laframboise and all his men had "returned" safely from the Tillamook country, although it is not entirely clear to where they returned, perhaps to the Willamette Valley or to the Umpqua. At any rate, he was soon at the latter place, to which

McLoughlin on May 18 sent a party to bring back the furs collected up to that point. The "Big Doctor" seized the occasion to tell Laframboise to keep a journal and to enforce discipline in his camp. It seems clear that McLoughlin rather expected the party to reach the Sacramento Valley, since when sending John Work off for that place in August, 1832, he said, "If you meet Michel Laframboise you will assume the Direction of the two parties." But a few days later he told Work that he had received information indicating that Laframboise was "hunting along the Coast following [Jedediah] Smiths tract [track], and it is certain he cannot be in the Valley this fall."[633] McLoughlin seems to have forgotten Michel's changeable temperament.

From the Umpqua Laframboise started southwest across the coastal range to the Pacific. Finding the country "too mountainous," however, he returned to the Umpqua and followed "McLeods tract" of 1829 to the Sacramento Valley.

The number of people in the Canadian's brigade is difficult to determine, since persons were added and subtracted at various times after the departure from Fort Vancouver. On January 22, 1833, when an exact count was made, the party consisted of eighteen European men, twelve women, sixteen children and seventeen Indian men, a total of sixty-three.[634] With this mixed group Laframboise made his way south to San Francisco Bay, which he reached on October 15, 1832. He established a base camp, evidently in the region of the present Stockton and French Camp. From that point he made a visit to Mission

San José. In January, 1833, he moved northward towards the Marysville Buttes, having received reports that Work was there.

The two parties joined as has already been discussed and continued together until May 13, when Laframboise and his brigade left Work near the northern California coast with the intention of falling on "Smith's road" and returning to Fort Vancouver along the coast.[635] Very soon, however, he headed inland, probably until he reached his outward route. He was back at Fort Vancouver on June 15, 1833. All were safe, except for one man who had been killed by a bear.[636] McLoughlin was relieved to see the party. Indians had reported that the brigade had been attacked by natives. In fact, the "Big Doctor" had been so worried that in January, 1833, he had sent a small expedition to the Umpqua to investigate.[637]

McLoughlin reported that Laframboise had found "very few Beaver" during his homeward trip. But the Canadian repeated what McLeod had said: "that the Bay of St. Francisco abounds more in Beaver than any part of the Country that he saw between this and that place."[638] The "Southern Party's" returns amounted to 755 large beaver, 84 small beaver, and 152 other pelts.[639]

In his usual hard-driving fashion, McLoughlin allowed Laframboise little rest at the depot. By October 13, 1833, he and a small party were well on their way to the Umpqua when they met Work's exhausted homeward-bound brigade north of Elk Mountain on the western side of the Willamette Valley. After giving Work some much-needed provisions, Michel proceeded on his way south.[640]

It is probable that Laframboise remained in the Umpqua region and along the nearby coast during the winter. In mid April, 1834, he sent letters from an unspecified location stating that he had recently had an encounter with Indians "on the S side of the Umpquah mountain" and had killed eleven of them. And evidently McLoughlin expected the Canadian interpreter to still be in the general Umpqua area when on May 21, 1834, he directed John Work to take a party of trappers there and "endeavor to join Laframboise and . . . unite the two parties into one that they may proceed this fall to the valley."[641]

This junction was never made, because by the time Work reached the Umpqua Laframboise had already moved south. But Work left some provisions with an Indian chief for Laframboise's use on his homeward journey. "Should Michell be sick as was my case last year," Work commented in his journal, "these things would be a great acquisition to him." By summer Laframboise was in California with a base near Sonoma. The Company's officers thought the governor of California had agreed to permit the concern's hunters to operate freely in the Central Valley, but Laframboise was challenged by Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, commandant at Sonoma, and when he could produce no proof that he was a Company employee he was "ordered off." On his way home Laframboise came upon the very ill Boston school teacher, Hall J. Kelley, who had been traveling north with a band of horse herders under Ewing Young. The Canadian nursed Kelley until he could be moved and then brought him to Fort Vancouver.[642]

Vallejo's rebuff was quite a shock to McLoughlin, who for a number of years had attempted to develop friendly relations with the California authorities with a view to obtaining leave to hunt and trade in the province. Pending a resolution of the matter, he was determined not to further aggravate the situation. Thus, on April 7, 1835, when he once more sent Laframboise southward, he directed Michel "to hunt the country along the coast, between the Umpqua and the Clamet River, and . . . you may erect a small Fort in that part of the country, and trade with the Indians." As for the trappers, he added, "on no account must they go to the Valley of the Bonaventura."[643] The "Big Doctor" might just as well have given orders to the wind.

When word of Laframboise's encounter with Vallejo reached Governor Simpson at Red River that summer, he blamed Michel for not carrying proper credentials and thus being forced to return "without making any hunt worthy of notice." The "Little Emperor" believed the differences with the California authorities could be settled by diplomatic means, but he maintained that Laframboise, "though zealous," was not the man for such a mission. McLoughlin was ordered to send a "strong well appointed party" to California under command of a commissioned gentleman or a clerk. He suggested Chief Trader John McLeod.

By the time these instructions reached Fort Vancouver by the fall express, Laframboise was long off in the field, and McLoughlin had heard nothing of him. When word of this situation reached

Simpson months later, he bowed to the inevitable and relented to the extent of promising that Laframboise, if successful, could be given command of a further expedition.[644]

Meanwhile, the Governor and Committee in London made a major policy statement concerning the Southern expeditions. On December 8, 1835, they told McLoughlin that friendly relations with the California authorities "should be assiduously cultivated" and that as long as a rapport continued "it is very desirable to hunt the Buona Ventura Valley, and other waters flowing into the Bay of St. Francisco, otherwise the American trappers . . . will assuredly push there . . . and not be satisfied with hunting those Rivers, but will go on . . . to the Columbia, and there will get fresh equipped by Wyeths people. We therefore desire that a trapping party be always kept employed in that quarter, while their Hunts pay."[645]

As might have been anticipated, Laframboise did not confine his 1835-1836 expedition to southern Oregon. He later told McLoughlin that he found no beaver in that region so had pushed on down the "shores of the Pacific" to the vicinity of the Russian settlements. Avoiding them, he entered the Sacramento Valley. Fortunately for Michel on April 24, 1836, he brought back 1057 beaver skins plus other furs, giving his third expedition to California a profit of £805.6s. McLoughlin saw fit to overlook Michel's disobedience of orders.[646]

