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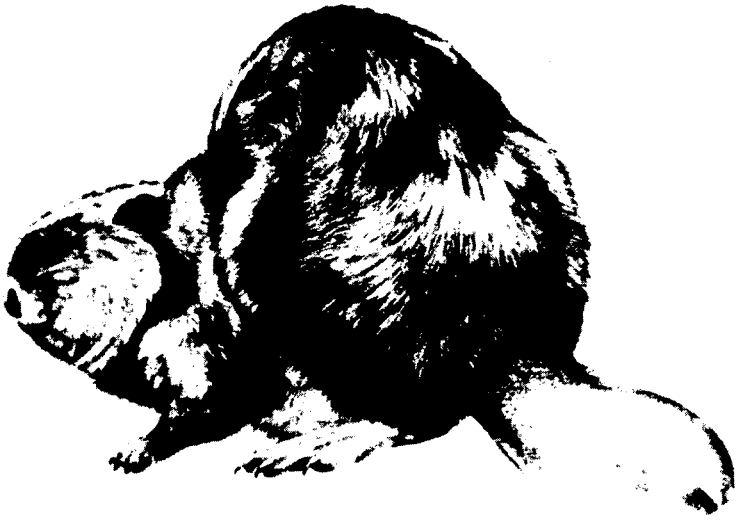
IN
STORAGE

Grand Portage

A History Of The Sites, People, and Fur Trade

by

Erwin N. Thompson



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PREFACE

This report on Grand Portage National Monument is in effect a basic data study, although the criteria for such was developed after the report was in progress. The study has been prepared in accordance with Historical Resource Study Proposal, Grand Portage-H-1c, "Grand Portage: A History of French, British, and United States Usage, ca. 1660-1842."

The following article was unintentionally omitted from the bibliography; its contribution to the report is hereby recognized: Nancy L. Woolworth, "The Grand Portage Mission, 1731-1965," Minnesota History, 39, (1965), 301-310.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Grand Portage's long history has a staggering wealth of personalities, economics, geography, and high adventure. However the historical documents possess a great barren of facts concerning the structures and appearance of the fur trade posts at both ends of the Portage. This dearth could be determined only by a study of the voluminous materials at archives and libraries in Canada, the United States, and, thanks to microfilm, Great Britain. The lack of structural details in the records was a disappointment. Yet the research had its moments of high adventure, such as pouring through David Thompson's magnificient diaries, or following anxiously a business deal in 200-year-old correspondence, as if one's concern could affect the outcome.

Recognition must be given to the superior research that former Park Historian Robert J. Riley completed while assigned to Grand Portage National Monument. His report is a remarkably thorough document considering the limited amount of material then available. My report, aided by sufficient amounts of time and travel, adds relatively little to Riley's data.

The work on Grand Portage by other NPS people, including Superintendent William Bromberg, Mrs. Eleanor From, James Reiley, Tom Swanstron, Dr. John A. Hussey, Merrill J. Mattes, Dr. Wilfred D. Logan, Francis R. Roberson, and Henry A. Judd is also very much appreciated.

As the bibliography indicates, several archives and libraries contributed greatly in making available their fur trade holdings. These include the Séminaire de Québec, Quebec (L'Abbe Honorius Provost, Director); McGill University Library, Montreal (Mrs. R. Carroll and Mrs. Lew Haddard); University of Montreal Library (Mr. Bilkins, Chief of Reference, and André Audy, Searcher); Toronto Public Library, Ontario; Ontario Department of Public Records and Archives, Toronto (Miss Jessie L. M. Jackson, Archivist); Canadian Public Archives, Ottawa; Detroit Public Library, Michigan; and the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul (Russell W. Fridley, Director, Lucile M. Kane, Archivist, and Alan R. Woolworth, Curator). I had the pleasure to meet at the University of Montreal a fellow researcher on Grand Portage, Mrs. Marie Gérin-Lajoie, who generously shared her knowledge. Thanks are extended to all these institutions and their staffs.

Mr. R. A. Reynolds, Secretary, Hudson's Bay Company, London, England, kindly gave permission to consult the appropriate portions of the Hudson's Bay Company's archives that are on microfilm at the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa. The Hudson's Bay

Company's records by being available on film in North America present a lodestone to all researchers involved with the fur trade.

Superintendent Eliot Davis, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, Washington, graciously made available a rare impression of the North West Company's seal that appears on the cover of this report.

I extend my appreciation too to the staff members of the Division of History, NPS, who generously contributed knowledge, time, and patience while this report was in progress. Miss Kathy See deserves applause for maintaining her composure as she skillfully transformed a hand-written manuscript into typed pages. All errors lurking in the report are my responsibility.

E. N. T.

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Archeology

Reference is made to Appendix 9 in this report. Alan Woolworth, who is very much aware of the archeological situation at Grand Portage, has made several recommendations for further excavating. Because documentary evidence on the structures is scarce, this additional work is quite critical to an understanding of the area at Grand Portage and at Fort Charlotte. Woolworth's comments on re-excavating the interior of the NW Co. stockade are also important. An examination of his report on the work done in the 1930's shows that modern techniques and adequate funding and supervision could well be employed in the compound.

Sites

A relatively small amount of level land lies within the boundaries of Grand Portage NM. At the same time, space is required for such necessities as a visitor center and a maintenance area. Great care should be taken in selecting these sites so that damage to or intrusion upon historic scenes does not occur. Few remains will ever be found of the northmen's camp ground or of the Montreal voyageurs' sleeping area along the shore. Yet these sites, insofar as they may be determined, are as historically important as the foundation ruins of the great hall. They should not be "used" for modern conveniences on the basis that archeology shows no traces of ruins. The files show that a few years ago consideration was given to placing some of the modern necessities in that part of the park between Lake Superior and Mount Rose that lies to the southwest of the NW Co. stockade. Inasmuch as this area still seems to be the one least affected by the events of the fur trade, that concept still appears to be sound.

We may never positively identify such sites as the canoe-manufacturing yard (local tradition suspects it was a few yards up Grand Portage Creek). Yet when determining future plans for the park, the unknown should be considered along with the known.

Great Hall

Architectural experts agree that the existing reconstruction of the Great Hall is far from satisfactory. Yet Grand Portage needs reconstructions if casual visitors are to acquire any deep appreciation of its history. Recommend that the work

of Dr. Hussey and Mr. Koue in studying fur trade posts be continued. Also recommend that the park prepare an RSP for research on great halls, with particular emphasis on Fort William, Ont. In the process of preparing this report, I noticed a number of descriptions and illustrations of Fort William that would be useful in reconstructing a great hall, especially since the same men were at both posts and Fort William was Grand Portage's successor. However, I believe that the present great Hall should not be removed until 1. a visitor center is completed and 2. until the study and plans for a new reconstruction are completed.

Interpretation

While Grand Portage lacks structures, it has a wealth of themes suited for interpretation, e.g., canoe construction, fur presses, the voyageur, portaging, trade goods, and many more. Interpretation could take place at Grand Portage, the portage itself, and on to Fort Charlotte. The portage itself is in many ways equally important as the concentration at the eastern end--it was the sole reason that the fur traders concentrated there.

The Portage

The eastern end of the portage has certain problems, such as a highway crossing it, a village on both sides, and a great many physical developments accompanied by a lack of documentation as to its exact route through Grand Portage village. But farther west the trail has remarkable integrity. Autos may now reach a point about half-way along the trail via a dead-end road (the former highway to Canada). Recommend that visitors be encouraged to drive this road and at the end of it be further encouraged to walk a portion of the portage.

Among the fascinating aspects of this beautiful portion of the portage, at present, is a very active beaver colony. The park is to be complimented for allowing this colony to continue its operations, even though the beavers constantly flood a portion of the trail. Some modification of the beavers' efforts are necessary, of course, just to keep the trail open to portagers and hikers. This is successfully done by daily monitoring. The ponds are successfully navigated by means of board walks. This practice should be continued for there is room for beavers and visitors. The experience also reminds us that in the fur trade days, portages were seldom easy, dry walks. Where else, at present, may one see a beaver colony at work--the animal that caused the fur trade to reach its zenith.

Significance

No matter how one looks at it, the prime significance of Grand Portage is its relationship to the building of Canada. By every test, except its location south of the later international border, its history is Canadian. Other than its role in the North American fur trade in general and the rivalry between Great Britain and the United States in the far west, the historical importance of the park cannot be forced into United States history. This fact should cause no great problem; in this case we are the custodians of a site at which occurred important events of another country's history.

Note:

Since the completion of the report, the Great Hall at Grand Portage burned to the ground when struck by lightning. This accident invalidates part of the recommendations concerning the Great Hall that are found on pages vii and viii. However, the rest of those recommendations are still valid and are retained for the reader's consideration.

The names of the North West Company partners sound like a roll call of the clans of Culloden. These men were hardy, courageous, shrewd and proud. They spent a good part of their lives travelling incredible distances in birch-bark canoes, shooting rapids, or navigating inland seas. They were wrecked and drowned. They suffered hunger and starvation. They were robbed and murdered by the Indians, and sometimes by one another. They fell the victims of smallpox, syphilis, and rum. Yet they conquered half a continent, and they built up a commercial empire, the like of which North America at least has never seen.

-- W. Stewart Wallace, Documents Relating to the North West Company

CHAPTER 1

The French Régime

Daring, ambitious Samuel de Champlain, son of a French sea-captain and the father of New France, exposed the secrets of the great waterway that led from the unknown interior of the New World to the salt water of the lower St. Lawrence. He and his men overcame the Lachine Rapids of the St. Lawrence, just above the future site of Montreal, traveled by canoe up the Ottawa, sweated across the portages, discovered Lake Nipissing, and became the first Europeans to gaze across Georgian Bay, that huge arm of Lake Huron. The year was 1615, just eight years after Champlain had founded Quebec city.

In that short time the officials of the new colony had already recognized the economic potential of what would come to be called the fur trade. By unlocking the geographical secrets of the new land, Champlain provided the basis for the certain expansion of that trade and for the feats of exploration that his successors would make during the 150 years that the colony would belong to France.

Shortly after Champlain's travels of 1615-16, his one-time servant, Etienne Brulé, possibly became the first European to gaze upon a still larger body of water, the grey-blue inland sea to be named Lake Superior. Historians must use "possibly" when discussing Brulé, for this son of the

forest did not record his wanderings in writing nor did his hand trace any maps.

The colonists did not stampede to follow these first explorations. The fur trade remained far behind the fishing industry in importance throughout the seventeenth century. Not until a rage for hats made of beaver fur swept over Europe toward the close of that century did the trade begin its rapid rise to prominence in Canada's early history.[1] Meanwhile a few French continued to push westward, justifying their effort on an elusive dream of an easy passage to the Western Sea and on carrying Christianity to the Indians.[2]

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1. In 1809, a leading official of the North West Company was able to write correctly that the fur trade was British America's most important commerce. This is in contrast to the United States where the fur trade was of much less importance in relation to other industries. "Some account of the trade carried on by the North West Company", photostat, 23 pages, 1808 or 1809, Public Archives, Ottawa. Much of this account is believed to have been written by William McGillivray, who hereafter will be identified as the author. This account has been published in Authur G. Doughty, Report of the Public Archives for the Year 1928 (Ottawa, 1928), pp. 56-73. See also Harold A. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, an Introduction to Canadian Economic History (Toronto, U. of Toronto Press, 1967) p. 12.

2. Europeans believed that the Pacific Ocean lay not very far beyond the Great Lakes. This misconception was the driving force behind much of the early exploration. Even after the breadth of North America was recognized, explorers maintained a fierce rivalry in trying to find routes of communication, by water if possible, across or around the continent. With regard to missionaries, Alexander Begg, History of the North-West (3 vols., Toronto, Hunter, Rose & Co., 1894 and 1895), 1, 63, says that Fathers Joques and Raymbault visited Lake Superior in 1641.

In 1659 two brothers-in-law entered on Lake Superior in the spirit of exploration. Pierre Radisson and Médard Chouart des Groseilliers, both French born, slipped away from Three Rivers in defiance of the royal governor's decree that no one could engage in the fur trade without a permit. They passed the winter in the bleak rocky land to the north and west of Lake Superior, the Fire Country, returning in the summer of 1660 loaded with furs. Students of this expedition and of a second by this pair a few years later have concluded that they did not pass near the subject of this report, the Grand Portage.[3]

Later, these two adventurers, running into the disfavor of the governor at Quebec, changed their allegience to an alien country, England, where they provided the stimulus that created the Hudson's Bay Company, the longest lived of all the great fur-trading companies.

The evolution of the fur trade in French Canada proceeded apace with the growth of the colony. At first any would-be trader, who had both the nerve and the capital, could undertake trade with the Indians of the western country. The resulting reckless competition, combined with losses inflicted by the fierce raids of the Iroquois (New France's lasting enemy), brought on increasing governmental control. Champlain himself arranged for a monopoly of sorts,

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3. Solon J. Buck, "The Story of Grand Portage", Minnesota History Bulletin, 5 (1923-24), 15; Innis, Fur Trade, p. 25.

which at first was little more than a loose association of those involved. In 1627, however, the Company of New France gained a more real monopoly. Although the names of the companies and their members would change from time to time, and the concept of monopoly would be modified to meet changing conditions, governmental control by means of licenses characterized the fur trade throughout the French régime.[4]

As the trade slowly increased, French settlement moved up the St. Lawrence so that the sources of trade goods would be closer to those involved in the trade. A fort grew up at Three Rivers in 1634. Another settlement began at the head of navigation in 1641-42. Located below the Lachine Rapids, near the junction of the rushing Ottawa and the stronger, quieter St. Lawrence, this settlement would go down in history as one of the great French cities of the world by the name of Montreal. Before the end of the regime, a system would evolve, at least rudimentarily, in which the interior traders would share their profits and risks with the Montreal merchants.

At their maximum development, the French posts would be of three kinds: the "free" posts, such as Detroit and Michilimackinac; the king's posts, such as Tadoussac and Toronto, and those posts leased to individuals, which included

4. Innis, Fur Trade, pp. 32-33, 36-38, and 40-42; W. McGillivray.

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5. Wayne
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Sault Ste. Marie and St. Joseph's. All were under one degree or another of governmental control; each enjoyed a monopoly within a prescribed geographic area; all were required to sell their furs to the King's stores at fixed prices. The trade was marred from time to time by greed and corruption.[5]

Gradually, posts came into being along the Great Lakes. However, the north shore of Lake Superior presented a formidable barrier that took time to breach. Large navigable rivers did not cut troughs through that lonely land of the glacier-scoured Laurentian Shield, a cold land of rock, lakes, and forests. Eventually, the early explorers discovered three practical routes that crossed "the height of land" to the drainage basins of Lake Winnipeg and, ultimately, Hudson Bay. The St. Louis River (the Fond du Lac), after a leisurely trip through northeastern Minnesota, empties into the southwest corner of Lake Superior at the present city of Duluth. By traveling up that stream and making portages to other rivers, men discovered that they could reach Rainy River near what is now International Falls. Of the three routes, this was by far the longest. Almost 200 miles to the northeast, the Kaministikwia River adds its

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5. Wayne E. Stevens, "The Organization of the British Fur Trade, 1760-1800", The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 3, (1916), 177; W. McGillivray.

vray.

waters to Lake Superior by means of Thunder Bay.[6] The explorers found that they could travel up this small river and by making portages from lake to lake and stream to stream could cross the land to Rainy Lake. The early French, at least until La Vérendrye, used this route more than the other two.

The third passage lay about thirty miles by water southward of the Kaministikwia. This the explorers came to call the Pigeon River. Today it marks a small part of the boundary between the United States and Canada. The lower few miles of the Pigeon are not navigable. Here the river rushes between narrow walls, its rapids swirl over rock masses, and large crashing waterfalls cause men to gaze with awe. However only five miles by canoe from the mouth of the Pigeon River, toward the southwest, lies a small, sheltered, gentle bay. Here, from ages unknown to history, the Indians had developed a trail that led almost nine miles across the hills to a point on the Pigeon that lay above the rapids and falls. The French were the first Europeans to discover the trail and they named it <u>le Grand Portage</u>, the Great Carrying-Place.

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6. Spelled a variety of ways in the historical sources, and spelled by the North West Company most often as Kaministiquia, this river appears here in the official form recognized by the Government of Canada.

Although this last route had more portages than either of the others, it was the most direct route to western lands and was destined to become famous. For a brief time, before revolutions and international relations changed the course of nations, this small piece of land tied together the fur trade of the west and the capitals of Europe and parts of Asia. And across its green miles, there strode a grand assemblage of traders, explorers, scientists, and financiers. The strategic geography of this small neck of land, the vitality and stature of the men who came here, and the economic wealth that poured over the trail have for generations captured, if not stunned, the imaginations of generations of students.

Daniel Greysolon, the Sieur Du Lhut, known too as the King of the Woodsmen and as an honest man, may have been the first identifiable Frenchman to visit the Grand Portage. In 1679 he paddled along the north shore of Lake Superior, intent on establishing a trading post. Most historians believe this post to have been at the mouth of the Kaministikwia, although a few believe that he selected the mouth of the Pigeon. In either case, it is possible that he learned of the Grand Portage either through his contacts with the Indians of the area or by personal exploration.[7] However,

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7. Innis, Fur Trade, p. 49; Buck, p. 15; Marcel Giraud, History of Canada (Paris, University Presses of Canada, 1946), trans. by Harold S. Boedeker, p. 26 of typescript at Minnesota Historical Society.

Du Lhut failed to record this event, if indeed it occurred, thus he did not earn for himself the title of discoverer of the Grand Portage.

A decade later, in 1668, Jacques de Noyon, a twenty-year-old French Canadian born at Three Rivers, was at the mouth of the Kaministikwia. He traveled up that river, passing through Dog Lake, Dog River, Height-of-Land Lake, Lac des Mille Lacs, and the Seine River to reach Rainy Lake. At the west end of Rainy Lake he built a small wintering post. He traded with the Assiniboines and, traveling still farther westward, reached at least the Lake of the Woods. But, like Du Lhut, he failed to note the existence of the Grand Portage.[8]

In discussing these documented explorations it is important to note the coureurs de bois, the runners of the woods, a group of half-legendary, mostly illegal, independent traders, who avoided securing licenses to collect furs throughout the wilderness. They could find their heroes in Radisson

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8. Lawrence J. Burpee, ed., Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de la Vérendrye and His Sons (Toronto, the Champlain Society, 1927), p. 6; Innis, Fur Trade, p. 50; Giraud, History of Canada, p. 26; Burpee, The Search for the Western Sea, the Story of the Explorations of North-Western America (2 volumes, Toronto, The Macmillan Company, 1935), 1, 243, does not give credit to de Noyon for traveling west of Lake of the Woods to Lake Winnipeg as have some historians.

and Groseilliers who had defied the government in trading with the Indians. Secretly slipping away from the settlements, avoiding the king's agents en route, and adopting the customs of the Indians, they traveled far and wide in the regions of Lakes Superior and Michigan. A 1681 letter describes their activities:

> There are two sorts of Coureurs de bois. The first go to the original haunts of the beaver, among the Indian tribes of the Assinibouets, Nadoussieux, Miamis, Illinois and others, and these cannot make the trip in less than two or three years. The second, who are not so numerous, merely go so far as the Long Sault, Petit Nation, and sometimes to Michilimackinac.[9]

These wide-ranging free spirits too may have known the Grand Portage and their moccasins may have crushed its dew-laden grass blades. Yet, whether because of illiteracy or because the nature of their business discouraged record keeping, these romanticized wanderers failed to meet the test of history as its discoverers.

In the years following Jacques de Noyon's activities a lull occurred in activities along the north shore of Lake Superior. One of the reasons for this was the French capture and temporary ownership of the British posts on Hudson Bay. When the Treaty of Utrecht, 1713, returned these forts

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9. Innis, Fur Trade, pp. 59-60, quoting a letter from M. Du Chesneau to M. de Seignelay, Nov. 13, 1681.

to the Hudson's Bay Company, the French turned once more to breaking through the barrier of the Shield. While the trade in the Illinois was more lucrative than the northwest, France considered it important to gain the allegiance of the Indians north and west of Lake Superior in order to discourage them from trading with the British to the north.

In 1717, Lt. Zacharie Robutel, Sieur de la Noüe, left Quebec with 32 voyageurs to reestablish Fort Kaministikwia on a permanent basis and to open trade with the interior. From then until the fall of New France, French traders and military were active at this establishment. It would be but a matter of time before Grand Portage entered the historical record.[10]

The time came in 1722 when a French officer, known only as Pachot, wrote that the most favorable route for trading west was by way of the Pigeon (he called it the Nantokuagane) River which, he said, was about seven lieues (about 18 miles) distant from the Kaministikwia. While the officer was a little short in his estimation and while his description implied that he had not seen the Pigeon himself, there is little doubt but that he knew of the existence of the Grand Portage.[11]

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10. Burpee, La Vérendrye, p. 7; Innis, Fur Trade, p. 91; Marcel Giraud, The Canadian Half-Breed, His Role in the History of the Provinces of the West (Paris, Institute of Ethnology, 1945) Works and Memoirs of the Institute of Ethnology, 44, translated by Harold S. Boedeker, p. 182 of typescript at Minnesota Hist. Society.

11. Burpee, Search for the Western Sea, 1, 202.

Despite the constant westering of the French, almost a century and a quarter passed between the founding of Quebec and the first documented crossing of the Grand Portage. In 1731, Pierre Gaultier de la Vérendrye sailed toward the Grand Portage with the intention of crossing it in a major effort to find the Western Sea. Born to the governor of Three Rivers in 1685, La Vérendrye, as he is known to history, had served in the army in France. Returning to Canada, he had acquired command of the trading posts on Lake Nipigon north of Lake Superior where he had resided from 1727 to 1728. Here he had had Indians sketch maps of the routes to "the great river of the West" and had decided he would travel by way of the Pigeon River.

With him in 1731 were three sons: Jean-Baptiste, Pierre, and François, and his nephew La Jemeraye. At Michilimackinac, a Jesuit priest, Father Messayer (or Mesaiger) joined the expedition. Counting everyone, including the soldiers and the voyageurs, the party amounted to 50. On August 26, the expedition reached the Grand Portage. In a letter written by the governor of New France the following year, one senses that, although this was the first documented visit, the site was already well known. The Marquis de Beauharnois wrote that he had received letters from both La Vérendrye and Father Mesaiger, who informed him about their experiences at "the

portage of Nantaouagan", that is, the Grand Portage.[12]

The experiences described were not entirely pleasant. On arriving at the portage, which La Vérendrye described as being from three to three and one quarter lieues (7.5 to 8.1 miles) long, he was disappointed to learn that "all our people, in dismay at the length of the portage... mutinied and loudly demanded that I should turn back." Out of the group, La Vérendrye finally found one voyageur who would cross. La Jemeraye, the nephew and who was second in command, one of the sons, and the lone volunteer set off across the portage to establish a post on Rainy Lake. La Vérendrye led the rest up the coast to the fort at Kaministikwia to pass the winter.[13]

La Jemeraye threw together Fort Pierre that fall on the outlet of Rainy Lake, wintered there, and returned across the Grand Portage in the summer of 1732 to report to

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12. Burpee, La Vérendrye, pp. 53-4 and 91. Burpee quotes from a letter from M. le Marquis de Beauharnois, Oct. 15, 1732, to Monseigneur Maurepas.

13. Ibid., pp. 436-7. The quotation concerning the mutiny is taken from a 1774 letter by La Vérendrye, thirteen years after the event. In this same letter he uses the name Grand Portage. His original letters of 1731-32 are lost. While he was explicit about only one volunteer, there must have been more. For he also said he "had enough [men?] to equip four medium sized canoes", and "had the portage made at once and gave them a good guide." Four men could not alone have managed four laden, medium-sized canoes. Beauharnois in 1732 (see note 12) said that three medium sized canoes were dispatched. See also Burpee, "Grand Portage", Minnesota History, 12 (1931), 363. A lieue was about 2½ miles.

La Vérendrye. By June 8 all was ready and La Vérendrye led the whole group across the portage and on into the interior of the country, taking "great care to improve all the portages" along the way.

He pushed on to the Lake of the Woods where he built Fort St. Charles, said to be a stockaded enclosure 100 feet square having four bastions, two gates, and one watch tower. La Vérendrye's and his sons' travels of the next dozen years, which were sufficient to mark him one of the great men of discovery, need only to be summarized here. In 1734 he founded Fort Maurepas on the Red River that flowed north into Lake Winnipeg. Four years later he constructed Fort La Reine (Portage la Prairie today) on the Assiniboine. Also in 1738, he visited the Mandan Indians on the Missouri River.

Two of his sons, François and Louis-Joseph (a fourth son who joined his father in 1735), searched still farther westward for the Western Sea. Students still disagree on their route but some conclude that the mountains the young men saw were the Black Hills. La Vérendrye himself received credit for discovering the Saskatchewan River and for traveling up it as far as it forks, in present Saskatchewan. Other forts built by the family included Dauphin on Lake Winnipegosis and Bourbon near the mouth of the Saskatchewan. During these years, La Vérendrye visited Quebec from time to time to renew his support. Chances are high

that he and his people continued to use the Grand Portage route, which the explorer himself recognized as having more portages than the Kaministikwia route but being one-third shorter and having fewer rapids.

Despite its success at exploration, the family traveled in the shadow of death. La Jemeraye died in 1736. That same year Indians killed Jean-Baptiste, Father Jean Pierre Aubneau, and about twenty voyageurs at the Lake of the Woods. Louis-Joseph was drowned at sea in 1761 while enroute to France. Pierre traveled eastward to Prince Edward Island (Isle de St. Jean) around 1746. He made at least one more visit to the west, then faded from history. François lived the longest, dying in Montreal in 1794. La Vérendrye himself gave up his western travels in 1744. He died in Montreal in 1749, greatly in debt toward the end. He did not find the Western Sea, but he did mark a land that would become an empire for others after him. Most important to the moment, La Vérendrye placed the Grand Portage on the maps and he bridged the gap from Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg.[14]

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14. Burpee, La Vérendrye, pp. 9-32; Burpee, "Grand Portage, Minn. History, 12, 362-64; Innis, Fur Trade, pp. 92-94; Giraud, Canadian Half-Breed, pp. 192 and 195; Arthur E. Jones, S.J., ed., Rare or Unpublished Documents II, The Aubneau Collection, 1734-1745 (Montreal, Archives of St. Mary's College, 1893), pp. 3, 49, 67, 71, 87, and 93. Father Aubneau also described Fort St. Charles: "merely an enclosure made with four rows of posts, from twelve to fifteen feet in height, in the form of an oblong square, within which are a few rough cabins constructed of

Only ten years elapsed between the death of La Vérendrye and the fall of Quebec to General Wolfe. Small notices in the accounts of the time indicate that the French continued to be active west of Lake Superior in the last days of New France.

The question arises whether or not the French erected any kind of post at the Lake Superior end of the Grand Portage, as they had at the mouth of the Kaministikwia. The evidence is inconclusive. A writer, early in the present century, said that La Noüe himself erected a fort at Grand Portage between 1718 and 1720, while he was in command of Kaministikwia. However, he cited no sources and subsequent research has disclosed no evidence to support this. Solon Buck, an ardent student of Grand Portage, wrote that a post undoubtedly was established at the eastern end of the trail during the French period, but, alas, "of this no information has been found."[15] Sir Alexander Mackenzie, of whom much is to be said later, wrote that the French had a "principal establishment" at the mouth of the Kaministikwia,

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logs and clay and covered with bark." Burpee, Search for the Western Sea, 1, 243, gives Jean Baptiste de la Vérendrye credit as being the first European to travel from the Lake of the Woods to Lake Winnipeg and Red River.

15. Buck, 16 and 16n.

but made no mention of a fort at Grand Portage.[16]

In 1750, Jacques R. Legardeur de Saint-Pierre became the commander of the "posts of the Western Sea". He made his headquarters at Vérendrye's Fort La Reine on the Assiniboine. One of his men, Boucher de Niverville, traveled up the Saskatchewan in 1751 and built Fort La Jonquière in the evening shadows of the Rocky Mountains. In 1753, Legardeur's replacement, Chevalier de la Corne, visited Grand Portage. La Corne was the last of these governors. He returned to Quebec in 1755. The fires of war in North America and Europe were about to be formally lit.[17]

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16. Alexander Mackenzie, Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence (Ann Arbor, University Microfilm, 1966).

17. Burpee, "Grand Portage", Minn. History, 12, 364-65; Burpee, La Vérendrye, pp. 32-33 and 37. La Corne has acquired the distinction of being the first to plant wheat in present Saskatchewan, today one of the world's great wheat producing areas.

CHAPTER 2

Genesis of the North West Company

The fortress of Quebec fell to the British in 1759. Montreal held out until 1760, not because it was a center of French military strength but because winter slowed down the British troops. Three more years passed before France ceded Canada, in 1763. Now one flag flew from Florida to Hudson Bay.

French traders had abandoned their western posts before the fall of Quebec. When Wolfe and Montcalm received their mortal wounds on the Plains of Abraham, "there was no Frenchman, save an occasional straggler, left west of Lake Superior."[1] However, this condition did not last for long. Even before the ink dried on the treaty of peace, French and British traders in Montreal were gathering the resources to renew the western trade. In 1761 the first of these moved up the waterway. Among the small number that year was Alexander Henry. Later, his namesake would be in the fur trade, thus historians have called this first Alexander "the Elder" or "Senior". He had been active in the fur trade in New York and during the war had been a civilian supplier to the British army moving on Montreal.

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1. W. S. Wallace, "The Pedlars from Quebec", The Canadian Historical Review, 13 (1932), 388.

After the fall of the town, he decided to remain there. A smart man could see opportunity in the ruins of the collapsed French trade.

Henry may have preceded Robert Rogers' 250 Rangers who went up to the former French post at Michilimackinac in the fall of 1761. If he went on to the Grand Portage that year, he may have already pushed on before a party of traders and a detachment of the Rangers arrived in the spring of 1762.[2] One of the soldiers in the escort was Thompson Maxwell, who later would be a participant in the Boston Tea Party. Reminiscing years later, Maxwell recalled the journey. He referred to the traders as the North West Company. That was the pardonable error of hindsight. There was no such firm in 1762. "In the latter part of May," he wrote, "we crossed Lake Superior, to the Grand Portage, at the northwest corner of the Lake, guarding, as we went, the goods of the Northwest Company." Maxwell set a precedent that was to be followed by most future visitors when he failed to describe the place: "There we unloaded and rested a few days and returned to Mackinaw again sometime in August."[3]

William McGillivray recounted in his narrative that

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2. Innis, Fur Trade, p. 168. Innis says that Henry arrived at Grand Portage in 1761. See also Buck, "Grand Portage", Minn. History, 5 (1923-24), 17.

3. "Thompson Maxwell's Narrative, 1760-1763", Minn. Historical Society, Collections, 11 (1888), 213n, 214n, and 215.

between 1761 and 1763, "some English and French traders sent goods to Lake Superior, and a few went even as far north as rainy lake."[4] This renewal of the trade suffered a sudden set-back in 1763, when Pontiac resisted encroachment on Indian lands by the British. The Rangers had left Michilimackinac, and this post fell to the Indians. Pontiac then laid siege to Detroit and effectively checked the travel of traders. This hiatus lasted until 1765. It proved to be the last interruption in Grand Portage's role as the key to the northwest fur trade for the next forty years.

Also in 1763, the new British government at Quebec proclaimed an end to the French system of monopoly, but attempted to regulate the fur trade by its own means. The governor declared the Indian trade open to everyone providing a license was first secured. Sir William Johnson, Superintendent of Northern Districts, assumed general control of the traders and laid down regulations. This scheme, while bringing about certain problems that will be noted, provided the basis for the strong and rapid growth of the fur trade out of Montreal. The new British traders quickly gained control of the great waterway stretching inland to Grand Portage. They spread into the southwest through the Illinois country and on to the Missouri River. They marched

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4. W. McGillivray.

westward up the Saskatchewan and would soon fan out from the Arctic Ocean to the Oregon Country. They would discover the way to the Western Sea that La Vérendrye had vainly sought. Neither the Hudson's Bay Company to the north nor the American colonies to the south would be able to break into the superb line of communication that led to empires.[5]

After the threat from Pontiac had passed, the traders immediately renewed their activities. Alexander Henry grasped the lead by securing a license in 1765 to trade in the Lake Superior region, a license that in effect gave him a temporary monopoly.[6] The next year, peddlers, as the Hudson's Bay Company derisively called the Montreal-based traders, reached Lake Winnipeg and established a post amidst the ruins of the French forts.

Among the traders securing licenses at this time were Thomas Corry, an Englishman, Maurice Blondeau, a French Canadian, and James Finlay. This last was the first English trader from Canada to reach the Saskatchewan. He arrived there in 1768. Others would be close on his heels.[7] Another

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5. Stevens, pp. 179-81; Innis, Fur Trade, p. 170.

6. Innis, Fur Trade, p. 168.

7. Wallace, "Pedlars", Can. Hist. Review, 13 (1932), 388-89 and 392; W. S. Wallace, The Peddlars from Quebec, and Other Papers on the Nor'Westers (Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1954), pp. 4-7. W. McGillivray did not agree that British traders were active on the Saskatchewan that early. He claimed that they could not travel safely on that river until 1771.

name destined for importance was Frobisher. Three brothers of this family engaged in the trade. Benjamin was the first to walk the Grand Portage, in 1765. Joseph followed his footprints in 1768. Thomas did not arrive at the Portage until 1773.[8]

In 1767, Grand Portage received its first literary-minded visitor, Jonathan Carver, an associate of Robert Rogers, whose Rangers had raised the first British flag at the portage five years earlier. Carver did not describe the site in detail, but his description is so matter-of-fact as to indicate that traffic on the portage was well developed.

He told his readers that "those who go on the north west trade, to the Lakes De Pluye [Rainy], Dubois [Lake of the Woods], etc. carry over their canoes and baggage about nine miles, till they come to a number of small lakes." He wrote that "at the Grand Portage is a small bay, before the entrance of which lies an island that intercepts the dreary and uninterrupted view over the lake, which otherwise would have presented itself, and makes the bay serene and pleasant." Carver was always interested in Indians and here he met "a large party of Killistinoe [Cree] and Assinipoil," who "were

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8. Strathcona Papers, Public Archives, Ottawa, Box 2, Correspondence, relating principally to Joseph Frobisher. Innis, Fur Trade, pp. 190-191, says that Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher made their first venture to the northwest in 1769.

come down to this place in order to meet the traders from Michilimackinac, who make this their road to the north west."

These traders had not yet arrived, and both Carver and the Indians, their provisions low, waited impatiently. When the Montrealers did arrive, Carver was unable to procure sufficient supplies from them to continue his explorations; thus he had to "return to the place from whence I first began my extensive circuit." His account made no reference to either any ruins of a fort from the French period or an establishment erected by the British. The only structure that he noted was "a large house" that belonged to the Chippewa leader in that part of the country.[9]

The evidence is scanty, but it seems probable that Carver arrived at Grand Portage one year before the British began to develop the lake-end of the trail. Many years later, Maurice Blondeau testified about the early days at Grand Portage. He recalled that when he was first there, in 1766, the forest had not yet been cleared from the shore of the bay. However, two or three years later, which would be after Carver's visit, the waterfront was cleared of its growth. Blondeau did not make it clear if a fort was

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9. Jonathan Carver, Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768 (London, 1781), pp. 70, 78, and 82; Burpee, "Grand Portage", Minn. History, 12 (1931), 365; Wallace, Peddlars, p. 3. Wallace names the others in Carver's party as James Stanley Goddard, James Tute, William Bruce, and two French Canadian interpreters.

erected at that same time.[10]

After 1769, when Guy Carleton assumed the governorship and loosened restrictions on the fur trade, Grand Portage entered the records with increasing frequency. Of the 76 trading licenses that Governor Carleton issued in 1769, three designated Lake Superior and two others involved the Sea of the West, that is, Lake Winnipeg. These latter two involved Maurice Blondeau (3 canoes and 19 men) and Laurent Ermatinger (2 canoes and 15 men). The next year saw Blondeau sending four canoes and twenty men with goods valued at £1,506. At this time, 1770, Benjamin Frobisher, then associated with the Montreal firm of Todd, McGill and Co., acquired a license to send three canoes to Michilimackinac and Grand Portage. His brother, Joseph, apparently spent the winter of 1770-71 trading with the Indians on the Red River. The years 1771-74 saw licenses issued to such people as Thomas Corry, Franceway, the Frobishers, Blondeau, Ermatinger, and James McGill. In 1774,

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10. Court of King's Bench, Montreal, 1803, "Dominique Rousseau and Joseph Bailly vs. Duncan McGillivray", photostats, Public Archives, Ottawa. The original document is in the Strathcona Papers, Edinburgh General Register House, Scotland. This important document is edited by Grace Lee Nute, "A British Legal Case and Old Grand Portage", Minn. History, 21, (1940), 117-48. Blondeau's testimony appears on p. 134. See also Joseph E. and Estelle L. Bayliss, in collaboration with Milo M. Quaife, River of Destiny, the Saint Marys (Detroit, Wayne University Press, 1955), p. 52.