Laframboise reported that sea otters were "plentiful" on the California coast, so in May, 1836, McLoughlin sent him off in the

Company's schooner, Cadboro, to hunt them. Three months later he was back with a mere twenty-three otter pelts. Not one to willingly to endure such losses, the "Big Doctor" ordered Michel on September 5, 1836, to take twenty-three men and spend the winter hunting "the Clamet country."[647]

It would appear that Michel returned to the depot from this excursion about February, 1837; or if he did not return he received fresh intructions at about that time from McLoughlin while still in the field, because sometime about the first of March he began a "four months hunt" to the "Bay of St. Francisco." He was back at Fort Vancouver on July 6, 1837, with 1436 beaver skins and 413 otter pelts, a haul valued at about £2314. The clear profit on this expedition was about £800.[648] McLoughlin was highly pleased, although James Douglas later said the brigade had made only "fair hunts."[649]

Stimulated by these results, Dr. McLoughlin planned an ambitious and complicated foray on the fur resources of California. On August 1, 1837, Laframboise -- now ranked as a postmaster with an annual salary of £100 -- set out in command of a party of twenty-seven men to trap on Feather River and to "endeavour to reach the entrance of the Rio Colorado in the Gulf of California." He was then to be at Trinidad Bay on the northern California coast by May 15, 1838. If he had by that time found a good place to continue hunting he would be re-equipped from the Cadboro for another excursion. But if he had not located a good trapping ground, he was to return to Fort Vancouver overland, driving a herd of California cattle before him.[650]

As was routine with Laframboise, things did not work out exactly that way. He reached the Sacramento Valley on November 15, 1837, having been slowed by the "weak and reduced state" of his horses. Finding too much snow on the mountains drained by Feather River, he continued on to familiar ground about the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers with San Francisco Bay. Here he established a base camp for the winter and sent out his trappers to scour the surrounding waters. They were remarkably successful, taking about 2700 skins prior to May 1, 1838. On that day Laframboise started his brigade toward Trinidad Bay to meet the Cadboro.

Unfortunately, Laframboise seems not to have known exactly where Trinidad Bay was, so although he reached the coast by the appointed date, he was about one hundred miles south of where the Cadboro was waiting for him. By June 6 the Canadian had decided that some mishap must have occurred to the vessel, so he moved his camp about thirty miles into the interior and told his people to wait there until August 1 when, if they had not heard from him, they were to move to the Sacramento Valley until he could rejoin them. He then set out with seven companions for Fort Vancouver to obtain fresh instructions. After making his way "through many dangers" he reached the depot on July 8, 1838.[651]

Chief Trader James Douglas, who was in charge of the Fort Vancouver District while McLoughlin was away on furlough, was greatly surprised and disappointed at this turn of events. He cast about for some way to get Laframboise back to his brigade, which was

represented as being in a "forlorn state." His problem was resolved on July 23 when the Cadboro turned up. The schooner's captain had waited for the Southern Party until July 8 before accepting the fact that Laframboise would not appear.

Douglas quickly reprovisioned the vessel and sent her back to keep the rendezvous. On board were Laframboise, his men, and "several recruits." Also along was Chief Trader John McLeod, sent to receive the brigade's furs and to hand out the fresh outfit.[652] Douglas ordered Laframboise to go back to the Sacramento Valley after getting his new traps and supplies and to hunt there during the winter. Then, in May, 1839, he was to return to the coast and await a vessel. If none arrived within two months he was to try again in October. If there still was no vessel, he was to go "back to the sea" again on May 15 and October 25, 1840. Laframboise was expected to maintain a position in the valley or if necessary to extend his operations "into the more populous country" southwest of California.[653]

The Cadboro skirted the California shore from Cape Mendocino southward, but no sign of the Southern Party could be seen. Stopping off Fort Ross, McLeod was hospitably welcomed by the Russians and invited to use the harbor at Bodega as a base while seeking the elusive trappers. A letter was sent to General Vallejo at Sonoma, who agreed to furnish horses, and soon Laframboise and ten men were on their way to the Sacramento Valley. The camp was found on Feather River, and all hurried to Bodega with their returns. The furs were put on board the Cadboro, supplies were received for the winter hunt,

and the entire brigade set out to "try their fortunes in the same field as last year, where, from the abundance of Beaver, there is still a fair prospect of success." Since Laframboise now knew where Trinidad Bay was, Douglas was hopeful that, come May, 1839, the "anxiety and derangement" of 1838 could be avoided.[654]

Laframboise was back on the Sacramento River by October 19, 1838, but his hunting in the Central Valley was disturbed "by the enmity of General Vallejo . . . who repeatedly ordered him to leave the country under penalty of seizure." The Mexican officer was suspicious of the Company's men and made allegations against them of an unspecified nature. But Laframboise could not leave his base camp without sacrificing the winter's hunt In this "distressed" state, he made an agreement with Governor Juan B. Alvarado to assist the government in punishing Indian raiders who were making life in California's frontier settlements almost unbearable. From that moment annoyance from local authorities ceased, but the Canadian was "so completely scared" that he determined to leave for the Columbia as soon as the trails became passable in the spring. Meanwhile, however, a detached party of eight men had penetrated two hundred miles south of the brigade's "present range" and had encountered friendly natives and an "abundance of Beaver."[655]

Not waiting to go to the coast as ordered, Laframboise hit the homeward trail. On April 30, 1839, a small advance party reached the depot with word that the brigade was on its way. Douglas's immediate reaction was displeasure at Laframboise's disobedience

of precise and detailed orders. His next thought was that he would have to make new arrangements for outfitting the next expedition, and he ordered the manager at Fort Walla Walla to send down forty horses by land.[656]

When the irrepressible Canadian arrived during June, however, he related his difficulties with the California officials in such a graphic manner that Douglas began to view his conduct "in a very excusable light," the more so because the expedition had suffered no actual damage. In fact, Douglas termed the hunt "very successful," as indeed it had been. The Southern Party for Outfit 1838-1839 was credited with a profit of £980.18s.7d.[657]