Samuel Hearne of the Hudson's Bay Company, who was watching the rival peddlers with intense interest, reported that more than 60 canoes had come inland from the Grand Portage.[11]

Laurent Ermatinger, from his desk in Montreal, sent a flurry of letters during these years to his partners at Michilimackinac and Grand Portage. From them, a glimpse of the operations may be seen. In one of these he introduces the name of Pangman as being a merchant at Grand Portage (1772). Peter Pangman will return to this narrative later. In a letter to Forrest Oakes at Grand Portage, also in 1772, he advised Oakes to have the voyageurs who brought the trade goods from Montreal to carry the pieces across the portage. This "very good skeeme" will allow Oakes to proceed into the interior more quickly. The North West Company would later employ this same technique so as to allow the wintering partners from the more distant posts to make the turnabout more quickly.

In 1774, Ermatinger informed Oakes of changes taking place in the trade. He mentioned the forming of partnerships among the hitherto fiercely competitive traders.

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11. Louise Phelps Kellogg, The British Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest (Madison, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1935), pp. 102-3; Innis, Fur Trade, pp. 190-93; Wallace, Peddlars, pp. 9-13; E. E. Rich, The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870 (2 vols., London, The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), 2, 12. In 1770 there were still only 360 Englishmen in all Quebec.

"Messers Todd and McGill setts out Next Week...the former has sold his share of concern in the North West Trade to Mr. Charles Paterson who setts out to Winter in that Quarter with McGill." He added that "Adhamar and Blondeau are also concerned in that Trade. A good many Goods are going this Year into the Northwest which I am afraid may Hurt the ensuing Year's Trade."[12]

Ermatinger's letters reflected the condition of the fur trade in 1775, fifteen years after the British had captured Quebec. While there was still a number of French Canadians engaged, the number of British was growing ever larger, whether they be new immigrants or migrants from the southern provinces. Yet the common heritage of these newcomers did not prevent their being ruthless adversaries. None of them hesitated to employ liquor to bend whatever Indians to their ends. Ermatinger alone, in 1775, sent about 48 barrels of rum to his trader.[13] The traders inflicted ruin upon one another as well as debauching the Indians with liquor whenever possible. The full story of bribery and violence will never be known, but blood was spilled and, in the end, relations with the various tribes were of a far lower level than during the French régime. Alex-

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12. Instructions de Mr. Mayrand, Montreal, May 14, 1772; Letter to Forrest Oakes, May 11, 1772; Letter to Oakes, May 3, 1774, all in Laurent Ermatinger Letter Book, 1770-78, Public Archives, Ottawa.

13. Ibid., Letter to Forrest Oakes, April 25, 1775.

ander Henry arrived at the Grand Portage in 1775 and reported that he "found the traders in a state of extreme reciprocal hostility, each pursuing his interests in such a manner as might most injure his neighbor. The consequences", he added, "were very hurtful to the morals of the Indians."[14]

From this turmoil, several traders were sufficiently foresighted to recognize that success in the fur trade would be more assured if they could agree on becoming partners, partners with sufficient drive and loyalty to the cause that together they could exert an influence on the trade far beyond that which any one of them could exert alone. The year 1775 saw such an arrangement come into being. It was not a formal, legal organization in the present-day sense. And the name North West Company was not yet born. But it was these northwesterners who in this year formed the nucleus of what would eventually become the fabled organization of history.

Exactly what happened in this year is not known. The written record is not extant. What is known is that a license was granted to a combine that included James McGill, Benjamin Frobisher, Maurice Blondeau, and Alexander Henry

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14. W. McGillivray; Alexander Henry, Travels and Adventures, In Canada and the Indian Territories...1760-1776, ed. by James Bain (Boston, Little, Brown, and Co., 1901), p. 235.

for twelve canoes with 78 men to go to Grand Portage and beyond. A military guard escorted this convoy from Michilimackinac to Grand Portage. The theater of operations appears to have been the Saskatchewan River. Of great importance was the fact that the fur returns of the combine in 1776 were considerable. Historians of the fur trade mark this successful cooperation as the beginning of similar combines that led to the formation of the North West Company.[15]

The formation of this combine did not by any means eliminate opposition—then or in the future. Eight other licenses were issued in 1775, including those of Laurent Ermatinger and Peter Pond. Grand Portage became busier. Alexander Hamilton described it this year in a little more detail than heretofor: "The transportation of the goods at this grand portage, or great carrying-place, was a work of seven days of severe and dangerous exertion, at the end of which we encamped on the river Aux Groseillers", another name for the Pigeon. He described the portage as consisting of "two ridges of land, between which is a deep glen or valley, with good meadow-lands, and a broad stream of water.

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15. W. S. Wallace, ed., Documents Relating to the North West Company (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1934), pp.4-5; Innis, Fur Trade, pp. 194-95; Kellogg, pp. 138-39; H. A. Innis, "The North West Company," The Canadian Historical Review, 8, (1927), 310. In his book on Peter Pond, Innis adds the names of the Ellices and Simon McTavish to this group, apparently referring to their financial backing. See H. A. Innis, Peter Pond, Fur Trader and Adventurer (Toronto, Irwin & Gordon, 1930), p. 91.

The lowlands are covered chiefly with birch and poplar, and the high with pine."[16]

By 1776 the American Revolution was in full blossom. This cataclysmic event had little immediate effect on the Montreal-based fur trade, other than to hurry the consolidation of interests as a reaction to any potential threat by the Americans. It was in this year that Laurent Ermatinger used, for the first time, the term North West Company in a letter to an associate.[17] Ermatinger himself continued to operate as an independent trader. He wrote Oakes at Grand Portage in April, reflecting the impact of the Revolution: "No Powder can be Sent to you this Spring. All my Powder (which was a considerable Quantity) and the rest of the Merchants also, was in the Kings Stores, from thence on Board a Vessel and in going to Quebec was thrown overboard." Furthermore, "the Continental Troops are so much in want of [blankets] that I really don't believe they will Lett any go out of this Province." E. E. Rich, in a recent study, states that in this year, because of the southern problem, the traders shifted their supply base from Michilimackinac to Grand Portage.[18]

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16. Wallace, Peddlars, p. 14; Henry, p. 236; Laurent Ermatinger to Forrest Oakes, April 25 and May 7, 1775, Ermatinger, Letter Book, Public Archives, Ottawa.

17. Innis, "North West Company", Can. Hist. Review, 8, (1927), 311.

18. Ermatinger, April 22, 1776, to Forrest Oakes, Ermatinger, Letter Book, Public Archives, Ottawa; E. E. Rich, Montreal and the Fur Trade (Montreal, McGill U. Press, 1966), p. 72.

The Montgomery-Arnold invasion of Quebec during the winter of 1775-76 slowed down the trade, but by no means halted it. Nor did the British restrictions on shipping in the Great Lakes. At no time was the Grand Portage itself threatened. Its steady growth as the gateway to the west was reflected in the licenses of 1777. Although only eight of the 121 issued were for Grand Portage, each of these eight licenses represented larger consignments of goods than theretofore. A positive effect of the Revolution was the flight of a number of Loyalist merchants to Montreal from the American colonies. Most noticeable among these were Simon McTavish and the firm of Phyn and Ellice.[19]

Traders continued to reach the Grand Portage in 1778 and 1779. The British commander at Michilimackinac, Maj. Arent Schuyler de Peyster, continued to provide escorts across Lake Superior. In 1778 the officer in charge of this guard was Lt. Thomas Bennett, 8th Foot. John Askin, at Michilimackinac, alerted one M. Beausoleille at Grand Portage of Bennett's coming: "You will have an officer and several soldiers to pass the summer at Grand Portage.

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19. Innis, Fur Trade, pp. 180-81, 188 and 195. The 1777 licenses for Grand Portage were issued to: J. Bte. Adhemar, V. L. St. Germain, Charles Paterson, James E. Waden, C. Chaboillez, George McBeath, Alexander Ellice, Forrest Oakes (Ermatinger), and William Kay. None of the future giants of the North West Co. appears on this list.

I beg you to try and have a house ready to receive them so that it may be let to them. The place must have a Chimney." Askin recognized the existence of one fort, and perhaps two, at Grand Portage in this letter. Although his reference is not wholly clear, he wrote: "You will have the goodness to have 200 pickets forty feet long made by your men and errected as a barrier between the old fort and yours." If, as is likely, Askin was writing as the Michilimackinac representative of the embryonic North West Company and if Beausoleille was its Grand Portage representative, it may be deduced that the combination had recently erected a fort of its own, and that for a longer time there had been another, "old" fort at the clearing on the bay. In this same letter, Askin made a reference to the North West Company when he added that it would be "the great Company's duty to furnish a dwelling for the officer and his soldiers".

Bennett, because of the delayed arrival of reinforcements from Niagara, set out from Michilimackinac with only five soldiers and seven French Canadian civilians. He apparently did more during his stay at Grand Portage than soothe the Indians' feelings. In a letter to Governor Haldimand in 1779, Major de Peyster added a postscript: "I should be glad to know if your Excellency will please

to allow the officer any pay for his laying out and directing the route at the Portage." Whatever engineering talents Bennett lent to the improvement of Grand Portage have, unfortunately, been lost to history.[20]

In this same year, 1778, a new combination of traders and merchants came into being that probably justified Askin's term "the great Company". The Frobisher brothers joined with Simon McTavish (recently from New York), McGill, and others to back the trading expedition of Peter Pond. These men, particularly the Frobishers, McGill, and McTavish were soon to be among the most powerful merchants in Montreal and the wealthiest men in Canada.

They already were men of means, particularly among their fellows at the Grand Portage. They were already acquainted with the hard life of the canoe and the portage. But it is hardly conceivable that they would have lived in simple tents or huts at Grand Portage during the meetings. Their means and tastes lead one to expect that the portage already had a fort that was at least as comfortable as those in the interior. While Askin did not

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20. John Askin, May 18, 1778, to M. Beausoleille, in "Fur Trade on the Upper Lakes, 1778-1815," Wisconsin Hist. Society, Collections, 19 (1910), 240; Major de Peyster, June 29, 1778, to Governor Sir Guy Carleton, and Jan. 20, 1779, to Governor Sir Frederick Haldiman, both in "Papers From the Canadian Archives, 1778-1783", Minnesota Historical Society, Collections, 11 (1888), 112, 112n, and 123. John Askin, as will be noted further on, is the person believed responsible for clearing the land on the shore of Grand Portage Bay, around the late 1760 s.

make clear if the fort of 1778 was the one later to be described as the North West's stockade, its existence cannot be doubted.[21]

Further evidence of forts and the system that was evolving at Grand Portage appeared that year in a memorandum prepared for Governor Sir Guy Carleton at Quebec. The memorandum noted that the fur trade now amounted to about £ 40,000 sterling and employed almost 500 people. The traders "have a general rendezvous at the Portage, and for the refreshing and comforting those who are employed in the more distant voyages the Traders from hence have built tolerable Houses; and in order to cover them from any insult from the numerous savage Tribes, who resort there...have made stockades around them."[22]

The war dragged on in 1779. This year the British Army had to turn down the request for an escort across Lake Superior. Nevertheless, the fur traders continued along the lines of consolidation, and the North West Company took on a more definite form. A complete roster of those who "joined their stock together and made one common interest of the whole" that year is difficult to ascertain.

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21. Innis, "North West Company," Can. Hist. Review, 8, (1927), 312; Rich, Montreal, p. 73. This year too British names outnumbered French among the Grand Portage traders for the first time since Canada became an English colony.

22. Kellogg, p. 146; "Trade in the Lake Superior Country in 1778", Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Hist. Coll., 19, (1911), 337.

Innis, in his monumental study, The Fur Trade, listed only ten shares out of a possible sixteen. E. E. Rich, in a more recent study, Montreal and the Fur Trade, lists more names but does not show the number of shares each held. Elaine Mitchell listed still a different assortment, but noted a total of 16 shares:

Innis

Todd & McGill-2 shares
B. & J. Frobisher-2
Holmes & Grant-2
Wadden & Co.-2
Ross & Co.-1
Oakes & Co.-1
10

Rich

Todd & McGill(James)
B. & J. Frobisher
Holmes & Grant
Wadden & St. Germain
McTavish & Small
Patterson & McGill (John)
McBeth (acting for Peter Pond).

Mitchell

Todd & McGill-2 shares
B. & J. Frobisher-2
Holmes & Grant-2
Wadden & Co.-2
Ross & Co.-2
Oakes & Co.-2
McTavish & Co.-2
McGill & Patterson-2
16

These partners limited their agreement to one year. It was a busy year. The increase of activity at Grand Portage was indicated in a petition of the merchants wherein they claimed that 800 men were now involved in the northwest trade. Of these, 300 came to the Grand Portage during the summer rendezvous.[23]

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23. Innis, Fur Trade, p. 312; Rich, Montreal, p. 74; Elaine

The organization of the North West Company, then and later, might be abhorred by a modern corporation lawyer but, as E. E. Rich has pointed out, "it was never a company in the strict legal sense which would have made it a corporate unit in the eyes of the law, responsible for its debts, accountable for its action, and capable of being sued as a single body. Rather," he writes, "it was a copartnership . . . wherein individual partners took action for the common interest . . . members . . . traded outside the Company as well as within it."[24]

The following year, 1780, the partners made the decision to renew their association, this time for three years. Again, they decided upon sixteen shares. Those having two each were: Todd & McGill, Holmes & Grant, and Wadden & Co. Represented by one share each were McBeath & Co., Ross & Co., and Oakes & Co. Lacking a copy of the agreement itself, one cannot make an accounting of the sixteenth share, unless Peter Pond received it. Despite the air of confidence shown, the partners later agreed to end this agreement in 1782 instead of 1783.[25]

Allan Mitchell, "The North West Company Agreement of 1785", The Can. Hist. Review, 36, (1955), 126. See also, Buck, p. 19; W. McGillivray; and Douglas Dunham, "The French Element in the American Fur Trade, 1760-1816", PhD Dissertation, U. of Michigan, 1950, pp. 179-180. Innis, Peter Pond, p. 91, recognized the possibility that McGill & Patterson, McBeath & Co., and McTavish & Co. had interests in the 1779 agreement.

24. Rich, Montreal, p. 75.

25. Innis, Fur Trade, pp. 197-98; Rich, Montreal, p. 76.

Alexander Henry, possibly an independent trader at this time, stepped back into the picture in 1781. Reflecting the dreams of the early French explorer, he petitioned the Canadian government for permission to set out from Grand Portage, "150 leagues from Mackinac," in order to cross the continent to the Pacific. Official reaction to this request is not known. But it would not be Alexander Henry's destiny to be the first across the continent. The year 1781 was too early. In his petition, Henry described the portage, saying that "the Carrying Place is Twelve Miles over and no other Method of Transporting Canoes and Goods, but by Canadians, who are very Expert in that bussiness."[26]

By the time of the rendezvous in 1783, the members of the association were ready for another reorganization. Among the worries that concerned them was that the United States had won its rebellion and now had control of the southern shores of the waterway. The Montreal-based traders felt that only consolidation would assure their continued supremacy of this route.

The new company that emerged from the negotiations is regarded by some authorities as the true emergence of

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26. Alexander Henry, Oct. 18, 1781, to Joseph Banks, Montreal, Public Archives, Ottawa.

the North West Company. Although further readjustments would mark the coming years, the pattern of operation was now well established. Also, the new organization was more formal than its predecessors. Then, too, Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher and Simon McTavish began their rise as the most powerful of the associates. From now on, if not earlier, these three would not be seen west of Grand Portage. In the future, they would manage their commercial houses in Montreal, act as creditors for the wintering partners (those who ran the far flung posts in the northwest), and serve as middlemen between the winterers and the European markets. They would visit the rendezvous at Grand Portage each summer where the business of the company was carried out.

The sixteen shares that year seem to have been divided as follows: McTavish-3, the Frobishers-3, George McBeath-2, Robert Grant-2, William Holmes-1, Patrick Small (who was closely allied with McTavish)-2, Nicholas Montour (who was closely allied with the Frobishers)-2, and Peter Pond-1.[27]

Peter Pond, busy in the interior, did not come out to Grand Portage until 1784. When he learned that his share

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27. Rich, Montreal, pp. 76 and 78; Mitchell, p. 126; Innis, Fur Trade, pp. 198 and 252.

of the concern was only one-sixteenth, he was quite unhappy. Apparently he felt that it had been his brains and brawn that had developed the system on the Red and Saskatchewan Rivers and points beyond. He may have had a fiery temper and less regard for human life than some of his associates, yet only a strong man could have developed a system that coaxed the Indians to trap (a woman's work) and bring their pelts to the Company's posts rather than to the Hudson's Bay establishments on Hudson Bay. Some of the members, he noted, such as George McBeath, had never been beyond the Grand Portage, yet had two shares. Pond refused to sign the agreement and, rather than return to the upper country, went down to Montreal. There he talked with Peter Pangman about beginning their own company. But before he and Pangman got fully organized, Pond reconsidered and eventually rejoined the North West Company. Pangman, however, held out, and, in 1785, formed an opposition.

This rebellion of Pond's would be repeated by others throughout the history of the North West Company. "Without a charter and with no legitimate monopoly," wrote Paul Phillips, "the company's whole history was a struggle for existence against rebellion from within and opposition from without."[28]

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28. Alexander Begg, History of the North-West (3 vols., Toronto, Hunter, Ross & Co., vols 1,2, 1894, vol. 3, 1895), 1, 95; Innis, Peter Pond, pp. 104-6; Paul Chrisler Phillips, The Fur Trade (2 vols., Norman, U. of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 2, 8.

Besides Pond's dissatisfaction, the Company had other worries in 1784. Many of these concerns arose from the now-successful American Revolution. A worry that would exist for many years was that the Company's near-monopoly of the Great Lakes, as well as its ports at Detroit, Michilimackinac, and even Grand Portage, might be threatened by American claims. Strange as it may seem, the British traders had no knowledge of the old French route up the Kaministikwia. This year the company sent Edward Umfreville to explore for an alternate route that would be outside American territorial claims.

Umfreville had worked for the Hudson's Bay Company during the 1770s but, after a series of misadventures and a falling-out over pay, had joined the North West Company as a clerk in 1783. Now he explored a route that led from Lake Nipigon, north of Lake Superior, through the "Fire Country" of the Shield, to Lake Winnipeg. However, this route was too long and had too many extensive portages ever to become a popular alternative to Grand Portage.[29]

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29. Innis, Fur Trade, p. 252; W. S. Wallace, ed., Documents p. 503; E. E. Rich, The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857 (Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1967), p. 168. Umfreville served on the north branch of the Saskatchewan from 1784 to 1788, when he left the N.W. Co. He tried to return to the H. B. Co., but was refused. In 1790 he published The Present State of Hudson Bay. After that he disappeared from the historical record. He also wrote an account of his 1784 explorations, "Journal of a Passage in a Canoe from Pais Plat in Lake Superior to Portage de l'Isle in River Ouinipique", Ontario Provincial Archives, Toronto.

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During the American Revolution, the Montreal merchants had lived under strict and severe regulations issued by the British authorities concerning transportation on the Great Lakes. Although these merchants had continued to send trade goods to Grand Portage by means of canoe brigades up the Ottawa, and they had managed to keep a schooner or two on the Great Lakes, they felt the urgency to expand their tonnage on the Lakes once the war was over. The Frobisher brothers petitioned Governor Haldimand on this problem in 1784. They pointed out the growing importance of Grand Portage by saying that, by July 1785, the North West Company would have an interest there of "f 50,000, original Cost, in Furrs, to be sent to Montreal by the returns of their Canoes, and in goods for the Interior Country." They requested permission to construct a vessel at Detroit, which they would then get up over the Sault Ste. Marie for transporting goods on Lake Superior. The governor granted his permission.

The Company built the Beaver at Detroit, "measuring no more than Thirty-four Feet Keel, Thirteen feet Beam, and Four feet Hold", at a cost of f 1,843.13.2 York (Toronto) Currency." Despite her small size, the Beaver could not get up the Falls of St. Mary's. The company would try again later, but it kept this vessel on the lower lakes, transporting goods from Fort Erie to Detroit

and on to Michilimackinac and St. Marie's.[30]

In both 1784 and 1785, the company, through the Fro-Bishers, wrote at length to government officials at Quebec requesting a monopoly at Grand Portage and for the northwest trade. These were lengthy pleas, and their contribution to history was a description of the fur trade as it was carried on from Montreal and Grand Portage.

The Frobishers mentioned their concern about Americans challenging the northwest trade. They told about Umfreville and his associate, Venance St. Germain, searching for a new route. As proof of the North West Company's value to the crown, they offered to survey all the West between the latitudes 55 and 65. In return, they asked for "an exclusive right to the passage they may discover . . . and also of the Trade to the North-West either by that passage or by the present communication of the Grand Portage for Ten Years only, as a reward for their services."

The lieutenant governor forwarded the memorial to London with the recommendation that it be approved. He did not ordinarily like monopolies, but in this case he thought it might be to the Indians' advantage: "The returns might be very great for a short period, but [otherwise] the Indians would be drowned in rum and . . . [competition, and this]

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30. Innis, Fur Trade, p. 183; Wallace, Documents, p. 84; Douglas Brymner, Report on Canadian Archives, 1890 (Ottawa, 1891), Memorial, B. and Joseph Frobisher to Lt. Gov. Halimand, May 8, 1785

would be the occasion of endless quarrels and bloodshed." The company failed to obtain an exclusive right to the trade.

According to the memorials, British traders, probably including Alexander Henry, reached Rainy Lake in 1765 and Lake Winnipeg in 1767. The Frobishers said that they themselves first entered the trade in 1769, when they formed a connection with the Montreal merchants, Todd and McGill. They recalled the ruthless competition of those early years, and noted that the major survivors had united to form one company "under the title of North-West Company, of which we were named the Directors, dividing it into sixteen shares."

The memorials explained the system as it had been inherited from the French and improved upon during the past twenty years: "Two sets of men are employed... making upwards of 500; one half of which are occupied in the transport of Goods from Montreal to the Grand Portage, in Canoes of about Four Tons Burthen, Navigated by 8 to 10 men." The other half were "employed to take out such goods forward to every Post in the interior Country to the extent of 1,000 to 2,000 miles and upward ...in Canoes of about one and a half Ton Burthen, made expressly for the inland service, and navigated by 4 to 5 men only."

The Montreal canoes "sett off early in May, and as the Provisions they take with them are consumed by the time they reach Michilimackinac, they are necessitated to call there" to pick up additional supplies for themselves and for the canoes coming down to Grand Portage from the interior. The Montreal canoes had to be at Grand Portage by early July "for the carrying place being at least Ten miles in length, Fifteen days are commonly spent . . . by the Canoemen" in transporting the goods to Pigeon River. As for the winterers, "their general loading is too-thirds Goods and one-third Provisions, which not being sufficient for their subsistence until they reach winter Quarters, they must . . . depend on the Natives." However, "in winter quarters . . . they are at ease, and commonly in plenty, which only can reconcile them to that manner of life and make them forget their Sufferings in their Annual Voyage to and from the Grand Portage."

Peter Pond, back in the company by 1785, supported the memorials. He was certain that the company had accomplished explorers who could conduct the survey. Furthermore, he warned of foreign competition. He had learned that the Russians had a port on the Pacific coast and that the Americans were preparing to sail in that region. In the end, neither the Frobishers nor Pond were able to sway the

British government to their ends.[31]

31. Brymer, Report on Canadian Archives, 1890, Memorial from Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher to Gov. Frederick Haldimand, Oct. 4, 1784; Lt. Gov. Henry Hamilton to Lord Sydney, June 6, 1785; and Peter Pond to Lt. Gov. Hamilton, April 18, 1785.

CHAPTER 3

Grand Portage Days, 1785-1793

Although Peter Pond had rejoined the North West Co. by 1785, a considerable opposition had developed by then. This particular opposition operated under the little known title of the Montreal Company. It consisted principally of Peter Pangman, who, like Pond, was an American-born trader; Alexander Mackenzie, later to become a renowned explorer; and several other winterers. The backers of this group included an Englishman, John Gregory, and a Scot, Alexander Norman McLeod, who went by the name of Gregory, McLeod and Co. Another partner who should be mentioned was John Ross. He too was a winterer and his murder in the Athabasca Country during the winter of 1786-87 would bring a cloud upon Peter Pond; the whisper ran through the trade that he was responsible for Ross' death.

Both companies, together with some independent traders who still managed to keep a toe-hold on the business, sent to Grand Portage in 1785 f 26,675 worth of goods. These supplies consisted of 4,850 gallons of rum, 604 gallons of wine, 12,500 pounds of powder, 444 weapons, 70 hundredweight of shot, and so forth. Thirty-eight Montreal canoes, powered by 391 voyageurs, carried the goods to Grand Portage to meet the winterers. Although the opposition

was very much present, by far the greater percentage of the supplies represented the efforts of the North West Company.[1]

In 1785, the opposition built its own establishments at Grand Portage, placing one at each end of the trail. Although no detailed descriptions of these posts exist, a small amount of information is available, especially from the pen of Roderic McKenzie, a cousin of Alexander Mackenzie and a new clerk in the opposition. The post at the lake-end consisted of a substantial shed and a warehouse. It was located on or near the beach to the northeast of the palisades of the North West Company, and somewhere across Grand Portage Creek that drains into the bay. Roderic wrote that Pangman, Ross, and others had been at Grand Portage since early spring and had "of course advanced greatly the buildings for the reception of the goods from Montreal" before he himself arrived.

At the western end of the portage, the opposition erected a "hangard or store warmly put together, and sufficiently sapacious [sic] for the purpose of the season." Masson, without citing his source, said that this post

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1. Gordon Charles Davidson, The North West Company (Berkeley, Univ. of Calif. Press, 1918), pp. 24-25. Of this total, the Frobishers (N.W. Co.) sent 25 canoes with 260 men, carrying 3,500 gal. rum, 340 gal. wine, 8,000 lbs. powder, 300 trade guns, and 12 cwt. shot, worth £ 20,000.

stood on the north side of Pigeon River. This would have put it in the unlikely position of being across the river from the portage itself. It would seem that Masson was in error. He also said that it stood opposite "the old fort" of the North West Company, indicating that the latter had already stood there some time--a fort that, later if not already, was called Fort Charlotte.[2]

Roderic McKenzie, on his first visit to Grand Portage and being very much history-oriented, recounted years later (apparently from notes made at the time) those first impressions as an employee of the opposition:

> A few days after our arrival Mr. Gregory and Mr. Alexander MacKenzie arrived from Michillimackinac. Now all the Gentlemen of the [rival] Concern, abating Mr. N. McLeod, who was a dormant partner, were assembled--and set to work at the outfits for the Interior. Their clerks consisted of Duncan Pollock, Laurent Le Rout, James Finlay, Roderic MacKenzie [sic], with a few Commis-men [clerks] of an inferior description. Mr. Le Rout & Mr. Pollock did not like to engage in the drugery of the general Rendezvous--and were not often called upon to assist. Mr. James Finlay would willingly believe that he knew very little of such coarse

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2. George Bryce, The Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company (London, Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1900), pp. 115-17; Innis, Fur Trade, pp. 199-253; L. R. Masson, Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest (2 vols., Quebec, de l'Imprimerie Generale a Cote & Co., 1889), 1, 22-23; Burpee, "Grand Portage," Minn. History, 12 (1931), 367; Correspondence between Alexander Mackenzie and Roderic McKenzie, 1786-1816, and Memorandum by Roderic McKenzie, both in Public Archives, Ottawa. Roderic spelled his first name both with and without the final "k", but most often without.

> work—so that I, who naturally could claim no privilege for any exemption, became the [fag?] of the whole—nor did I grumble at it—though it often happened that the counter became my pillow. However our busy season was soon over--our outfits, which were not very numerous nor extensive, were soon despatched, and disposed.[3]

Roderic did not go west at the end of Gregory-McLeod's rendezvous that summer. Instead he stayed at Grand Portage as an assistant to Pierre L'Anneau who was in charge of the opposition establishment. Although L'Anneau had been a trader for many years, Roderic did not think much of his intelligence. "He knew ni 'A' ni 'B'" but "was so handy that he was considered a 'jack of all trades'." To help the bourgeois and his young clerk were 18 voyageurs. These men spent the winter of 1785-86 "erecting the buildings and for the purpose of traite." Young Roderic also spent a good deal of time learning French.

During the winter Roderic lost much of his respect for his boss: "By degrees I could perceive a gradual change gaining ground for the worse in Monsr. L'aneas [sic] conduct & I made it my duty to keep a sharp eye over my gentleman."

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3. Roderic McKenzie, "Memoirs of McKenzie," Public Archives, Ottawa. McKenzie was extremely conscious of history. In his late years he literally demanded reminiscences from traders in the North West Company. He gathered a large body of valuable manuscripts, which, unfortunately, fell into evil times and unskilled hands after his death. The first culprit was L. R. Masson, a relative by marriage (note 2). As a result there are today two slightly different sets of his reminiscences. Both are in the Public Archives, Ottawa.

On his return from a fishing trip in December, McKenzie learned that L'Anneau had been on a monumental binge. Unhesitatingly, he called the old bourgeois "into the office", demanded the keys to the fort, and "assumed the charge and became master. This," he said, "pleased all." McKenzie was a man on the way up.

Roderic made reference to the North West Company's post, which he called the "old fort". The bourgeois there was a Mr. Cloutier, "a very respectable old man," and the clerk was James Givens, "that year from Montreal." Although their companies were engaged in ruthless competition, the two clerks got along very well through the long winter. Roderic also developed friendships with the Indians who had visited the area for a short time in the fall.[4]

When his bosses arrived at the Grand Portage rendezvous in 1786, they found McKenzie still very much in control. During the winter he had finished the "complete Establishment for all purposes," and had succeeded in persuading the local Indians, except one family, to camp and trade "within the limits of our Establishment," to the exclusion of the North West post.

The summer of 1786 was relatively unnoteworthy in McKenzie's memory. Gregory and McLeod continued their opposition.

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4. Masson, 1, 11-12.

Although they had but a small portion of the whole trade, they made a determined effort that year. James McGill, associated with the North West Company and a successful Montreal merchant, wrote John Askin: "Your Friends of the Northwest are making a larger outfit this year than they did last." He added that Gregory and McLeod planned to build a small vessel at the Portage. It is possible McGill meant Grand Portage, but more likely he was using the term generally and may have meant the portage at Sault Ste. Marie-where ship-building was more likely to be carried on. While Grand Portage had a "canoe yard," it does not seem probable that ship carpenters and the necessary supplies would have been present to build even a "small vessel."

Roderic could not recall much about that summer except that it was "nearly the Same as the year preceeding." When the outfits were ready to start inland, he found himself relieved of his year's duties and assigned to Cousin Alexander, bound for the English River. He was about to become a nor'wester.[5]

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5. The above was compiled from both the Roderic McKenzie accounts (see note 3). In the Correspondence between Alexander Mackenzie and Roderic McKenzie (note 2) there is still another version of his memoirs. In this last he described having trouble with an Indian, who was later killed during a drinking match. Describing the drunken orgy, McKenzie wrote that "the Gates of the Fort were of course secured." He said too that the Indians had their own "Great Lodge" erected at Grand Portage for the purpose of a feast.

As uneventful as 1786 was, 1787 brought significant changes to the fortunes of the North West Company. On April 15, Benjamin Frobisher died. Simon McTavish, a financial wizard and a man so fond of money he was called "the Marquis", wrote Joseph Frobisher a letter almost immediately. He began: "Ever since the death of my worthy Friend, your Brother, I have been considering in what manner our business in the N. W. can be best managed." He pointed out that the Agreement of 1783 was coming to a close. Noting that he himself found it difficult to run his Montreal business as well as to attend the annual meeting at Grand Portage, he assured Joseph that, now with Benjamin gone, he would find it equally exhausting. Since it was important that a merchant be present at the rendezvous, would, he asked, Joseph consider an arrangement that would require only one of them going up each summer—in short, uniting into one company. He reminded his friend that together they would hold "near one-half the Concern."

Frobisher replied on April 22. He agreed with McTavish "that throwing our interests together seems to be the most certain means of giving stability to our concern." As far as making alternate visits to Grand Portage, he had no good objection, "unless I urge that a single Person is more proper for that Business than one who is married."[6]

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6. Joseph Frobisher, Letter Book, 1787-88, Public Archives, Ottawa. This appears to be a hand-written copy of the original at McGill University, Montreal—also consulted.

Negotiations between the two continued throughout the summer and fall until, on November 19, an agreement was reached and there emerged the powerful firm of McTavish and Frobisher. Throughout the rest of the existence of the North West Company, this firm would be the dominant element in the organization.[7]

Also in 1787 Gregory and McLeod gave up their short-lived opposition. They made an arrangement with the North West Company whereby they received a share of the stock. Their employees, such as Roderic McKenzie and Alexander Mackenzie, found themselves now in the employment of the Big Company.

The reorganized North West Company now had twenty shares rather than sixteen. The new firm of McTavish and Frobisher directly controlled seven of these. Those who held two shares each were Robert Grant, Nicholas Montour, and Patrick Small. Seven men received one share each: John Gregory, Peter Pangman, Norman McLeod, Alexander Mackenzie (all four of the late opposition), Peter Pond, George McBeath, and William Holmes.[8]

This new amalgamation would prove its worth. An astute

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7. Ibid; R. Harvey Fleming, "McTavish, Frobisher and Company of Montreal," The Canadian Historical Review, 10 (1929), 136-7; Drafts of the agreement between McTavish and Frobisher are to be found in the "Quebec Papers," volume 75 of the William Drummer Powell Papers, Toronto Public Library, Ontario.

8. Innis, Fur Trade, p. 199.

scholar writes that after this reorganization the North West Company's "character and exploits make the Hudson's Bay men seem colourless, methodical, and uninspired. It was a potent blend of managerial capacity, ruthless enterprise, and buoyant courage."[9]

A side note on Grand Portage in 1787 is found in an inventory of livestock. On the list appeared six horses, one three-year-old colt, five cows, one bull, two oxen, two calves, and six sheep.[10]

Shortly after its reorganization, the Company submitted a request to the government at Quebec for a grant of land along the portage itself. It proposed to build a wagon road over the nine miles of trail so as to reduce the back-breaking labor of men carrying the tons of furs and supplies--work that has become glamorous only in hindsight. The Council at Quebec, apparently fearing that such a grant would give the North West Company complete control of this strategic neck of land, refused the request in 1788. One writer believes, however, that eventually the trail was improved sufficiently to enable ox-drawn carts to travel on it. Evidence to support this improvement is slight.[11]

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9. Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, 2, 122.

10. Innis, Fur Trade, p. 231.

11. Davidson, p. 23n; Buck, p. 22.

This same year, 1788, saw Peter Pond go down to Grand Portage for the last time. Although he had been linked to violence in the far northwest, such as the murder of John Ross, he had accomplished much in the years he had been a winterer. He had opened the Athabaska country to the trade. He had proven that trade could be carried out over extremely long distances. And, not least, he had gained a good grasp of the geography of the north. He had determined that he would find the river that Captain Cook of the British Navy had said flowed into the Pacific. At his Athabaska Department he had become acquainted with the existence of a river flowing northward. At first he had decided that it drained into the Arctic Ocean, but, by 1785, had changed his mind and decided it was the river Cook had seen. He himself did not get to explore that stream. Another man would achieve that goal—Alexander Mackenzie.

Following the reorganization in 1787, Mackenzie went to the Athabaska to take the department over so that Pond could explore his magic river. However, the Company now decided that Pond's presence in Montreal was more essential, and the 48-year-old trader sped down the waterways on his final journey. Before he left, he told Mackenzie all he knew about the land and he fired the enthusiasm of the younger man to find the way to the Pacific. Mackenzie traveled down the river of

Pond's dreams. When he reached salt water and realized that the river—which now bears his name—did not flow into the Pacific, Mackenzie was greatly disappointed. Yet the result of this extraordinary voyage of discovery contributed to the rapid expansion of the North West Company's empire of trade.[12]

When Mackenzie returned from his remarkable trip, he went down to the annual meeting at Grand Portage in 1790. If he expected acclaim from his associates, he was disappointed, for "my Expedition is hardly spoken of but this is what I expected." He wrote Roderic McKenzie that he "found all very quiet" at the Portage. "Everybody had plenty of letters and news from Montreal except myself."[13]

The rendezvous may have been quiet in 1790; nonetheless the associates did write a new agreement that year. Again, the shares amounted to twenty. Alexander Mackenzie increased

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12. Innis, Peter Pond, p. 115; Innis, Fur Trade, pp. 200-01; Charles M. Gates, ed., Five Fur Traders of the Northwest (U. of Minnesota Press, 1953), pp. 11-15. Gate describes Pond as a clear-visioned blazer of western trails, whose eloquence was as remarkable as his spelling was quaint. Despite his association with the North West Company, Pond presented to the U. S. Congress of the Confederation a map of northwest Canada and, even before that, explained the geography of the Great Lakes to Benjamin Franklin. Franklin used this knowledge in the boundary negotiations of 1782-83. Pond left the North West Company in 1790 and died a poor man in 1807 in the United States.