Douglas had no intention of withdrawing from California "while it continues to afford profitable employment." He chose to interpret Alvarado's acceptance of Laframboise's "proffered aid" as "expressive certainly, of no desire that our visits, to the confines of his jurisdiction should cease." But in a diplomatically worded note he found it necessary to disavow certain of the engagements made by his Canadian subordinate. In making his offers, Douglas told Alvarado, Laframboise had "entered upon a province foreign to his duties." But, added the temporary Columbia manager, "we shall, in fact, hold ourselves bound to observe the provisions of the treaty . . . as far as consistent with the laws of our country." Laframboise would go to the "Tulares" -- the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley -- and exert a "powerful influence" over the natives there to keep the peace, but Douglas said nothing about joining in any punitive campaigns

against the Indians.[658] In fact, he held as "unadmissable" those clauses requiring offensive action, but he would "most cheerfully perform" those clauses otherwise aimed at promoting "the quiet and security of the country."[659]

Laframboise was given his orders on July 14, 1839. Douglas told him to go "immediately" to the Central Valley, to lay in a supply of winter provisions, and then to go to "the Lake you found last spring [Tulare Lake?]." He was to hunt there as long as he took beaver, though he could trap on Feather River, San Francisco Bay, or elsewhere if necessary. "We will not make war upon the Indians," Laframboise was told, but he was to "speak to them against stealing horses" and to try to keep them quiet. He was further instructed to keep as far from the coast as possible "in order, to avoid intercourse with the Settlements," and he was to be back at Vancouver by at least June 20, 1840.[660]

Laframboise got away on July 20, 1839. His party, besides himself, consisted of thirty-three "engaged trappers and Indians" and Joseph McLoughlin, the "Big Doctor's" son and "a young man of determined character." Unhappily, young McLoughlin developed a severe "pulmonary attack" on Rogue River and had to return. "This misfortune," said Douglas a few months later, "has weakened the effective strength of the Expedition but Laframboise must do his best alone, as it is impossible to reinforce him for this season."[661]

Little is known about the activities of Laframboise's 1839-1840 expedition beyond the fact that he arrived back at Fort Vancouver on

June 22, 1840, only two days late! McLoughlin, by then back from Europe, rather churlishly described the returns as "tolerable." As a matter of fact they were slightly better than those of the previous year -- 1611 beaver and 695 land otter, for a total profit of £1111.17s.6d.[662]

The Governor and Committee had been watching the progress of the Southern Expedition with much interest. On March 20, 1839, they told Governor Simpson that the Snake and California parties were "productive of much benefit in checking the approach of rival expeditions," and in "collecting furs that could never come into our possession by any other means." The directors continued: "we are therefore desirous they should be reinforced and maintained in full vigour," but they cautioned that "positive orders" should be given to the leaders to have as little communication as possible with strangers and to avoid the settlements in California as far as was "consistent with perfect safety."[663]

But by the summer of 1840 the directors had heard of Laframboise's troubles with the California authorities, and they were particularly disturbed by his "treaty" with Governor Alvarado, which they termed a "most indiscreet proceeding." They pointed to the Canadian's "repeated instances of a lack of good judgment" and to his lack of firmness. Though admitting that he was "very efficient," they considered him "ineligible for such an important command." While Laframboise might continue as "an officer of the expedition" they recommended that "the principal command be placed in better hands."[664]

While these observations would not reach McLoughlin for some months, the Columbia manager had been thinking along the same lines himself. He told the directors that he had intended to appoint someone else to lead the 1840-1841 Southern expedition "but we had so much business to attend that I could not spare an Officer and prevailed upon Mr. Laframboise to continue in charge." So the corpulent little Canadian was once more at the head of the Southern Party when it departed from Fort Vancouver perhaps on September 23, 1840, or even during October. On September 14 McLoughlin had written to Laframboise, saying: "I expect you will make your people attend to their religious duties. You will have prayers said morning and evening and you will keep order and regularity in your camp."[665] The party was to hunt "South of the Umpqua" and was to return "about the usual time," the next June. There were twenty-four men in the brigade in addition to the leader.[666]

Again, little is known about the activities of the 1840-1841 expedition, except that it operated in the Central Valley of California. Laframboise is reported to have camped at the Marysville Buttes for "several months," and at least two of his men cached traps there.[667] This location was visited despite a letter which had been received at Vancouver during the summer from "Captain" John A. Sutter, a Swiss adventurer who in 1839 had established a settlement on the site of today's Sacramento. Sutter, wishing to keep the Central Valley beaver for himself and acting upon the authority of California government, had ordered the Southern Party not to return

to "the Tulares" [the San Joaquin Valley]. But McLoughlin chose to ignore this communication, "having no information that he was an accredited agent of the government."[668]

On its homeward journey in the spring of 1841, Laframboise's brigade helped to drive north a large flock of sheep and a herd of cattle which James Douglas had purchased for the Company in the San Francisco Bay region. It is doubtful that the trappers enjoyed this unusual duty. The stock was delivered to the Tualatin Plains at the north end of the Willamette Valley during June, 1841, so Laframboise probably met his deadline for reaching Fort Vancouver. The returns were satisfactory though not spectacular -- 1590 beaver and 2-1/2 pounds of "beaver coating," producing a profit of £1408.14s.11d.[669]

The Laframboise of 1841 was a different man from the exuberant voyageur of earlier years who was reputed to have had a native "wife" in every tribe he encountered. He had married the daughter of a fellow Canadian in 1839, he had developed a Willamette Valley farm which was extensive for its time and place, and he was dissatisfied with his lack of advancement in the Company. Prior to leaving Fort Vancouver in 1840 he had requested a furlough to visit Canada in 1841.[670]

Thus he evidently did not consider himself available for another "South Party," at least in the immediate future. On September 5, 1841, he visited the Willamette Valley camp of Lieutenant George Foster Emmons, a member of the United States Exploring

Expedition, who was putting together a party to investigate the country between the Columbia River and San Francisco Bay. Laframboise "evinced a disposition" to accompany this expedition, but Emmons withheld "all encouragement" when he learned that the Canadian "had just rec'd a letter from Dr. McL[oughlin] directing him to organize his [Southern] party immediately for the regular annual trip to California." Emmons did, however, enlist several other men who were to remain in California and trap for the Hudson's Bay Company during the winter.[671]

But on October 12, 1841, when the Southern Party started for California it was commanded not by Michel Laframboise but by Clerk Francis Ermatinger.[672] Obviously, if Emmons was correct in his understanding that Michel had originally been offered the leadership, something had happened between late August or early September and early October. That something may have been merely that McLoughlin for at least a year had been intending to change the command of the California brigade and that Ermatinger, an able and experienced veteran of the Flathead and Snake Country trades, was suddenly available, having reached the depot from Fort Hall on September 29, 1841.[673] But there probably was more to it than that.