13. Alexander Mackenzie to Roderic ("Dear Rory") McKenzie, Grand Portage, July 16, 1790, Public Archives, Ottawa.

his shares from one to two. In addition, by agreeing to buy out Peter Pangman, who hoped to retire in 1791, he found himself with a larger voice in the Company's affairs.[14]

Innis wrote that this agreement of 1790 was significant because now, for the first time, the charter took into account the consolidation that had been effected by the absorbtion of Gregory and McLeod. The agreement set forth the manner of operation from the fur sales in London, through the operations of the merchant houses in Montreal, to the annual rendezvous at Grand Portage, and on to the departments in the trading country of the Northwest.[15] Among the details of organization, a few stood out as illustrations of the maturity the company had reached. From now on, two winterers could go below each year on a rotation basis (Article 3). Neither McTavish nor Frobisher would have to attend the rendezvous in person. From now on they would employ agents to represent them on this annual trek, beginning with John

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14. The shares were divided as follows: McTavish, Frobisher & Co. (including one Mr. Coy), 6 shares; Nicholas Montour, Robert Grant, Patrick Small, John Gregory, Peter Pangman, and Alexander Mackenzie, 2 shares each; William McGillivray (a nephew of Simon McTavish) and Daniel Sutherland, 1 share each. "Accord et convention entre Alex. MacKenzie et McTavish Frobisher & Co., 24 juillet, 1790," Seminaire de Quebec, Quebec. Mackenzie agreed to pay Pangman f 6,000, Halifax currency, in 1794, and an additional f 4,000 in 1796. Photostat, Peter Pangman, Sale of His Shares in N. W. Co., Public Archives, Ottawa.

15. Innis, "North West Company," Can. Hist. Review, 8 (1927), 315

Gregory and Daniel Sutherland (Article 4). McTavish himself was to move to England where he could more directly control both the purchase of goods and the sale of furs (Article 4). The agreement was to last seven years. Should the partners then wish to dissolve the company, "the Forts, Buildings, and fixed property at the Grand Portage [were] to be sold in Four lots, at public sale, to the Highest bidder." (Article 12). The number "four" is tantalizing; were they perhaps referring to the North West's posts at either end of the trail and the two establishments of the defunct Gregory and McLeod?[16]

The number of young Scots, recruited in the homeland, increased rapidly during these years. Coming to Canada first as clerks, many of them remained with the company through the best and worst of times, eventually becoming wintering partners. A few rose into the highest positions of leadership, eventually to assume control of the organization as the founding members gradually retired. One of these young Scots was John Macdonald of Garth—he was always quick to add the "Garth" in order to identify himself among the many other MacDonalds. His grand uncle had met Simon McTavish on one of the latter's visits to Britain. John was bound to the company as a clerk. He arrived at Quebec in April 1791 at the age of 17. Traveling to the Grand Portage with McTavish himself, Macdonald left Lachine on July 15 "in a large Birch

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16. "Accord et convention...24 juillet 1790."

Canoe maned by sixteen choice Voyageurs & our Cook." They traveled the route that the voyageurs had known since the beginning:

> We landed at St. Ann...and proceeded on the Lake two Mountains--which was the first lake of any magnitude...came to the River Ottawa...left it & made our way to Lake Nepisingue--crossing that Lake... reached Lake Huron by French River...proceeded on Lake Huron to the Sault St. Mary's where the Company has an establish t on the South side of the Sault...We made the Portage after some short stay-- & proceeded in our frail Boat, on the Lake Superior to the Old Grand Portage where we got in safely the fourth or fifth day after a visit to some Trading Posts.

He remembered that the men already gathered at the rendezvous welcomed the arrival of McTavish with "great rejoicings."

> Several Partners were there from the interior as well as the Agents from Montreal...The [total?] ensemble seemed Huge to me. During a stay of perhaps a fortnight here, I had a quarrel with a Clerk a large English Man of the name of Harris. he threw a Loaf of Bread at me & I called him out-- with my pocket pistols. Again, he took a rope & said this is my pistol, he was afterwards under my command & a very good fellow--but no Trader.

At the rendezvous, Macdonald came under the care of Angus Shaw, a bourgeois who took excellent care of his men. When everything was ready, "we started in his Canoe--a much smaller size than the canoes from LaChine untill we overtook his Brigade of Loaded Canoes--that had left Fort Charlotte on the North end of Grand Portage some days previous." His familiar handling of the term Fort Charlotte indicates that the

post had been called that for some time.[17]

Neither Macdonald nor anyone else made mention of the alleged visit to Grand Portage that summer of Count Paolo Andreani, from Milan, who had become famous for making a pioneer balloon ascent in 1784. Andreani did not have much to say about the post. He recognized that Grand Portage was "the central point of this trade," and that the North West Company's post was "kept in good repair, and garrisoned with fifty men." At the height of the rendezvous, however, there was "in this place...frequently a concourse of one thousand people and upwards."[18]

After his visit to Grand Portage in 1791, Simon McTavish sailed to take up residence in London. Hardly had he got settled when he learned disturbing news from his partner, Joseph Frobisher. James McGill had called on Frobisher to warn him that a group of traders and merchants was planning to offer

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17. John Macdonald, "Autobiographical Notes of John Macdonald of Garth," Public Archives, Ottawa. Macdonald did not write this account until he was 89 years old. Thus they should be treated with care even though his mind appears to have been most active.

18. Andreani's account is found in François Alexandre Frédéric La Rochefoucault-Liancourt, "Tour Through Upper Canada," in Thirteenth Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario, 1916 (Toronto, 1917), pp. 15-119. It is assumed that Count Andreani actually visited Grand Portage rather than relying on accounts of others. See also Theodore C. Blegen, Minnesota, A History of the State (Minneapolis, U. of Minn. Press, 1963), p. 113.

the North West Company fresh opposition. Among these were traders who, like the company, had been operating in the country south of the Great Lakes, out of Detroit and Michilimackinac. The Treaty of Paris, 1883, had assured the American Republic its right to this country. The British traders realized that their operations there would sooner or later be restricted. Planning the future, these men now looked to the northwest country as a source of continuing profit. Among those in the new scheme were Alexander Todd, a business associate of James McGill, and the ex-winterer, Alexander Henry, now a merchant in Montreal.

During his visit, McGill had suggested to Frobisher that the North West Company increase its shares to twenty-four, "giving the four additional shares to all those Gentlemen upon certain terms & Conditions." Such an arrangement would allow the "Gentlemen" an entry into the northwest and avoid the problem of opposition. Frobisher wrote McTavish that he had asked McGill to inform the parties that the present agreement concerning the North West Company was binding and could not be changed until the partners met at next year's rendezvous at Grand Portage.[19]

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19. Joseph Frobisher, Montreal, Dec. 8, 1791, to Simon McTavish, London, Strathcona Papers, Box 2, Public Archives, Ottawa.

The partners met on schedule in 1792, and for two weeks the winterers delighted in "refreshing & refitting & meeting the Montreal Agents." The business of the threatening competition came up as Frobisher had predicted. Following the example of 1787, the partners voted to expand the company and admit the outsiders. The members did not follow McGill's recommendation of four additional shares; rather they increased the number to 46.

All the partners of 1790 remained in the company, several of them increasing their shares. Three winterers were added: Angus Shaw, Cuthbert Grant, and Roderic McKenzie. The potential opposition was admitted under the names of Todd, McGill & Co. (2 shares); Forsyth, Richardson & Co. (2 shares); Alexander Henry (1 share); and Grant, Champion & Co. (1 share). McTavish, Frobisher & Co. increased its own shares to 12, thus continuing to dominate. The agreement was to become effective in the spring of 1792 and to last for six years.[20]

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20. Northwest Company Agreement, 1792, McGill University Library, Montreal. The shares were as follows:

McTavish, Frobisher & Co.	-12	Patrick Small	2
Robert Grant	4	William McGillivray	2
John Gregory	4	Daniel Sutherland	2
Peter Pangman	4	Angus Shaw	2
Alexander Mackenzie	4	Cuthbert Grant	1
Nicholas Montour	2	Roderic McKenzie	1

plus the four newcomers mentioned above. Other items of interest in the 1792 agreement: McTavish, Frobisher & Co. were to handle all the business in Montreal. That firm now consisted

John Macdonald of Garth, finishing his first season in the northwest, came down to Grand Portage with the fur-laden canoes that summer. There he met Alexander Mackenzie. He learned that Mackenzie was planning on a second major trip of exploration, still determined to find a river leading to the Pacific. Macdonald's grandfather had asked Mackenzie to take the young clerk with him on any future trip, and Mackenzie now offered John the opportunity. However, John had "got attached to Mr. Shaw and expressed my reluctance & therefore declined."

While Mackenzie was firmly placing himself in history in 1793 by being the first man in history to reach the Pacific in the northern part of the continent, young John returned once more to Grand Portage. In his old age he recalled that summer of youth and strength:

> Made our way in full spirits & health to head Quarters, where as in all future cases we met the gentlemen from Montreal in good fellowship after a twelve months absence. The men were always regaled with plenty—a feast on arrival of Bread and Pork—an unusual diet—& a cup to make them merry—there were usually about 6 to 8 hundred men on the ground on a Summer (illeg.)

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of Simon McTavish, Joseph Frobisher, James Hallowell, and John Gregory. Gregory and Sutherland were to continue as the firm's agents at the Grand Portage rendezvous. Peter Pangman, although listed as a winterer, finally did retire in 1793. From now on winterers could go to Montreal two at a time, providing they paid a clerk to act in their place. Cuthbert Grant and Roderic McKenzie, being the youngest, went to the end of the vacation list; however both were to receive an annual salary of £ 200 because they had only one share each.

> The[y] regaled generally about a couple weeks—when we [illeg.], made up our crews & prepared to return to winter, each to his own alloted Department under its apointed Bourgeois & Clerks.[21]

Macdonald possibly met a new clerk who arrived at Grand Portage in 1793, John Macdonell, who has been described as a naïve but very game tenderfoot. He was also enthusiastic about everything he saw and experienced. Of the thousands of men who came that way only he described the Grand Portage with any degree of thoroughness. He signed his engagement on May 10, 1793, at Montreal, agreeing to serve for five years as a clerk at a salary of f 100 and "found in necessaries." He set off on May 25: "Embarked at Lachine on board of a Birch Bark canoe, the first that I remember to have been in." Several weeks later, in July, his brigade of canoes had crossed Lake Superior and was but one day from Grand Portage:

> Here Mr McLeod and I shaved and shifted being the last night we shall sleep out, wind and weather permitting; this side of the grand portage--Leaving pointe au père we paddled two pipes [smoke breaks] and put to shore to give the men time to clean themselves, while we breakfasted--this done a short pipe brought us to Pointe au Chapeaux [Hat Point] around which we got a sight of the long wished for Grand Portage. The beach was covered with spectators to see us arrive, our canoe went well and the crew sang paddling songs in a vociferous manner.

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21. Macdonald, "Autobiographical Notes."

Macdonell observed that the establishment was located "in the bottom of a shallow Bay perhaps three miles deep and about one league and a half wide...from Pointe aux Chapeaux to pointe a la Framboise " (Raspberry Point). The company's post stood "on a low spot which rises gently from the Lake. The pickets are not above fifteen to twenty paces from the water's edge." He noticed that immediately behind the fort stood "a lofty round Sugar loaf Mountain the base of which comes close to the Picket on the North West Side." That hill today is called Mount Rose.

He wrote that the gates in the palisades were closed each evening at sunset. The bourgeois and the clerks slept in buildings within the fort, while the engagés slept outside the walls. Two sentries stood guard at night, not for fear of attack but to keep a lookout "for fear of accidents by fire." He added that "a clerk a guide and four men are considered watch enough." His description of the structures within the fort are all too brief, but they are the best that exist:

> All the buildings within the Fort are sixteen in number made with cedar and White spruce fir split with whip saws after being squared, the Roofs are covered with Shingles of Cedar and Pine, most of their posts, Doors, and windows, are painted with Spanish brown. Six of these buildings are Store Houses for the company's Merchandise and Furs, etc., the rest are dwelling houses shops compting and Mess House--they have also a wharf or kay for their vessel to unload and Load at.

From his account, one learns that the engagés who came down with the furs from the northwest camped apart from the canoemen from Montreal. He noted that little mixing occurred among the men from the northwest, each outfit keeping pretty well to itself: "The North men while here live in tents of different sizes pitched at random, the people of each post having a camp by themselves and through their camp passes the road to the portage--They are seperated [sic] from the Montrealers by a brook." This implies that the northmen and the Montrealers kept Grand Portage Creek between them, the latter being on the beach east of the creek, the former camping west of the creek and north of the stockade.

Macdonell also commented on the portage itself. He found it to be "three leagues from one navigation to the other which caused great expense and trouble to the company." When he walked the trail he learned that it was "full of hills" and that the voyageurs had divided the distance "into sixteen poses or resting places." At the Pigeon River end of the portage he visited Fort Charlotte, then under the charge of Donald Ross, who had been there so long he was called "Governor." The young clerk noted that a voyageur received six livres of northwest currency for each piece or bundle he carried across the portage. Macdonell

reflected that this northwest "currency existed long before the Northwest Company had a being and I believe before Canada was taken from the French." He did not however use the term "bons" that was given by others to a kind of currency in use at Grand Portage about this time.

Another item that caught Macdonell's interest was the North West's fleet on the Great Lakes. In addition to the brigades of canoes that left Montreal each year, the company, as has been noted, employed schooners on the lakes to carry products, particularly food, to Grand Portage. Macdonell wrote:

> The only vessel on Lake Superior [in 1793] is the new one Mr. Nelson was building when we passed Pointe aux Pins and is to be called the Otter; the Athabaska, which sailed the Lake before her is to be floated down the falls of St. Mary, to help the Beaver to bring the needful from Detroit and Mackinac to the Sault, which the Otter is supposed sufficient, to convey from St. Mary's to the Grand Portage and in return she takes a cargo of Furs to the Sault when they are arrived from the North—Part of the Company's Furs are sent Round the Lakes in Shipping, but the Major part goes down the ottawa in the Montreal canoes.

The gathering at Grand Portage anxiously awaited the arrival of the new ship. Almost 1,000 men occupied the area and food was running low. Macdonell figured that only six days of subsistence remained in the stores. True, the voyageurs did not demand much—"a full allowance...while at this Post is a Quart of Lyed Indian Corn or maize, and an

ounce of Greece." The Otter arrived before the shortage became acute. She had had some trouble because of an absence of favorable winds, but by ten a. m., August 12, "she anchored at the wharffe having entered partly by sailing and partly by towing."

Business wound up and the new outfits were put together for the coming winter's trade. Macdonell crossed the Portage again and prepared to set off for the Red River. Until now acquainted only with the large Montreal canoes, he took note of the smaller craft on western waters: "These N. W. Canoes are about half the size of the Montreal or Grand [Ottawa] River Canoes and when loaded to the utmost can carry a Tun and a half." The enthusiastic novice set out for the Red River, crossing the "height of land" on August 11. Here he became a "Northman" by observing the ritual of one of the old hands "sprinkling water in my face with a small cedar Bow dipped in a ditch of water and accepting certain conditions ...particularly never to kiss a voyageur's wife against her own free will the whole being accompanied by a dozen of Gun shots." He, in turn, gave a drink to each of the voyageurs.[22]

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22. John Macdonell, "Lake Athabasca et les Chipweans." This unsigned manuscript is at McGill University Library, Montreal. This manuscript bears evidence of editorial work by either Roderic McKenzie or L. R. Masson. It has also been edited and published by Charles M. Gates, Five Fur Traders of

the Northwest, University of Minnesota Press, 1933, pp. 92-97. Concerning money, Gates said that Grand Portage was reckoned by units called G. P. C., 12 of these units equalling one pound sterling. The term "bon" appears in the testimony of Joseph Lecuyer, 1803, in Grace Lee Nute, "A British Legal Case and Old Grand Portage," Minnesota History, 21, (1940), 147.

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147.

CHAPTER 4

Growth and Change, 1793-1799

Despite the precautions of the partners of the North West Company in 1792, the problem of competition rose again in 1793. Two of the Company's employees, David and Peter Grant, left the concern in the fall of 1792 and, now, obtained backing from "the Messers Robertsons" of Montreal to begin their own establishment at Grand Portage. Simon McTavish picked up a rumor at this time that the new outfit also benefited from none other than Daniel Sutherland, his agent at Grand Portage. A student of the fur trade suggested that the agreement of 1792 itself spawned this opposition, "for the increasing organization and control of the agents left less scope for the individual trader to be given a profitable place within the concern."

Although the North West Company would not be able to dispose of this new opposition as easily as it had eradicated earlier opponents, the new company had but a toehold at Grand Portage in 1793. Macdonell observed that summer:

> Between two and three hundred yards to the East of the N. W. Fort beyond the pork eaters camp is the spot Messers David and Peter Grant have selected to build upon, as yet they have done nothing to it but marking out the four corners of the ground they mean to occupy, with posts stuck in the ground. They are now off for the interior without leaving any vestage of their having been

here but the four posts above mentioned.[1]

The opposition had a successful winter in the northwest and returned to Grand Portage in 1794 rich in furs. An envious North Westerner, Angus Shaw, wrote from Grand Portage that "Robertson and his partners behaves outwardly with great haughtiness, but I hope they will pay Dear for their breach of faith, They are quite elated from the Number of Packs they made last winter."[2] Nevertheless, the competitors were more of a nuisance than a threat. Greater problems came to light within the North West Company itself in 1794.

On one hand, the Montreal merchants who had joined the company in 1792 were expressing uneasiness about the flood of furs coming out of the northwest. They were very much afraid that such a volume would lower prices so that they would have to take a loss on furs coming out of Mackinac. The solution, as they saw it, was for the North West Company to reduce the scope of its activities in the northwest. They made little headway with their argument.[3]

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1. Macdonell; Joseph Frobisher, Feb. 14, 1793, to Simon McTavish, Strathcona Papers, Box 2, Public Archives, Ottawa; Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, p. 193; William Grant, Jan. 5, 1793, Montreal, to Simon McTavish, Hudson's Bay Company Records, N. W. Company Correspondence, 1791-99, microfilm, Public Archives, Ottawa.

2. Angus Shaw, July 25, 1794, to Simon McTavish, Strathcona Papers, Box 2, Public Archives, Ottawa.

3. James Hallowell, Montreal, June 19, 1794, to Simon McTavish, Strathcona Papers, Box 1, Public Archives, Ottawa.

Discontent began this year too among the younger partners in the Company. Some of them felt they were not getting a large enough share of the profits. They resented too, if only temporarily, the appointment of Simon McTavish's nephew, William McGillivray, to a partnership in the McTavish, Frobisher and Co. Finally, later that year, Montrealers heard a rumor that gunfire had broken out at Grand Portage between the North West Company and the opposition and that "men had been killed on both sides." However, as Joseph Frobisher suspected when he heard the story, it proved to be untrue.[4]

No note of these problems appeared in either of the two journals surviving from that summer (1794) at Grand Portage. John Macdonald of Garth was back again and, if his chronology is not confused, had an interesting adventure at Fort Charlotte. He alluded to the appearance of the establishment by calling it a general depot having "extensive Stores for Furs & Goods as outfits." According to his memory, Simon McTavish (who was in London that summer) sent him across the portage to Fort Charlotte to relieve the man in charge, Mr. Lemoine, who had been charged "with some nasty tricks." (It must be noted that this was only one year after

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4. James Hallowell, June 26, 1794, to Simon McTavish, Strathcona Papers, Box 2, Public Archives, Ottawa; Mitchell, "Agreement of 1795," Can. Hist. Review, 36 (1955), 131-2; Fleming, "McTavish, Frobisher, and Company," Can. Hist. Review, 10 (1929), 141; Joseph Frobisher, Aug. 30, 1794, to Simon McTavish, Hudson's Bay Records, N.W. Co. Corresp., 1791-99, Public Archives, Ottawa.

Macdonell recorded that "Governor" Donald Ross was in charge of Fort Charlotte.) According to Macdonald, he "set off & in my entrance into the House met Mr. Lemoine & delivered my message. He [demurred?] & asked me to show him my orders. I pointed to my tongue & told him I got no orders. He saw it was useless to resist-- & set off as told. I returned & reported."

A few days later, McTavish (?) sent Macdonald back to the Pigeon River with instructions to force the opposition to move farther away from Fort Charlotte:

> I...told the Young Gentleman...that [illeg.] was too nigh & that he must move Some place farther. He reply'd that it was his Master who planted the Pickets that he had no authority or Power to move such pickets....I immediately said I am not told by anyone to do it but to ask you to do. But you will not do So I must.... Saying which I...pulled them up and threw them into the Pigeon River.[5]

Duncan McGillivray was the keeper of the other journal that year. He paid little attention to the appearance of the area. Rather, he described in detail the serious business of setting out for the northwest. He mentioned that the canoes from the more distant posts were now terminating their journey at Rainy Lake (Lac la Pluie). Montrealers

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5. Macdonald, "Autobiographical Notes." He recalled either the wrong date or the wrong man, since McTavish was in England that summer. Nevertheless, his recollections give some general idea of both Fort Charlotte and the opposition establishment at this end of the portage.

crossed the portage and went up to Rainy Lake with the new outfits and brought back the furs to Grand Portage. This scheme saved considerable time and allowed the more distant outfits to begin their long return journeys sooner. He also related that the Montrealers, or manageurs de lard, were in a rebellious mood that summer and threatened to go home without taking the furs unless they received a raise. However, once the ringleaders were separated from the rest, "a timidity was observed in their behaviour which proved very fortunate for their Masters."[6]

One of the few accounts dating from 1794 had some rather unflattering comments concerning the Indians at Grand Portage. An anonymous writer, possibly Roderic McKenzie, said that the "Chipeways about the Grand Portage are few in number--accustomed to opposition in trade they are extremely difficult to deal with." On the other hand, "the Indians of Lac La Pluie are of the same tribe, and equally vicious from the same cause--but are more useful from their knowledge of constructing canoes for the Company." The author did not mention the excessive use of liquor by both the Company and the opposition as possibly contributing to the problem.[7]

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6. Duncan McGillivray, Journal, photostats, Public Archives, Ottawa. Original is in the Colonial Institute, England. The journal has been edited by A. S. Morton, The Journal of Duncan McGillivray of the North West Company of Fort George on the Saskatchewan, 1794-1795 (Toronto, 1929).

7. "An Account of the Athabasca Indians," photostats, Ontario Provincial Archives, Toronto.

A fascinating document has survived from the North West Company's correspondence for 1794. Titled "Scheme for the NW Outfit," it describes in detail the planning that went into working out the quantity and kinds of goods needed for Grand Portage, and the number of men and canoes required to haul the goods up and bring the furs down. That year the Company sent 2,015 pieces from Montreal:

600 bales, dry goods
40 trunks, dry goods
30 bales, Brazil tobacco
10 bales, Spencer tobacco
20 bales, Carrot tobacco (name derived from shape)
22 cases, guns
90 cases, iron
8 cases, hats
20 cases, knives
3 cases, soap
70 "Maccaroons"
2 bales, traps
10 bales, copper kettles
10 bales, tin kettles
20 bales, (Hams? & Cheecks?)
10 kegs, sugar
8 kegs, salt
32 kegs, butter
100 kegs, powder
80 kegs, pork
230 kegs, grease
40 kegs, beef
400 kegs, high wines
50 kegs, rum
10 kegs, port wine
10 kegs, brandy
20 kegs, shrub
3 kegs, sausages
30 bags, ball
20 bags, shot
17 bags green peas

2015 Pieces

If the returns were equal to the preceding year's, the plan continued, the Company could expect 1,839 packs of furs. The vessel, Beaver, would be able to take 500 packs down. The rest would go aboard 36 canoes, each carrying 38 packs.

Leaving Montreal that year would be 330 men, of whom 88 were going as winterers, leaving 242 to come down with the furs. These would be distributed among the 36 returning canoes at six men per boat. The few left over would come down in two light canoes. The total figure of 330 men going up was broken down as: 11 guides, 35 foremen, 46 steersmen, 32 seconds, 129 middle men, and the 88 winterers.[8]

By 1795, Frobisher and other senior partners realized that the agreement of 1792 would have to be modified because of the unhappiness of the younger partners and the continuing rivalry from the opposition. The details of this new compact are missing from the historical documents; only later references to this year indicate that a new agreement was reached. One problem that was solved involved the firm of Grant, Champion and Company. In 1792, this company had received one share as a preventive measure against its competing. By now, however, it stood accused of breaking the 1792 agreement by supplying trade goods to other rivals in

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8. "Scheme for the N. W. Outfit, 1794," N. W. Company, Correspondence 1791-99, in Hudson's Bay Records, Public Archives, Ottawa.

the northwest. The result was that McTavish, Frobisher and Co. bought out this firm for £ 500 and assumed its debts. In return, Grant and his partners again agreed not to trade in the northwest.[9]

Despite the efforts of 1795, Frobisher found himself facing the same problems in the following year, when Alexander Mackenzie, now promoted to agent, had a discussion with him in Montreal. Frobisher informed McTavish of Mackenzie's gripes:

> I have had a long Conference with Mr. McKenzie respecting the North West Business, & find the [g]rounds of his Complaints are as follows--
> That the Young Partners are much dissatisfied with the small Shares they hold, that... promises had been made to them by you which have not been fulfilled. That they [illeg.] your having been exempted from going to the Portage. That they have [rea]son to think their affairs are not well attended to, in the Shipping of Goods, from England, Particularly the Guns, & the Shrouds.[10]

Mackenzie, by accepting the position as agent, gave up his explorations; but the North West Company was by no means bereft of adventures. Attending the annual meeting at Grand

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9. Northwest Company Partnership Documents, 1795, Masson Collection, McGill University Library, Montreal.

10. Joseph Frobisher, Nov. 8, 1796, to Simon McTavish, Strathcona Papers, Box 2, Public Archives, Ottawa. Elaine Allan Mitchell, "New Evidence on the Mackenzie-McTavish Break", Can. Hist. Review, 41 (1960), 43, thinks that Mackenzie, either then or later, made a bid to have McTavish removed from the Company, but failed.

Portage in 1797 were two bright stars named David Thompson and Simon Fraser. Fraser's glory was to come later, but Thompson's fame as a path-finder was already beginning. He had worked for the Hudson's Bay Company the past twelve years but in 1797 left that temporarily moribund organization to join the North West Company as its scientist. Before his retirement in 1812, he would explore the length and breadth of the far West, among other things opening up the upper Columbia River to the Canadians. Shortly after that retirement, he would prepare a magnificent map of the West that encompassed 1,700,000 square miles of Canada and the United States.[11]

Always the geographer, Thompson had little use for light talk in his exhaustive journals. One pauses with delight then at reading his entry for June 25, 1797, while enroute to the Grand Portage for the first time. Still on the Saskatchewan River, he wrote: "A fine Morn. but confound the Musketoes." Arriving at Grand Portage, he restricted his notes for the most part to naming all the members of the new firm that he met. On his departure for the northwest, after a stay of 18 days, he did make mention of the portage itself: "At 9 a.m. set off...across the Portage--at 10 AM the Sun was direct behind

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11. Burpee, "Some Letters of David Thompson," Can. Hist. Review, 4 (1923), 105-07. Thompson failed to find a publisher for his great map. It hangs today in the Ontario Provincial Archives, Toronto. See also Burpee, "Grand Portage", Minn. History, 12 (1931), 372.

us, which I take to be the Co. of the mid of the Portage--at 11½ AM came to the NWt end." Very few visitors today can walk the portage in 2½ hours.[12]

When Thompson returned to Grand Portage for the annual meeting in 1798, he took the time to measure the portage itself. His notes contain the most detailed description of the trail known to exist. Although lengthy, the pertinent portions of his journal demand extraction:

> June 11. In the afternoon-- Measured the height of the Hill behind the Fort [Mount Rose] took a Alt de of the Hill at the Edge of the Lake 4 ft. above its level. Alt de double-- 43' 45½ --but the Ground not permitting another Alt de I measured a Base along the Lake--calling the top of the Hill A--the spot where the Alt de was taken B--& the end of the measured Base C--Angles at B∠95" 41--at C 60° 43'--Base exact 63 fath.
>
> Hence the height of the Hill above the place of Obsn. 294.5 feet to which add 4 ft. the height of the place of Obs...& it gives 298.5 feet [The hill today is shown as a little over 300 feet above the lake.]
>
> June 16th Measured the Grand Portage--from the west gate of the Fort [one of the few specific references to a gate on the west], Lake Superior, to the brink of the Rivulet at Fort Charlotte [Pigeon River]-- 14,110 yards [8.02 miles] --1960 yards to the Parting Trees [not identified] --11,400 yards to the Meadow [not identified]--& 8 miles exact to the Door of the House of Fort Charlotte + 30 yards to the Stream.

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12. David Thompson's Journals, Vol. 3, Book 5, "1797, Journey to Grand Portage," and "Journey from the Grand Portage Banks of Lake Superior to Swan River, 1797," Ontario Provincial Archives, Toronto. The three Western trail-blazers--Mackenzie, Thompson, and Fraser--were all at the 1797 meeting.

During the five weeks he spent at Grand Portage that summer he kept busy observing both land and men. He witnessed the arrival of the Otter and of the Montreal canoes. He measured Mount Josephine, to the northeast of the fort, finding it to be 741 feet 11 inches above Lake Superior. He noted the arrival of Duncan McGillivray in a litter from the upper country, McGillivray having suffered a leg wound. On July 4 he saw "the Sloop" arrive from Ste. Marie, and watched it depart on July 9 laden with furs. At the time of his own departure for the upper country, he took time to visit "the Perdrix," which must have been Pigeon Falls. He recalled that "the whole is not above 50 feet perpend: in my opinion- the Fall is very high falling over black Rock--40 yds. below there is another shoot of abt 14 ft. perpend."[13]

Another exploration of importance that occurred in 1797 happened by accident. Earlier this account made note of the attempts of Edward Umfreville in 1784 to find a new route to the northwest in case Grand Portage was claimed by the United States. Although his route from Lake Nipigon to Lake Winnipeg was lengthy and by no means convenient, the Company continued to rely on its potential use in case Grand Portage had to be abandoned. As late as 1788, Frobisher had written that "some years ago...we explored another Enterance into the

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13. Ibid., vol. 4.

country by the way of Nipigon," and should Grand Portage be lost, "we should suffer no material injury."[14]

Despite this ace-in-the-hole, the Company learned with pleasure in 1797 of another route that lay within British possessions and was more practicable than Lake Nipigon. This proved to be none other than the old Kaministikwia route so well known to the French a half a century earlier, but which had been forgotten due to the popularity of Grand Portage. Its rediscovery came about when Roderic McKenzie was on his way down to Grand Portage that summer:

> I met a family of Indians at the height of land; from whom I accidentally learned the existence of water communication a little way behind parallel to this, extending from Lake Superior to Lake La pluie [Rainy Lake] . . . . This was excellent information--of course I immediately engaged one of the Indians to meet me . . . in Lac La coir to show me this new Route.

The Indian failed to keep the appointment, but McKenzie had already learned all he needed and "proceeded without him, and reached an Establishment of the Company's" someplace above Kaministikwia. From there he traveled down to Lake Superior, then along the coast to Grand Portage, "and was the first by that communication that appeared there by water direct from Lac La pluie." He soon learned that it had formerly been used by the French and found it "most astonishing that

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14. Joseph Frobisher, June 30, 1788, to John Brickwood, J. Frobisher Letter Book, 1787-1788, Public Archives, Ottawa.

the North West Company were not acquainted with it sooner."

McKenzie's discovery would soon become most important to the North West Company. But even before then, Simon McTavish recognized its value. Upon learning of the route, he wrote that it "would be more advantageous and easy for us than the Grand Portage." As if foreseeing events, McTavish said that "no time ought to be lost in moving our place of Rendezvous" to the Kaministikwia.[15]

Meanwhile, the opposition more firmly entrenched itself at Grand Portage. The competition of 1793 and its four stakes that Macdonell had observed had been replaced now by more substantial rivals, ensconced in a solid structure. Innis named this latest opposition as consisting of John Mure, Quebec; Forsyth, Richardson & Co.; Parker, Gerrard, Ogilvy & Co.; Phyn, Inglis & Co.; and Leith, Jamieson & Co. Of these, Forsyth, Richardson & Co. was the most active. By 1798, the initials XY marked their bales of furs, and they became known, unofficially at least, as the XY Company. No direct evidence exists, but those who have studied this competition have concluded that it adopted XY simply because they followed the W of the North West Company's seal.[16]

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15. Memoirs of Roderic McKenzie, Public Archives, Ottawa. McKenzie quoted from a letter written by Simon McTavish, Montreal, June 22, 1799.

16. Innis, Fur Trade, p. 255; Rich, Montreal, p. 92.

William McGillivray and Alexander Mackenzie, the agents of McTavish & Frobisher at the Grand Portage in the summer of 1798, decided to crack the whip against at least part of this opposition. Together they wrote a letter to Parker, Gerrard, Ogilvy & Co. This firm had apparently been a signatory to the agreement of 1795 and thereby had promised not to compete with the North West Company. The two agents wrote that in their opinion, "the Canoes, Men, and Property you have sent and brought to this Place have been avowedly designed for the North West Trade, we consider to be a direct breach of the agreement." This company replied that it was not responsible for the actions of one of its members, Mr. Gerrard. And for the moment the matter rested.[17]

Despite this continuing opposition, which would grow still stronger, the North West Company thrived during the 1790s. Between 1784 and 1788, the annual returns had amounted to £ 30,000 sterling. Between 1796 and 1799, the returns averaged out at £ 98,000 sterling. They would continue to rise. By 1798, the Company employed well over 1,200 men, many of whom attended the annual rendezvous at Grand Portage.[18]

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17. William McGillivray and Alexander Mackenzie, June 28, 1798, to Ogilvie, Parker, Gerrard & Co., North West Company Letter Book, 1798-1802, Public Archives, Ottawa.

18. Arthur G. Doughty, ed., (Duncan McGillivray, writer?), "Some Account of the Trade Carried on By the North West Company," Report of the Public Archives for the Year 1928 (Ottawa), p. 69; Innis, Fur Trade, p. 237. Of the total employees, 50 were clerks,

Details of the men and the companies involved in the northwest trade are too great to be captured in capsule form. Still, a glance at the myriad of facets that involved Grand Portage is to be found in an XY ledger that discusses its "Outfit of 1799." Here one finds an entry concerning the manufacture of 442 corn flour bags. Another note records the purchase of two "Iron Brands." Still another comments on the making and painting of 21 canoe oil cloths. The Grey Sisters (of Montreal?) received f 362.12 for making capots, blankets, sleeves, leggings, mantels, robes, and shirts for the Company. One La Framboise earned himself f 1.7 for preparing a map of the northwest. (One wonders if David Thompson ever saw it.) Forsyth, Richardson & Co. received a sum of money "on account of young men brot out from Scotland as apprentices via George & James Keith affecting the concern." Invoices concerning this recruiting dealt with bedding bought at Aberdeen, transportation to London, board in the city, and getting the young men's baggage aboard ship. An inventory taken during the lull of spring in 1799 showed supplies remaining at

Grand Portage	f 2099.19.11
Michilimackinac	313. 4. 4
Lake La Pluie	548. 1. 9

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70 interpreters and clerks, 35 guides, and 1,102 were canoemen. Of the total, 5 clerks, 18 guides, and 350 canoemen traveled between Montreal and the Grand Portage-Rainy Lake area. The rest, of course, were northwesterners. A North West Company Letter Book lists the names of 114 clerks, interpreters, and partners for this period.