During March, 1841, Chief Factor James Douglas returned to Fort Vancouver from California, where he had, among other things, negotiated an agreement with the authorities permitting the Company's trappers to operate freely "in all parts of the uncultivated frontier" after certain conditions were met.[674] McLoughlin was elated. He

reported to Governor Simpson on April 7, 1841, that beaver were said "still to abound" at San Francisco Bay. If Laframboise could take 6790 beaver between 1835 and 1839 with only a few men, he added, "we have every reason to think they will do much better now that they have a free range of the country." He dreamed of organizing a force of one hundred trappers, under "a commissioned gentleman" assisted by two "active clerks" and composed of "decent well behaved men," to hunt as far south as the mouth of the Colorado River "where Beaver is said to be more abundant than in the Bay of St. Francisco."[675]

In addition, Governor George Simpson reached Fort Vancouver on August 25, 1841, inspecting Company establishments while on his famous "overland journey" around the world.[676] He too, of course, had heard of the arrangement made by Douglas, and on June 20, 1841, he had told the London directors: "I think it will be advisable to increase that expedition to at least 50 men . . . and place them under the charge of a Commissioned Officer . . . for the purpose of making a more extended range of country . . . . I hope to be able to reach Fort Vancouver in sufficient time to get this expedition reorganized previous to its return [to California]."[677] And both he and McLoughlin were well aware by that time of the Committee's belief that Laframboise lacked the good judgment required for the command of a major expedition to a province where "unpleasant accidents" might occur at any moment. It is quite probable, then, that Simpson and McLoughlin discussed the need for a change in leadership before the governor departed for the Northwest Coast on

September 1 after a visit of only six days.[678]

Francis Ermatinger was not at all happy at his sudden appointment to the Southern Party. His request for permission to go East had been refused by Governor Simpson in a "heartless letter," and his hoped-for promotion to a chief tradership had been delayed. In return, Ermatinger determined to show Sir George that "there is two ways of doing our duty" -- the right way and the slack way.[679]

He was still in the Willamette Valley on October 20, 1841, getting his party organized and equipped. Evidently he started southward shortly thereafter. Simpson was later to blame the failure of the expedition on this delay in completing arrangements.[680] Regardless of who was at fault, the season was late, as Ermatinger was soon to discover. It was reported in California that his brigade was "larger than usual."[681] One writer has said that it numbered about one hundred persons, including women and children.[682]

Ermatinger evidently took the usual route by way of the Willamette Valley and the Rogue River to the Klamath River in the Shasta area. Either before or after reaching the Klamath -- Governor Simpson who told the story seems to have been confused as to the geography -- the party crossed a "mountain" -- probably the Siskiyous -- where the men had to walk for three days through snow two feet deep. It is possible, however, that Ermatinger took McLeod's route of 1829 east of Mount Shasta, since Simpson seems to indicate that this notorious "Pit mountain" was the "very ground" where the unfortunate McLeod lost all his furs and "nearly three hundred horses."

On December 12 Ermatinger and his people were camped on "a petty tributary of the Sacramento." During the night heavy rains caused the stream to rise nine feet. The next day the party struggled through deep mud and water to higher ground. One Indian women and several horses had not reached this sanctuary by nightfall, and the next morning they were found dead, the horses still standing "stiff and ghastly" with their loads on their backs.[683] By December 27 the brigade was somewhere in the general vicinity of Sutter's Fort.[684] Ermatinger next seems to have taken his party to the west side of the valley. In January, 1842, an American encountered the brigade on Putah Creek near the present Winters.[685] And according to Simpson a camp was established on Cache Creek, from which the trappers moved out in small groups to ply their trade, largely about San Francisco Bay. They had orders to reassemble at a place "two days distant from Sonoma" by April 25. Ermatinger then went to this unstated location and set up a base camp at which the women and children could await the return of their men.[686]

While at this camp the British leader received a "rather authoritative mandate" from Sutter to present himself at the latter's establishment, and "intimating" that the Company's men had no right to hunt in California. "Mr. Ermatinger," later wrote Governor Simpson, "did not consider it necessary to pay any other attention to Mr Sutter's notification, than to reply that he did not mean to comply . . . nor to respect his assumed authority."[687]

Aside from such occasional administrative duties, Ermatinger seems to have done little during the next several months except travel about to the settlements of central California, visiting with his old friend William G. Rae at the newly established Company trading post at Yerba Buena -- the present San Francisco -- and enjoying the scenery. As he later told his brother: "I passed a jovial winter of it . . . , let the trappers take care of themselves while I was galloping about the country to the American shipping, to Rae's &c."[688]

But this gadding about was interrupted on one important occasion. Governor Simpson had reached San Francisco by ship on December 21, 1841, and within a few weeks he visited Sonoma. Desiring to see Ermatinger but not knowing where he was, the governor left a note which soon reached its man. The bourgeois, finding that Simpson had left Yerba Buena for Monterey, acquired a "Spanish costume" and followed on horseback. The meeting was to have important consequences. Ermatinger conviced Simpson that the Sacramento Valley and the San Francisco Bay region were "so much exhausted as no longer to afford remunerating occupation to a trapping party," though how the clerk could have arrived at such a conclusion in such a short time is a mystery. The governor also gained the impression that the Colorado River at the head of the Gulf of California, "which was considered the Eldorado of the West," was "now totally destitute of fur bearing animals."[689]

In November, 1841, Simpson had been eager to maintain the Southern party "from year to year while any material benefit can

be derived from its operations."[690] On March 1, 1842, after his talk with Ermatinger, Simpson told the London directors: "it does not appear that any benefit can arise from continuing our trapping expedition within Mexican territory. it has therefore been determined to break up the party in the course of this year, if no other promising field for its operations be discovered."[691]

Ermatinger was back at his base camp to meet his hunters by about April 25, "the latest date at which the swarms of mosquitoes would allow them to carry on their trapping in the haunts of the beaver and the otter."[692] Soon afterwards he started north for Fort Vancouver, driving along a herd of eighty-three cattle which he had purchased as a private speculation, an action entirely contrary to Company regulations. Upon reaching the Willamette Valley he sold the animals on his own account before Chief Factor McLoughlin knew they had arrived. But little happened in Oregon that did not soon come to the attention of the "Big Doctor," and he required Ermatinger to assign the proceeds of the sale, less expenses, to the concern. Further, Ermatinger had the dubious honor of being reprimanded by McLoughlin, Simpson, and the Governor and Committee for this folly.[693]

Ermatinger reached the depot by July 6, 1842, when he accepted the long-sought parchment indicating his promotion to the rank of chief trader. In the words of McLoughlin, his expedition had "made poorly out."[694] His returns were only 763 beaver, 4-1/2 pounds of beaver coating, and 387 land otter -- less than half those for

Outfit 1840. He had indeed shown that there were two ways of doing his duty.