Red River	492.	13.	3
Fort Du Prairies	1520.	15.	4
Athabasca	576.	6.	11[19]

From another source, one learns that the XY Company had some kind of uniform in 1798 for its principal men. John Cameron had written to Angus Shaw, now in Montreal, asking his friend to send him a suit. Shaw replied that he "could find you the Suite of Cloathes, but the Agents told me that a Sute of Uniforms were going up (some made here and the rest...at Grand Portage) for all the Gentlemen in the North." He had concluded therefore that it was "best not to send any of another collour or ffashion."[20]

The winter of 1798-99 was unusually severe at Grand Portage. As late as June 1799, ice was still holding up some of the North West Company's ships in the Great Lakes. Nevertheless, Agent Alexander Mackenzie reached Mackinac from Montreal by June 4. Here he found letters from various winterers throughout the northwest, letters that had reached Mackinac by various means both in the past fall and this spring. In a long rambling letter, Mackenzie reported back to Montreal on the state of the fur trade. He discussed the opposition who also were preparing to cross Lake Superior to Grand Portage. He wrote about the various successes the winterers had

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19. Ledger, Outfits, Séminaire de Québec, Quebec. The activities and inventories of the North West Co. at this time would be much more complex.

20. Angus Shaw, May 2, 1798, to John Cameron, Selkirk Papers, vol. 28, Public Archives, Ottawa.

had against the Hudson's Bay traders. The Company's ship had been able to make one visit to Grand Portage already this spring and had found "the people there all well and the business of winter compleated. We lost several head of Cattle owing to the hay having Rotted last season."

Twelve days later he was at Grand Portage. Here he penned another long letter, this one directed to the winterers, some of whom would meet it and read it on the way down, greatly hungry for news of the outside world. Others, who were spending the summer in the northwest, would eventually receive a copy too, and their memories would be sharpened. A good part of this letter dealt with the activities of the opposition, warning the winter partners that competition would be strong again this year. On the whole, however, Mackenzie did not think much of Forsyth, Richardson & Co.'s efforts to hire skilled interpreters and guides. He discussed the opposition's organization, saying that it had 20 shares. Forsyth, Richardson & Co. and Leith, Shepherd & Co. together held 12 of these. Daniel Sutherland, former agent of the North West Co., but now the opposition's Montreal agent, held one share. So did "Mr. Sharp" who was the agent at Grand Portage. Four winterers also held one share each: "Desrivieres formerly La Violettes partner, Rochblanc who was Clerk to Mr. Grant, Alexr. McKenzie [no known relation] & McDonell from Detroit." The other two shares had not yet been awarded.

Mackenzie informed the winterers that the Company had purchased land from Indians "on either side of the River Camenestiquoid" (Kaministikwia?) and on the north (British) side of Sault Ste. Marie, where it was building a canal to ease transportation around the sault.[21]

Despite Mackenzie's scoffing, the XY Company offered formidable opposition in 1799. Forsyth, Richardson & Co. took the lead in the organization, while Phyn, Inglis, & Co., now based in London, handled the sales.

As for Mackenzie, he was anything but happy. He continued to be the voice of the junior members' complaints. He possibly had made up his mind earlier, but this year was his last with the North West Company. When the annual meeting was over, he left Grand Portage for Montreal, then went on to England. Some historians have claimed that Mackenzie was a bitter enemy of Simon McTavish and could no longer work with him. Others have said that Mackenzie's bitter enemy was William McGillivray, McTavish's nephew, and he was jealous of McGillivray's rapid rise. The Great Discoverer himself did not say explicitly which of the two troubled him the most. In any event, 1799 marked the end of his engagement

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21. Alexander Mackenzie, June 4, 1799, to McTavish, Frobisher & Co., and June 16, 1799, to the Proprietors of the North West Company, both in North West Company Letter Book, 1798-1802, Public Archives, Ottawa. The loss of nine cattle was confirmed in a letter by John Munro, July 15, 1799, Strathcona Papers, Box 2, Public Archives, Ottawa.

as agent.

His cousin, Roderic, wrote that at the general meeting, Alexander announced that "feeling himself uncomfortable he could not think of renewing his engagements, and was determined to withdraw from the Concern." The wintering partners argued against his decision, saying he had "their sole confidence" and that "they could not dispense with his services." All protestations were in vain.

Joseph Frobisher, in Montreal, was disgusted. He wrote Simon McTavish: "McKenzie's abrupt departure...proceeded I believe from a fit of ill humour, without any fix'd plan or knowing himself what he would be at. He has repeatedly thrown out hints to me respecting your misunderstandings to which I have listen'd with indifference." Frobisher further characterized the great explorer with the devastating remark,"you know him to be vindictive."[22]

With or without Mackenzie, the fur trade would continue. One result of the continued gnawing of an opposition was an

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22. Memoirs of Roderic McKenzie; Joseph Frobisher, an incomplete letter, Jan. 18, 1800, apparently to Simon McTavish, Strathcona Papers, Box 2, both at Public Archives, Ottawa. In December, 1799, after Mackenzie's departure from the Company, the firm of McTavish, Frobisher & Co. underwent a reorganization. Ten equal shares were divided as follows: Simon McTavish-4, John Gregory-2, William McGillivray-2, Duncan McGillivray-1, and William Hallowell-1. See North West Partners' Trust-Deeds & Agreements, 1799-1820, Hudson's Bay Records, Public Archives, Ottawa. Duncan McGillivray, a brother of William, replaced Alexander Mackenzie as agent to Grand Portage.

increase of rum among the Indians. The North West Company had never hesitated to use it as a trade good in opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company. However, with the advent of the XY Company, liquor flowed even more freely in the battle for furs. From 1793 to 1798, the average annual amount of liquor dispensed by the North West Company was 9,600 gallons. During the years 1802-04, when the XY Company was most active, the average annual distribution of liquor by the North West Company alone was 12,340 gallons.[23]

The summer of 1799 presented other bits of news that affected Grand Portage. During this year, the Charlotte transported the Company's goods on Lakes Erie and Huron, up to Detroit, then on to Sault Ste. Marie. The Otter continued to transport supplies from above Sault Ste. Marie to Grand Portage. A letter concerning the Charlotte gave a glimpse of her cargo: "The Charlotte sailed from [Detroit]...for the Sault...she had for loading 619 bags of hulled corn containing 1365 bushels, 16 bags of Oats, and the whole of the goods you sent up for the Grand Portage." The Detroit agent, Angus

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23. Phillips, 2, 110; Innis, "NorthWest Company," Can. Hist. Review, 8 (1927), 313 and 315; R. Harvey Fleming, "The Origins of 'Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Company,'" Can. Hist. Review, 9 (1928), 141-3; McGillivray, "Some account of the Trade," Public Archives, Ottawa. It is not possible to give a precise date of Alexander Mackenzie's departure from the North West Company. His letters of June 1799 indicate that he was still loyal to the Company, even though mentally he may already have decided to quit. He left Montreal for England in October, and it may be said this was his official departure. It is also difficult to say when he actually became a member of the opposition. This report assumes that his opposition became effective when he returned to Canada in 1800.

Mackintosh, reported that the XY Company had "entered seriously into measures to prosecute that trade. They determined to get a vessel built here during the ensuing winter [1799-1800] of Forty Tons burden...[for use] on Lake Superior."[24]

A final note from Alexander Mackenzie this summer informs us that at Grand Portage, the opposition now had a "Hangard & House erected by Men at a Dollar per day." This is the first definite acknowledgement of the XY Company's facilities.[25]

Before leaving the eighteenth century, note should be taken of two accounts that presented themselves to the British public as accurate accounts of the now-romantic spot. Priscilla Wakefield wrote one of these books, entitling it Excursions In North America. Hasty readers have decided that her leading character, one Arthur Middleton, was a visitor to Grand Portage. However, in her preface, Wakefield cheerfully acknowledged that her hero was but a literary device and her information about Grand Portage came from the traders and travelers who had actually been there. Keeping in mind that her description is a highly filtered one, it is presented here, mainly for curiosity:

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24. Angus Mackintosh, Papers, 1798-1800, 2 vols., bound photostats, Burton Coll., Detroit Public Library, letters, July 13, 1799, to McGillivray and Mackenzie; July 17, 1799, to McIntosh and Frobisher; also see Angus McIntosh, Correspondence (Letter Book), 1798-1803, Public Archives, Ottawa.

25. Alexander Mackenzie, letter, 1799, in North West Company Letter Book, 1798-1802, Public Archives, Ottawa.

> The Grand Portage, where we landed, is situated on a pleasant bay . . . . The fort is picketed in with pallisadoes, and incloses houses built with wood and covered with shingles. These are for the accommodation of the merchants and their clerks, during their short stay there. The north men live in tents; but the more frugal pork eaters, or [Montreal] canoe man, lodges beneath his canoe.
>
> We mess at the first table, with the merchants, clerks, guides, and interpreters . . . on fresh meat, salt pork, fish, and venison; but the poor canoe-men are obliged to be satisfied with a pudding of hominee.[26]

Another book published at this time, by an author who did not see the Grand Portage--but who did not hesitate to describe it--is a travel account by Isaac Weld, Jr. In contrast to Wakefield's hero, Weld actually traveled in Canada, but not as far West as Lake Superior. His description is wholly borrowed:

> Those intended to bring back [to Montreal] cargoes immediately, stop at the Grand Portage, where the furs are collected ready for them by the agents of the company. The furs are made up in packs of a certain weight, and a particular number is put into each canoe. By knowing thus the exact weight of every pack, there can be no embezzlement; and at the portages there is no time wasted in alloting to each man his load, every one being obliged to carry so many packs.

He also learned from his sources that the North West Company had a "regular" post at Grand Portage and that it employed "about two thousand men" in the upper country.[27]

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26. Priscilla Wakefield, Excursions in North American, Described in Letters From a Gentleman and His Young Companion (London, Darton and Harvey, 1806), p. 345.

27. Isaac Weld, Jr., Travels Through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada...1795, 1796, and 1797 (London, John Stockdale, 1800), pp. 229 and 234.

CHAPTER 5

The Last Years

Henry Munro was in charge of Grand Portage during the winter months of 1799-1800. Early in January 1800, William McGillivray wrote him from Montreal describing the Company's plans for the coming summer. McGillivray realized that this letter probably would not reach Grand Portage until spring. He wrote at this time to insure that his letter would be at Sault Ste. Marie when the Otter made its first visit to Grand Portage—probably in May.

Among the sundry matters McGillivray mentioned was the shortage of bags for shipping corn. He directed Munro to collect all the empty bags at Grand Portage and to send them back on the Otter's first trip.

With regard to the perennial problem of the opposition, he directed Munro to adopt tactics that would make matters as difficult as possible for them at Grand Portage. In musing on this subject, McGillivray did little for the future historian's understanding of the area. He decided that the opposition would "try to build somewhere on the point, where the Montreal canoes usually pass the Summer, or about the premier's scaffold."

McGillivray's reference to the "point" is not thought to mean either Raspberry or Hat Points that form Grand Portage Bay, but a small unnamed point directly across Grand

Portage Creek from the North West Company's stockade. Later, considerable evidence will be introduced that it was along this beach that the Montreal canoes landed. Also important, this beach was closest to the eastern portal of the portage itself, thus keeping at a minimum the distance the porters had to carry their heavy packs. The documents lack any information concerning the intriguing "premier's scaffold." The only other use of this term known is that "premier" sometimes was a nickname for Simon McTavish. The agent's idea was for Munro to take possession of these likely spots "by erecting a couple of Tents on the proper places & getting out the Montreal Canoes (that are remaining there from last Summer) on the point."

The XY Company already had structures at both ends of the portage; thus it would seem that McGillivray's concern was directed toward the XY's expansion or improvement of its facilities, especially at the landings. In his instructions, he implies that the North West Company had already started the practice of erecting fences close to the opposition's structures, thus denying the latter the adjacent ground. He advised Munro to repair these fences at the western end of the portage (Fort Charlotte) and to plow the ground and plant crops. While Munro was at it, he should also repair "the Picketting and Fences at this end, particularly those adjoining their

buildings."[1]

In another letter from Montreal that winter, we learn that Grand Portage possessed the services of a cooper. At this particular time he had insufficient materials from which to make barrels to be used for transporting grease and alcohol. However, the Otter would bring him "a considerable quantity of Staves and Hoops."[2]

By the end of May 1880, William McGillivray had reached Ste. Marie's, enroute to Grand Portage. While awaiting transportation, he wrote back to McTavish, Frobisher & Co. giving the winter's news from the West. His letter contains two items of interest concerning Grand Portage. Besides its role as a rendezvous, Grand Portage served as headquarters for a number of small posts in its vicinity. These tiny establishments trapped beaver and in this particular spring had brought in no fewer than 20 packs.

More important to the present, McGillivray learned of a

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1. William McGillivray, Jan 10, 1800, to Henry Munro, North West Company Letter Book, 1798-1802, Public Archives, Ottawa. In the 1962 excavations at Grand Portage, archeologists discovered a 60-foot line of post butts some 400 feet east of the N. W. stockade. At present there is no evidence to support the idea that this was one of the fences McGillivray referred to. See Alan R. Woolworth, "Archeological Excavations at Grand Portage National Monument, 1962 Field Season," MS, Dec. 1968, pp. 38-39 and maps.

2. Duncan McGillivray, Jan 31, 1800, to John Bennet, North West Company Letter Book, 1798-1802, Public Archives, Ottawa.

great storm that had hit Grand Portage in the fall of 1799: "A Tempest last Fall carried & broke to Pieces our two Quays at the Grand Portage—with 4 boats—but Mr. Munro has in some measure repaired the Damage." This is one of the few references to wharves at Grand Portage, and the only one to two. Unfortunately, their locations cannot be determined by documentary evidence.[3]

Among the new employees to arrive at Grand Portage in 1800 was young Daniel William Harmon, a most literate clerk. An avid diary keeper with a flair for description, Harmon caught the flavor of the fur trade when Grand Portage was at the apex of its activities. So acute were his observations that extracts from his account will begin with his departure from Montreal on April 28:

> I yesterday in company with several other Clerks left Montreal...and am thus far [at Lachine] on my way to the Indian Countries, there to remain at least Seven Years...Here is where the Goods intended for the Interior or Indian Country are put aboard Canoes...which will carry about five Tuns burden each, and manned by eight or nine Men, who are mostly Canadians, and are said to answer the purpose better than People of any other Nation.
>
> The whole squadron is divided into three Brigades, and in each Brigade there is one or two Guides or Pilots who serve in a double capacity of pointing out the best way to steer, and have also...the charge of the Canoes & Property...and...command the men...Those voyageurs I am told have many of the Sailors' customs, and the following is one of them:—from all who have not passed certain places they expect a <u>treat</u> or something to drink, and

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3. Ibid., William McGillivray, May 27, 1800, to McTavish, Frobisher, and Co.

should you not comply with their whims, you might be sure of getting a Ducking which they call baptizing....

[May 21] The Canadian Voyagers when they leave one stream to follow another have a custom of pulling off their Hats and making a sign of the Cross, and one in each Brigade if not in every Canoe repeats a short Prayer. The same ceremonies are also observed by them whenever they pass a place where any one has been buried or a cross erected...at almost every Rapid... we have seen a number of Crosses erected, and at one I counted no less than thirty! It is truly melancholy....

[May 28] St. Josephs or the New Fort, & where the British came and built when the Americans took possession of Mackanu. Here there is one Captain, one Lieutenant, an Ensign & thirty nine Privates.

The N.W. Coy. have a House & Store here [St. Joseph's], in the latter they make Canoes for sending into the Interior or down to Montreal. Vessels also of about Sixty Tons burthen come here from DeTroit, Mackanu & Sault St. Maries.

[May 30] Sault St. Maries...the N.W. Coy. have another Establishment on the North side of the Rapid, and on the opposite shore there are a few Americans, Scotch & Canadians, who carry on a small traffic with the Natives. ...here the N. W. Coy. have built Locks for taking up loaded Canoes.

[June 1] Pointe au Pin, in Lake Superior, and here we find the Vessel that voyages between this & the Grand Portage. I went on board & the Captain told me she would carry about ninety five Tons & generally makes four trips every Season to the Grand Portage.

The brigades of Montreal canoes slipped into Grand Portage Bay on Friday, June 13. Harmon learned that he was now about 1800 miles from Montreal. He examined the fabled establishment with curiosity:

The Fort which is twenty four Rods by thirty [i.e. 396' by 495', whereas the measurements determined by archeology are about 320' by 360'] is built in a Bay at the foot of a considerable Hill or Mountain--within the Fort there are a number of Dwelling Houses, Shops & Stores etc. all of which appear to be Temporary buildings, just to serve for this moment. The Bay is so shoal that the vessel must be almost light before she can approach the shore, and directly opposite the Fort there is a considerable Island, which shelters the vessel....There also is another Fort which stands within two hundred Rods [3300' or about 0.6 miles] of this belonging to Parker, Gerard, Forsyth, Richardson, Ogilvy & Coy., but who have been in this Country only three years & have not as yet met with much success....

As this is the Headquarters or General Rendezvous for all who commerce in this part of the World, therefore every Summer the Proprietors and many of the Clerks who Winter in the Interior come here with the Furs...and I am told this is the time when they generally arrive but some of them are already here. Those who bring the Goods from Montreal go no farther than this, except a few who take goods to the Rainy Lake, intended for Athabasca, as that place lies at too great a distance from this, for the People of that quarter to come this far & return before the Winter sets in....

Harmon's time for sight-seeing came to an abrupt end, for it was time for the clerks to distribute the next year's goods to the various outfits. Nevertheless he found time to record his daily activities, thus preserving a view of this busy time:

June 14th Saturday. Mr. J. Clarke & I are placed in the General Shop where we deal out to the People Dry Goods, Rum, Flour, Sugar, Butter & Meat etc. etc. [Apparently a general store for those at the rendezvous.]

June 15 Sunday. I have another fit of the Ague & Fever. The People here pass the Sundays much like the Natives, with this only difference, we change our Cloathes, but they do not--the labouring People have all Day been employed in Making and pressing Packs of Furs to be sent to Canada--

to me who has never been accustomed to see People labour on the Sabbath it appears very wrong....

24th Tuesday, I along with several other Clerks am busily employed in making Packs--and almost every Day form some time past People have been flocking in from the Interior with the Returns of the Season.

28th Saturday. Last Night while drunk a Squaw stabbed her Husband, who afterwards expired--and this afternoon I went to their Tent, where a number of Indians...were drinking and crying over the Corpse, to whom they would often offer Rum and try to turn it down his throat....