At Honolulu on March 1, 1842, Governor Simpson gave McLoughlin specific orders not to send trapping parties to any part of the country "South of the Shasty Mountains" and to break up the Southern Party "unless you can find useful employment for it in the Snake country."[695] McLoughlin protested at length against this decision but gained only limited permission for "the re-equipment of that expedition from Fort Vancouver" should "Mr. Ermatinger's hunts during the present campaign, and his report as to future prospects" be "sufficiently encouraging."[696]

Ermatinger's returns were by no means encouraging, but McLoughlin did not disband the Southern Party. Instead, he sent it back to California. While admitting that Ermatinger had made "only a poor hunt," the "Big Doctor" excused his disobedience of orders by claiming that the expedition had paid for itself and that "the men who composed it were too old, and had too large families" to be employed at Fort Vancouver or to be permitted to hunt in its vicinity, "as it would afford an opportunity to our opponents to tamper with them."[697] Besides, as McLoughlin had earlier told Simpson, he believed it was "our interest" to hunt California "as much as we can, and as quick as possible while it is in our power."[698]

On June 21, 1842, the Council of the Northern Department, in the absence of Governor Simpson, appointed Ermatinger to the command of the "Bonaventura Expedition."[699] Evidently Simpson had not told

the Chief Factors and Chief Traders of his intention to break up the party. But by the time word of Ermatinger's appointment reached Fort Vancouver by the fall express, the new chief trader had been married to Mrs. McLoughlin's granddaughter and sent off to take charge of Cowlitz Farm. Also, Ermatinger had been promised that he could go "out" in the spring of 1843; therefore McLoughlin did not consider him available for service in California.[700]

McLoughlin thus fell back on Michel Laframboise once more. The veteran postmaster consented to go, but for one trip only. The brigade left "in the autumn of 1842" bound for the "Bay of St. Francisco" on an expedition intended to last two years.[701] As usual, McLoughlin was too sanguine. The trip was far shorter than anticipated.

Laframboise reached the San Francisco Bay area and established a base camp where he spent most of the winter. But the Canadian was no disciplinarian, and he lost control of his men. Exactly what happened is not entirely clear, but evidently the trappers obtained liquor from the settlements and spent much of their time carousing, shooting Indians, and stealing horses. It is reported that the local authorities ordered them from the country. There probably was some truth to these charges, since at least one member of the party, Antoine Dechamp, spent some time in a California jail.[702]

One thing is certain: the beaver returns were terrible. After the winter hunt the pelts were taken to Yerba Buena and turned over to the Company's agent, William G. Rae, for shipment to Vancouver by water. Later the returns from "a poor Spring hunt" were also

delivered to Rae.[703] On August 27, 1843, Rae reported to London: "The Company's trapping Party under the charge of Mr Laframboise left the Sacramento a few days ago, they have made out miserably I do not think the whole hunt exceeds 650 Otter and beaver skins."[704]

The brigade returned to Fort Vancouver on October 10, 1843.[705] Its hunt had indeed been miserable -- 462 large beaver, 66 small beaver, 12 pounds of beaver coating, and 173 land otters -- but the expedition had paid for itself and even, McLoughlin later claimed, produced a profit of £477.[706]

The conduct of the men had been so "bad" that Laframboise refused to return to California under any consideration. "I am," he told the "Big Doctor," "through the mercy of God come back safe because I gave way to my men; if I had assumed the tone of master I would have been murdered by them. I will not venture again."[707]

Laframboise retired to his Willamette farm after this trip. In June, 1844, Governor Simpson received the news that Laframboise had left the service with the ungracious comment that he was "a very unfit man for conducting a party" -- harsh words for an employee who had served on the Columbia for thirty-two years.[708]

McLoughlin was not yet willing to abandon the Southern expeditions however. On November 15, 1843, he told the Governor and Committee he intended to send the brigade to hunt "this winter . . . about the Umpaqua."[709] Although no accounts of this expedition have yet been seen by the present writer, it seems that nineteen or twenty trappers did leave for the south on this occasion; there is no indication in records yet seen as to who the leader was. This brigade was still

designated the "Southern Party."[710] It is quite probable that the brigade did not reach central California, because on July 4, 1844, McLoughlin told the Governor and Committee that "since 1842 [Outfit 1842] we have had no hunting parties in that direction."[711]

The returns of the 1843-1844 (Outfit 1843) "South Party" were 586 large beaver, 166 small beaver, 13 pounds of beaver coating, and 121 land otters.[712] McLoughlin calculated the "gain" from these relatively few furs to be £425.4.1.[713]

Evidently even before this expedition left Fort Vancouver in the fall of 1843 McLoughlin had received a letter written to him by the Governor and Committee on December 21, 1842, directing him to "either break up that party, if there be no prospect of employing it to advantage in California, or change the scene of its operations to some quarter promising more favorable results."[714] Seemingly convinced at last of "the impoverished state of the country," McLoughlin bowed to the will of his superiors and disbanded the Southern Party. Personnel records show that a high percentage of the trappers who made up that roughneck band retired to the Willamette during 1844.[715] The "Bonaventura Expedition" or "South Party" was no more.

Miscellaneous trapping parties

The Snake Party and the Southern or Buenaventura Party were by far the most important Hudson's Bay Company trapping brigades in the Columbia Department. They were the only ones to be assigned

separate headings in the concern's accounts and personnel records. They were organized on a continuing basis over a period of years, composed of a body of employees and freemen which, while individual members dropped out and were replaced by others at frequent intervals, contained a solid core of veterans. These brigades, with rare exceptions, were the largest trapping parties in the Columbia Department, and their primary function was trapping; trading ordinarily was a secondary consideration. Almost without a break they went out annually according to predetermined schedules. In short, they were institutions.

But they were not the only trapping parties to operate in the Columbia Department. At least one other, the Flathead Party, had a longer life than either, extending, under the Hudson's Bay Company, from the 1820s to the 1850s. But the Flathead Party generally was composed of fewer men, and its primary purpose was to accompany the Flathead Indians to their buffalo-hunting grounds on the "plains" and to trade for furs, leather, grease, dried meat, and other native products. Beginning in the early 1830s and continuing as long as American trappers were active in the Rockies and the Snake Country, the Flathead expeditions concentrated on bartering as many pelts from these rivals as possible. Almost always, however, this brigade was accompanied by trappers who hunted as opportunity afforded.

Similarly, after 1832 the Snake Party -- which long retained this designation in the Company's books -- shifted its emphasis to trading, both with the Indians and with American trappers. After

1837 Fort Hall on the Snake River was included in the operations of the Snake Party, and trading with emigrants and, later, with Mormon settlers, became a large part of its business. Here again, as has already been mentioned, trappers operated in conjunction with the "Snake Party," sometimes in considerable strength.

A number of other trapping parties went out from posts in the Columbia Department. In fact, when an establishment found itself with idle employees temporarily on its hands, a frequent practice was to send the men out to hunt beaver.

A few examples will serve to show the motives behind the dispatch of these small parties. Unfortunately, the results of these expeditions cannot be determined, since their returns were mingled with those of the posts to which they were attached.

In the Fort Vancouver District report for 1826-1827, Chief Factor McLoughlin noted that there was "a Good deal of Beaver Yet in the District but the Natives are so Indolent and so Independent of us they will not hunt." Therefore, he added: "we could Employ from twenty to thirty trappers to Great Advantage . . . . we have brought the Indians of this District to that state that we can disperse trappers in small parties (if we had them) of three or four men."[716]

By 1829 McLoughlin had two parties in the field, and he told a fellow employee that he intended to keep one band "constantly" in the Cowlitz region and another in the Willamette, although whether these expeditions were for trading or trapping or both is not clear.[717]

During the same year the "Big Doctor" told John Work, in charge of the Colvile District, that it was not to "our Interest to Induce

freemen to remain about the flat Heads" and urged him to attempt to arrange for these people to "join next year some of our trapping parties."[718] Also in 1829 Governor Simpson noted that the fur trade at Fort Vancouver had shown a decline. "But," he commented, "there are a few spots within reach of small Trapping parties, which may through their labors, keep up the returns to near about their present standard for several years to come."[719]

In September, 1829, Clerk James Birnie wrote to McLoughlin from a temporary trading station he was managing at The Dalles and suggested that a trapping party should be dispatched from that point. McLoughlin was receptive to the idea and even ordered veteran François Payette down from the Colvile District to assist in the project.[720] It is doubtful, however, that this expedition ever took the field, because Birnie did not long remain at The Dalles.

In general, there is very little information presently available concerning these miscellaneous small parties. Apparently there is a fertile field here awaiting some future researcher.

Fur brigades, trappers, and the trapper's life

In the vernacular of the British fur trade, a brigade ordinarily was a flotilla of canoes or boats, most often carrying supplies or men to the field or fur returns to the depots. Only occasionally was the term applied to trapping parties or to major pack trains. According to H. M. Chittenden, the name was sometimes employed in the earlier years of the American fur trade to designate trapping parties or supply trains but "quickly fell into disuse."[721]

To Hudson's Bay Company employees west of the Rockies, the term "the brigade" meant exclusively the annual party which each spring brought the fur returns from New Caledonia and the interior Columbia Basin posts to Fort Vancouver by a combination of canoe, pack train, and boat travel and which each summer returned with the "outfits" for the interior establishments. The two largest trapping and trading parties, those to the Snake Country and to the south of Fort Vancouver, were routinely called "the Snake Expedition" or "the Snake Party" and the "Buenaventura (or Bonaventura) Expedition," "the Umpqua Party," "the Southern Expedition," "the Southern Party," or "the South Party" respectively. The word "brigade" in reference to these expeditions is seldom found in the records.[722]

The Southern Party and the Snake Party were set up as distinct units in the Company's accounts and personnel records. That is, they were administratively on a par with the trading posts in the Columbia Department; their profits and losses were computed individually and not ordinarily lumped in with those of an establishment as were those, say, of the Flathead expedition.[723]

Whether a party made a profit or loss in any business year depended on the ratio of "costs" to "credits." The costs were classified as supplies, servants' wages, and "Servants credits furs" (amounts credited to an engagé for his share of the furs he turned in and, probably, to a free trapper for the pelts he sold to the Company). The credits were the "returns" (the furs brought to the depot by the party), the "book debts" (amounts owed by trappers and others for goods and supplies purchased from the Company), and "inventory."[724]

Preparations for the two major trapping parties began considerably in advance of the return of the groups from the previous year's expeditions. Although circumstances sometimes resulted in variations in the routine, the departmental manager usually began to take steps in the spring to bring to hand the supplies and animals which would be required for the expeditions leaving each fall. His estimates of the needs were based on requisitions previously submitted by the leaders of the parties.[725] For example, in March, 1829, Chief Factor McLoughlin took steps to make sure that Chief Trader John W. Dease, in charge of the Colvile District, sent forty bushels of peas and corn to Walla Walla for use of the Snake Expedition.[726]

Horse equipment, commonly called "agrès" or "agrèts" by the traders, largely came from Flathead Post, where buffalo skins and other types of hides were obtained from the natives.[727] This term included such items as apishimons (or appechemons) (pieces of buffalo robes used as saddle cloths), parfleches (leather or skin containers for carrying provisions or personal effects; roughly, saddle bags), pack saddles, and pack cords. Leather lodges and deerskins also came from Flathead. These items were sent to Fort Colvile, the headquarters of the district to which Flathead Post belonged, and then were forwarded to Walla Walla and Fort Vancouver, often by the annual brigades, to be ready for issue when the trapping parties were organized.[728]

An idea of the quantities of such articles required for a single expedition is provided by the requisition for the "Snake Outfit

1831" which Peter Skene Ogden submitted on behalf of John Work to Chief Trader Francis Heron at Fort Colvile on August 21, 1830, more than a year in advance of the time when the items would be needed. The document read as follows:

> Requisition
> 6 Leather Lodges -- 40 Appichimons, 40 Pack Saddles -- 20 Par Fleches, 100 Prime Chevr[euil] Skins 60 Elk Skins, 200 fath[oms] Pack Cords -- 3 New Boats [needed to take furs to depot and return upstream with supplies].[729]

Horses were required in large numbers for the trapping expeditions, and they were the most troublesome necessities to obtain. Alexander Ross in 1823 estimated that each hunter should have from two to four horses for trips to the Snake Country.[730] About a year later Governor Simpson said that each man needed "three Horses to do his duty well."[731] John Work believed that a trapper required four good horses to work his traps, transport his supplies and gear, and pack out his pelts.[732] Additional animals were necessary for carrying the expedition's trade goods, provisions, and other supplies, while the men bringing their families along required mounts and pack animals for them also. As an example, Ross's Snake Party of 1824 consisted of 35 men, 25 women, and 64 children, a total of 144; they required the use of 392 horses.[733]

The horses and mules brought back from an expedition were taken out on the next trip. To "recruit" such animals after the arduous service in the Snake Country the Company maintained a grazing farm several miles from Fort Nez Percés. Horses coming in with the Southern Party were at first left with Indians or settlers in the

French Prairie-Champoeg area of the Willamette Valley. These persons proved to be unreliable caretakers, however, so a grazing farm was developed on the Tualatin Plains, west of the present Portland.[734] But the numbers of such "veterans" were always insufficient. Due to starvation, lack of water, poisonous plants, thefts and attacks by Indians, cold weather, slaughter by the trappers for food, and other vicissitudes, every expedition took a heavy toll of the horses. On McLeod's 1829 expedition to California the loss was one hundred per cent.

The great bulk of the replacements were obtained through Fort Nez Percés, where they were traded from the Nez Percé Indians of the Clearwater-Grande Ronde region. In 1829 Governor Simpson stated that the Company depended on that tribe "for an annual supply of about 250 Horses."[735] Not all of these animals were always required for trapping parties, but the number purchased for the brigades was substantial. In August, 1831, for instance, McLoughlin told the manager at Walla Walla that John Work "should have" 130 horses for his next expedition. If all of them could not be obtained at Nez Percés, the "Big Doctor" added, the chief trader at Fort Colvile was to assist with as many as he could collect.[736]

Some of the horses for the Southern parties were obtained from the same source. Sometimes these animals were driven down along the north bank of the Columbia to Fort Vancouver. On other occasions they were taken across the Cascades into the Willamette Valley.[737] Additional mounts, if still needed, were occasionally purchased

from the freemen and Indians of the Willamette Valley. Chief Trader McLeod, for instance, bought ten horses and two colts from "Lucier the Freeman" near Champoeg on May 16, 1826, before starting for the mouth of the Umpqua.[738]

Unfortunately for the prosperity of the expeditions, the horses finally assembled at the starting points were almost always poor in quality. Those from the previous journeys seldom had time to fill out their emaciated bodies, cure their saddle sores, or repair their worn hoofs. The fresh animals received from the Indians were little better. Party leaders nearly every year complained bitterly about the "low state" of the animals traded from the Nez Percés. The Indians, said Samuel Black at Walla Walla in 1829, did not "improve in breaking in horses or riding them."[739] Also, the Nez Percés were clever horse traders and always managed to unload a number of culls and untamed mustangs on the British.[740] "Three fourths of the horses I received last fall from Mr Black," wrote Ogden in 1827, "were young, two years old and ill suited to undergo the severe privations they met with in the Snake Country."[741]

Ogden was inclined to put much of the blame on the Company. "It would be far more to the interest of the concern," he once said, "to pay an increase[d] price to the natives and select good horses." He pointed out that the Americans he met in the Snake Country bought their animals from the "Upper Nez Percy tribe" where good horses could be obtained, though the cost was probably double what the British paid. The American animals, he said, "will in due season

fully pay their value, whereas those we obtain never can."[742] He meant that greater mobility would result in more beaver being taken. There was much truth in Ogden's argument, but the difficulty in purchasing adequate horses did not lie entirely in the price paid.

Such provisions and supplies as could not be provided by the inland posts were made available by the depot at Fort Vancouver. These included an assortment of trade goods -- awls, beads, hawk bells, blankets, files, ammunition, copper kettles, scalping knives, thimbles, tobacco, and wire to name only a few -- since furs were traded from the Indians, from American trappers, and from the inhabitants of California whenever an opportunity arose. A supply of stationary -- bound notebooks, paper, ink powder, lead pencils, quills, and sealing wax -- was carried along for the required journals, accounts, and correspondence. Provisions, both for the bourgeois and the men, included such items as brandy, corn, corn meal, flour, molasses, split peas, round peas, Carolina rice, rum, salt, and tallow.

Under the heading of "Country made Articles" were axes, bags, biscuit, oil cloth, cold chisels, tin cups, knives, shot molds, shirts, beaver traps, and trap parts. "Country Produce" included such items as appechemons, oak kegs, dressed deer skins, kegs of butter, and, occasionally, a tent. Another classification covered "Sundries supplied Freemen & Trappers" not included in general shop sales. This heading covered a large range of items, with emphasis on awls, cloth of various types, point blankets, buttons, files,

gunflints, gunpowder, gunworms, handkerchiefs, hats, kettles, knives, needles, pepper, pins, ribbons, shirts, shot, thimbles, thread, tobacco, twine, and wire. Provisions, including rum, and "Country made Articles" were also listed under articles sold to freemen.[743]

In addition, there is known to have been certain equipment which does not appear in any financial accounts thus far examined in the preparation of this study. In September, 1826 for example, A. R. McLeod mentioned having a "hand vice."[744] Several of the Snake expeditions carried along a three-pound cannon.[745]

John Dunn, who served briefly as a postmaster at Fort Vancouver, has left a picturesque description of the bustle about the depot as a trapping party was being prepared for its journey:

> The blacksmiths are busily engaged making beaver-traps . . . -- the storekeepers making up articles for trade, and equipping the men (as each of them takes from the store every requisite article), the clerk in charge of the provision-store (generally called, after the French, depance), packing up provisions for them, to last until they get into the hunting ground -- the clerk in charge of the farm providing horses, and other requisite articles.[746]

Except for the items purchased by individuals, all of these supplies appear to have left Vancouver "in bulk," not to be distributed further until the jump-off points in the frontier were reached. Ordinarily transportation of both goods and persons bound for the Snake Country was by Columbia boats as far as Fort Nez Percés, The Dalles, or other place where the expedition was to be finally organized.

Similarly, the outfit and the personnel of the Southern Party were usually carried by boat to Willamette Falls, portaged over the

"chutes," and taken by boat or canoe to the Champoeg-Newberg area. But on occasion, when there were a number of horses to be taken from Fort Vancouver to the assembly point, a portion of the people drove the animals downstream from the depot for a few miles and then swam them across the river to Sauvie Island and the Scappoose vicinity, from whence a trail led south through the Tualatin Plains to near the mouth of Chehalem Creek not far from Champoeg.

Not all expeditions to the south took their final departure from Champoeg, however. John Work, on his way to the Umpqua in 1834, for instance, distributed horses to his party at the Tualatin Plains.[747] But veteran Company clerk George B. Roberts was undoubtedly correct, in general, when he recalled in later years that Champoeg was "the starting point for California."[748]

A most important feature of the departure of a trapping party from Fort Vancouver was the regale or régale -- an issue of spirits and food given as a "treat" to the men about to embark on another journey of hardship and privation. For the Snake Party this affair was habitually held a few miles upstream from the fort in the vicinity of the Company's mills, well isolated from the depot employees. The régales for the departing Southern expeditions usually took place near Champoeg.

Peter Skene Ogden and perhaps other leaders were able to keep their men somewhat under control on these occasions, and as a result little delay in starting was experienced. Perhaps the reason for

this moderation on the part of the trappers, at least during the early years of the Company's tenure on the Pacific Slope, was the fact that, as Ogden remarked, "even at headquarters the Regale they receive is so trifling that it is scarcely worth accepting."[749]

But not all leaders were so fortunate. Chief Trader McLeod gave his men a regale at Champoeg on Monday evening, September 8, 1828, before setting out for the Umpqua. On Wednesday he noted that many of the party were still unable to work due to the effects of liquor, but by Thursday, though the people were still "enjoying themselves," he was relieved to find that most of the drink had been consumed.[750] The costs of the regale at departure and of another on arrival back at the base or depot were carefully toted up and charged against the expenses of the expedition.[751]

When the jump-off points were reached the final organization of the parties began. Often additional men, both engagés (salaried Company employees) and freemen (free-lance trappers). were enlisted; ill or superannuated hands were left behind. If necessary, additional horses were acquired. Provisions, ammunition, and horses were distributed among the men. The agrés were carefully checked and handed out to those entitled to them. Any items in bad repair were put to rights, and those lacking were obtained or manufactured on the spot.

It was at this stage that the terms of employment and the difference between servants and freemen became even more important than at the depot. These terms determined who got what during the distribution and on what conditions and at what price. The financial

arrangements varied somewhat over the years, and the following discussion therefore is necessarily somewhat generalized.

The Company's regular employees, the so-called "servants" or engagés, received an annual salary. The rolls of the expeditions reveal that most of the servants in the various parties were ranked as "middlemen," the ordinary paddlers of a canoe or oarsmen of a boat; their pay was £17 per year. "Laborers" also appear on expedition rolls; they were often Hawaiians, and their wages too were £17 as a rule, though sometimes if the laborers were young half-breeds or Indians the pay was less. Occasionally a "boute" went along with a trapping party; these men were the bowsmen or steersmen on canoes or boats, and their usual wage was £22 per annum.[752]

It was common knowledge that serving in trapping expeditions, particularly those to the Snake Country, was the most dangerous and disagreeable work in the Columbia. In order to induce employees to accept this duty, certain concessions in remuneration were made. In 1827 McLoughlin said that the servants in Ogden's Snake Party were given the "same terms as last year," that is their regular wages of £17 per annum for ordinary laborers and voyageurs. In addition, the proceeds of the hunt were divided in three portions: first the expenses of the expedition, charged at inventory prices, were to be repaid to the Company in beaver at the rate of four shillings per skin; then one half of the remainder went to the concern as profit; and the other half was credited to the servants at the rate of four shillings per made beaver.[753]

By 1838, however, the lot of the engagés appears to have improved somewhat. James Douglas explained the situation to Charles Ross as follows: "The half Trappers receive wages as ff employed in a fort, besides the value of half their hunt, expenses deducted . . . . a large Beaver is paid 11/ a small do 5/6 & a large land otter 10/ a small one 5/." These were the same prices as those paid to freemen.[754] In addition, servants were able to purchase clothing and other supplies at a considerable discount from prices charged outsiders.

Freemen, who sometimes made up the larger part of trapping parties, were remunerated on a different basis. They received no wage or other payment "save their hunts." As has been seen, in 1826 as part of his move to alleviate the lot of the trappers, McLoughlin agreed to pay ten shillings for each large beaver and five shillings for every "cub" turned in by the freemen. By 1838 these amounts had been altered to eleven shillings for a large beaver, 5 shillings six pence for each small one, ten shillings for a large land otter, and five shillings for a small otter. In 1826 McLoughlin also permitted the freemen to buy their "Hunting Implements" at inventory prices and "personal necessaries" up to the amount of £10 or £15 at prices paid by servants -- fifty per cent above prime cost for imported goods.[755]

Ogden came to believe that the prices charged to freemen were still too high and that the limit placed on discount purchases was unrealistic. Late in 1827 he stated that a freeman "from the laborious life he leads I am now of opinion he cannot do with less than £25,

and on his return to the Depot even with the above advances he will reach that place naked."[756] This suggestion was not favorably received, and by 1831 the freemen may even have lost ground a bit, since McLoughlin seems to have indicated that both hunting implements and personal items were being charged to them at servants' prices.[757]

Freemen, in 1828 at least, were charged £2 for each horse they bought from the Company. These and practically all other purchases for that matter were advanced on credit. Horses were returned when a man "gave over" hunting, and the only final charge was for animals lost, including those that died from hardship or were stolen by Indians. Similarly, "hunting implements" could be returned for full credit, lass the cost of repairing those broken. Lost items were charged to the loser.[758] What this meant in essence was that horses and traps were supplied by the Company with "all losses" to be "defrayed by the Trappers."[759]

Each trapper carried, on an average, seven traps.[760] In 1824 Alexander Ross said the men in his Snake Party each had from six to ten steel traps.[761] A freeman was charged -- in 1826 at least -- fifteen shillings for each trap; they were issued free to engagés. In either case, however, the traps had to be paid for if lost or damaged. If traps or their chains were broken during service, the trappers had to pay the cost of repairs in the field which, said Ogden, was nearly as much as the original cost. The men were willing to pay these steep charges rather than forego the use of their traps for the season. Traps were often lost in service, usually by the breaking of the chains, by being stolen by Indians or on rare occasions