July 4th - In the Daytime the Natives were allowed to Dance in the Fort, and to whom the Coy. made a present of thirty six Gallons of Shrub [a drink made with orange or lemon juice, sugar, and rum], etc. and this evening the Gentlemen of the place dressed & we had a famous Ball in the Dining Room, and for musick we had the Bag-Pipe the violin, the Flute & the Fife, which enabled us to spend the evening agreeably--at the Ball there were a number of this Countries Ladies, whom I was surprised to find could behave themselves so well, and who danced not amiss.

July 6th Sunday...where I shall pass the ensuing Winter is not yet known--however as I am now in the shop where the Fort des Prairies People are equiped [sic] I expect to go to that quarter. [Harmon suggests here that the separate outfits each had their own shop in which to prepare their goods.]

July 13th Sunday, Yesterday...went to Fort Charlotte, which is at the other end of this Portage and is nine miles over. I went there to send off a number of Canoes bound for Fort des Prairies....

Two days later, Harmon set out to spend the winter, as he had guessed, at Fort des Prairies. Five years would pass before he came back down to a rendezvous. By then, Grand Portage would be abandoned and, as far as it is known, he never again saw the handsome bay that had so fascinated him

on first sight.[4]

Another gentleman to pen his impressions this year was Alexander Henry. This Alexander was the nephew of the famed Henry who appeared early in this narrative. On his way to the Grand Portage this summer, David Harmon mentioned meeting this fellow clerk, whom history has designated Alexander Henry the Younger or, sometimes, Jr. Like so many of his associates, young Henry saw no need to describe Grand Portage: "The track from the Grand Portage to Lake Winnipeg being already so well known, requires no further description."

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4. The above extracts were taken from Daniel Harmon, "Journal of Travels...1800 to 1819," Public Archives, Ottawa. These photostats were made from a handwritten copy of his journal now in the Iowa State University Library. This copy of his journal was in the possession of his daughter when she died in 1904. Despite analysis by several scholars, it is still not known if this is the original journal or a copy. If it is a copy, internal evidence suggests to me that the copyist was very accurate. In all respects it discloses an innocent clerk uncovering the wonders of the fur trade. The journal was first edited and published by Rev. Daniel Haskel, A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interior of North America (Andover, 1820). Haskel, alas, was more concerned with his own ideas of man and religion than with the accuracy history demands. In recent years the Archivist of the Public Archives, W. Kaye Lamb, acquired the photostats and republished the journal under the title Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon, 1800-1816 (Toronto, The Macmillan Co., 1957). This version reflects scholarship.

Haskel, for no known reason, had Harmon describe the Company's post at Grand Portage as: "the houses are surrounded by palisades, which are about eighteen inches in diameter, and are sunk nearly three feet in the ground, and rise about fifteen feet above it." Despite one's desire for more details about Grand Portage, Haskel's version must remain suspect.

Also to be noted with suspicion is a quotation from an anonymous journal (which has remarkable similarities in other aspects to Harmon's) that was cited by James H. Baker, "History

He did however describe his departure for the interior:

> Saturday. July 19, 1800. Our Baggage and other Necessaries being previously carried over the Portage, which is about 9 Miles, our men also, being fully equipped for the year, and their accounts settled, at 3 o'clock I set off for Fort Charlotte, where I arrived at 5. The road through the Portage was very bad in some places, knee deep in mud and clay, and so slippery, as to make walking tedious.
>
> Sunday. July 20 [at Fort Charlotte]. The Canoes having been previously given out to the Men, to gum and prepare, I found every thing in readiness for our departure, and early this morning, gave out to each Canoe their respective loading, which consisted of Twenty-Eight packages per Canoe...namely
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> 5 Bales Merchandize -- 90 pounds each
> 1 Bale Canal Tobacco
> 1 Bale Kettles
> 1 Case Guns
> 1 Case Iron works
> 2 Rolls New Twist Tobacco
> 2 Bags Leaden Balls
> 1 Bag " Shot
> 1 Bag Flour
> 1 Keg Sugar
> 2 Kegs Gunpowder
> 10 Kegs of High Wines, 9 Gallons each
> 28 Pieces Total
>
> Equippage for the Voyage: Provisions for 4 Men to Red River, 4 Bags Corn, 1½ bushels in Each, ½ Keg Grease
>
> Add to the above, about 4 packages of 90 lbs. each private property belonging to the men, consisting of Cloathing, Tobacco etc., for themselves and families for the year, so that, when all hands are embarked, the Canoes generally are sunk

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of Transportation in Minnesota," Minn. Hist. Collections, 9 (1928), 9-10: "On that night of the 3d of July, 1800, according to the diary, the factors gave a 'great ball'. The large dining room, with its puncheon floor sixty feet long, was cleared, and inspiring music was furnished by the bagpipe, violin, and flute." This writer has made an exhaustive investigation of the known sources, but has not located any reference to a puncheon floor or to its length.

to the Gunnell. At 10 o'clock, the Brigade were all off, and at 3 o'clock I followed.[5]

Finally, the various outfits had departed for the interior. Less laughter and confusion marked the North West post at Grand Portage. Agent William McGillivray, still busy at seeing the Montreal canoes off on their return journey to the St. Lawrence, added up this year's returns: "I am about making up the last of the Packs. We Shall have in all about 1360 of 100 to. besides 470 of 120 to. by the Otter." He went on to state that there were only 200 buffalo robes this year and that he had to use them all "to pay bons and Billets."[6]

McGillivray too left Grand Portage in August. At Ste. Marie's, at the opposite end of Lake Superior, he wrote back to the post that the Otter would bring "the Plank and boards wanted to compleat the two Houses." He said also that the Otter would lay up at Grand Portage over the winter so that the vessel could return to Sault Ste. Marie as soon as the ice broke up the following spring. He told the bourgeois, now Kenneth McKenzie, to be particularly careful "in putting up the Books." He suggested that they be placed in the "large

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5. Alexander Henry, "Mr. Henry's Journal across the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific, 1799 to 1816," 2 vols., Public Archives, Ottawa.

6. William McGillivray, Aug. 17, 1800, to P. Grant, North West Co. Letter Book, 1798-1802, Pub. Archives, Ottawa. A "bon" was a form of money or credit employed by the N. W. Co. at Grand Portage and in the northwest. Further reference will be made to it.

trunk in my room in which I have left the Key and put it when filled with them into the Powder House." In case the bourgeois had any doubts, he meant the "Petit Ledger Book resolves and Engagements with our outfit Books."

A few days later, McGillivray set down instructions for the captain of the Otter, directing him to pay particular attention to the crew's food supply for the winter. In addition to the food the Otter would carry up, the crew would depend on a share of the supplies at Grand Portage. The winter's menu would include corn, beef, baked biscuit, salt fish, sugar, butter, flour, rum, and potatoes. The letter indicates that the potatoes would be those grown the past summer at Grand Portage itself, "after laying a part of quantity necessary for seed and for the Table next Summer." As a special complement, "I ordered a large Hog at the Portage to be fattened." McGillivray told the captain to share it with Kenneth McKenzie. Finally, if the crew should manage to collect sufficient hay, they were to borrow one of McKenzie's milk cows.[7]

While McGillivray spent that busy summer of 1800 seeing to a thousand and one details, the opposition also pursued its goals. Alexander Mackenzie, who had gone to England the

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7. Ibid., McGillivray, Aug. 26, 1800, to Kenneth McKenzie, and to Captain Maxwell. This Kenneth McKenzie is not the same man who built Fort Union on the Upper Missouri in 1829.

preceding autumn, had returned to Canada in the spring. Before the summer was over, he associated himself with the XY Company. Probably in this year the opposition adopted the formal, but rarely used, title of "The New North West Company" or "The New Company." The voyageurs of the North West Company had still another name for it. They called its members the "Potties," meaning either "les petits (the little ones) or the "potées" (those made of putty, softies).

The XY Company, as already noted, had small establishments at either end of the Grand Portage, but was still experiencing difficulty in challenging the North West Company throughout the Interior. The lieutenant governor of Lower Canada estimated that the XY Company's capital was equal to the North West Company's, but that its number of employees amounted to only one-third of the giant's. Mackenzie did not visit Grand Portage this year. Instead, he visited with his new associates in Montreal and together they refined the organization of their company. That fall, Mackenzie returned to England where he would write a book that would increase his fame and cause the king to make him a knight in 1802.[8]

Mackenzie made another trip to Canada in 1801, but again did not attend the XY's gathering at Grand Portage. However, Simon McTavish, the kingpin of the North West Company, did attend

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8. Fleming, "Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Company," Can. Hist. Review, 9 (1928), 143-45; Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, 2, 215-16.

his organization's rendezvous. It had been his moving to London years earlier and continued absence that had given rise to criticism from Mackenzie and other junior members. An old friend, on learning that McTavish was once again traveling the waterways, wrote that "your old Acquaintance at the grand portage [will]...be much pleased to see you there, your presence will in my Opinion tend to be productive of making favorable impression for your & their own Interests on their minds which might otherwise be declining."[9]

Thirteen other partners attended this year's meeting. The roll call dramatized the Scottish preponderance in the Company: William McGillivray, Angus Shaw, Roderic McKenzie, Alexander McLeod, Daniel McKenzie, William MacKay, John McDonald, Donald McTavish, John McDonell, Archibald Norman McLeod, Peter Grant, John Sayer, and Charles Chaboiller. They admitted six new members, each with one share (out of 46), including Alexander Henry, Jr., and Simon Fraser.

The business meeting produced little drama in 1801. The partners passed a resolution that too much drunkenness existed among the wintering partners, their clerks, and their interpreters. In the future such conduct would meet with punishment. They also drew up a new list giving the priorities

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9. Angus Mackintosh, Jan. 30, 1801, to Simon McTavish, Mackintosh Letterbook, 1801-2, Burton Collection, Detroit Public Library.

for trips out to Montreal. In coming years they would decide annually how many could be spared to go out, but at no time would the number exceed five.[10]

At the same time that McTavish met his associates, the XY Company held its much smaller rendezvous on the same shore. Although Mackenzie had not come up, his joining the company was very much felt. So extensive was his power that the company soon was to be reorganized under the title of Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Company--although the informal "XY" continued to be used by both friend and foe. As a part of the reorganization the partners took an inventory of their goods, tools, and structures. A record of this inventory, and of succeeding annual inventories, has survived.

The XY Company valued its "Forts & other buildings at both ends of the Portage" at f 300. The list contains the tools of the carpenter and the blacksmith. Such lists are rare today and they give evidence of what the companies had with which to build:

<u>Carpenter's tools</u>

4 gouges	2 saw sets	1 two-foot rule
6 chisels	2 crosscut saws	
6 hammers	4 pit saws	
2 adzes	16 planes	
11 augers	6 drawing knives	
3 spike gimlets	2 compasses	
½ dozen gimlets	6 pr. nippers	
5 handsaws	15 rasps & files	
2 small cooper's saws	1 iron square	

10. Minutes of the Meetings of the North West Company, 1801-04, Baby Collection, University of Montreal.

Blacksmith's tools

1 bellows
1 vice
1 anvil
1 verberquin (?)
1 pr. shears
5 hammers
5 pr. nippers (tenailles)
1 pr. small nippers
11 chisels
2 pr. train irons
1 pr. large scales, beams, weights
1 pr. large cooper scales
4 guns

4½ doz. files
2 cloutures (?)
120 bu. charcoal
1 grindstone
1 cart and wheels
2 pishons (?)
2 coutres (colters?)
1 pr. lg. stillyards
4 pr. small "
1 pr. smaller scales
1 pr. brass scales
3 bodettes (?)
14 oil cloths

The XY Company's 1803 inventory at Grand Portage showed the following items: 23 panel doors, 30 window sashes, 10 bed steads, 24 chairs, 3 japanned candlesticks, and 1/3 box window glass.[11]

Alexander Mackenzie had finished Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence by 1801. In it he described the Grand Portage he had known as a partner of the North West Company. He mentioned the bay and the island, saying that the shallowness of the water rendered "it necessary for the vessel to anchor near a mile from the shore, where there is not more than fourteen feet of water." This fails to support the statement of others that the Company had one or two wharfs.

The North West fort, he wrote, was "picketed in with cedar pallisadoes, and inclosing houses built with wood and covered with shingles." He felt that the structures were

11. XY Company Register, Inventories, Baby Coll., U. of Montreal.

"calculated for every convenience of trade, as well as to accommodate the proprietors and clerks during their short residence there. The North men live under tents: but the more frugal pork-eater lodges beneath his canoe." He reported that the only crop planted was potatoes; however, "there are meadows in the vicinity that yield abundance of hay for the cattle."

The portage itself he described only in general terms. He noted that the voyageurs from Montreal had the job of transporting the supplies over it: "each of them has to carry eight packages.... This is a labour which cattle cannot conveniently perform in summer, as both horses and oxen were tried...without success. They are only useful for light, bulky articles; or for transporting upon sledges, during the winter, whatever goods may remain there, especially provision of which it is usual to have a year's stock on hand."

Mackenzie outlined "the mode of living" at the Fort. "The proprietors, clerks, guides, and interpreters, mess together, to the number of sometimes an hundred, at several tables, in one large hall." The menu was considerable: bread, salt pork, beef, hams, fish, venison, butter, peas, Indian corn, potatoes, tea, spirits, wine, "and plenty of milk, for which purpose several milch cows are constantly kept." The mechanics had similar food, "but the canoe-men, both from the North and Montreal, have no other allowance here, or in the voyage, than Indian corn and melted fat."

If the voyageurs got a limited variety, their food must have been nutritious. Mackenzie told of having "known some of them to set off with two packages of ninety pounds each, and in return with two others of the same weight, in the course of six hours." He admitted that the north men did receive a little extra on their arrival at Grand Portage. They were "regaled with bread, pork, butter, liquor, and tobacco," for another year's work well done.

He found discipline among the voyageurs to be remarkably good: "It is, indeed, very creditable to them as servants, that though they are sometimes assembled to the number of twelve hundred men; indulging themselves in the free use of liquor, and quarrelling with each other, they always shew the greatest respect to their employers." He might have added that, legally or not, the proprietors had no hesitancy about imposing punishments for breaches in discipline.[12]

Mackenzie published his book just as Grand Portage's role as the greatest of the fur trade's rendezvous sites was coming to a close. Five years had passed since Roderic McKenzie had rediscovered the old Kaministikwia route and McTavish had said that the North West Company should move to the mouth of that river. The record of this move, once undertaken, is like so many things about Grand Portage not rich in details.

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12. Alexander Mackenzie, Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence (Ann Arbor, University Microfilms, Inc., 1966) xl-xlvi.

It is possible that the actual decision to move was made in 1801 when McTavish arrived at the rendezvous, and that construction of the new fort began that summer. Whatever the circumstances, the North West partners met at Grand Portage for the last time in 1802. The next year would find them at the new port, eventually to be named Fort William in honor of McGillivray.

The partners, now numbering over thirty, signed a new agreement in the summer of 1802. This agreement, setting the number of shares at 96, was to last for twenty years beginning with the Outfit of 1803—a mark of the stability which the organization had reached. Simon McTavish's name continued to head the list. Although now an elderly gentleman, he was not yet prepared to surrender any power. Just that spring he had purchased the Seigniory of Terrebonne, outside Montreal, for £ 25,000, and was looking forward to his pleasures of fame, power, and wealth.[13]

Although 1802 marked the end of the North West Company's occupancy of Grand Portage, it did not signify an end to the XY Company's activities there. Sir Alexander Mackenzie, knighted that year, would continue his activities at the historic site. However, it was his cousin Roderic's opinion that

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13. Agreement of 1802, in Documents from the Estate Trust Files of James Keith, of Aberdeen, microfilm, Public Archives, Ottawa; Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, 2, 217.

the XY Company was "doing worse than ever."[14]

It was a new man in the XY Company, George Nelson, who described Grand Portage this year. He had a favorable recollection of the old company's layout: "The establishment of the N. W. Co., tho' there was nothing superfluous or unnecessary, but was of an extent to prove at once the great trade they carried on, their judgement & taste in the regularity & position of their numerous buildings. The neatness & order of things was not [the] least part of it."

As for his own company, his account is the only source to state that Mackenzie's people were that year erecting a new fort: "Our company had a few buildings, a few hundred yards to the East of the N.W. below the hill; but were busy building a very fine 'fort' upon the hill." One may but guess at "the hill," although it seems apparent he was not referring to Mount Rose. Nelson's description of the rendezvous illustrates the XY's adoption of the operational techniques of the North West Company:

> I was placed in one of the Stores to Serve the people. At last they began to come in, all was business. Receiving Goods, corn, flour, pork etc. etc. from Montreal & Mackinac, & furs from the different wintering posts--Gambling, feasting, dancing, drinking, & fighting. After a couple of weeks to rest, for the Winterers to give in their returns & accounts, & to make up their outfits, they began to return again, to run over the same ground, toils, labors, and dangers.

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14. Roderic McKenzie, June 5, 1802, to Duncan Cameron, N. W. Co. Letter Book, 1798-1802, Public Archives, Ottawa.

Nelson recorded also the bitter rivalry that existed, competition that more than once led to violence. One of the XY's brigades, ready to return to the interior, had camped at Portage la Perdrix, "only a few hundred yards from our Stores at the north end of Grand portage where they feasted & got drunk upon the 'régale' that was always given them when they arrived from, or departed for, their winter quarters." When the hungover voyageurs woke the next morning, they discovered that "thirty Kegs of High Wines (containing 9 Galls. ea.) had all run out!" Upon closer examination, their bleary eyes found that the kegs "had been bored with two gimlet holes each! The consternation & injury this occasioned may be imagined." The rumor quickly spread that the North West men had done the mischief. "It created an excessive bad feeling," Nelson wrote, "& led to retaliations some of which would have ended tragically but for providence, but nothing further ever followed."[15]

Sir Alexander, "Mons. Le Chevalier" as the French Canadians called him, was at Grand Portage in the summer of 1802, his first visit since quitting the North West Company. On the whole he was satisfied with the returns of his relatively small company. Also, he had a new ship, the Perseverance, on Lake

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15. Richard Barton and Grace Lee Nute, eds., " A Winter in the St. Croix Valley, 1802-13," Minnesota History, 28 (1947), 142-3, 143n. (The diary of George Nelson, N. W. Co.)

Superior. From the company's letter books, we find that the XY Company had established well its sources for trade goods. Daniel Sutherland, in Montreal, carried on correspondence with companies in the United States (including John Jacob Astor) and Great Britain (principally Phyn, Inglis & Co.). In one of his letters is a reference to a farmer and a barn at Grand Portage. In 1802 he sent a number of tools to Grand Portage so that the barn might be repaired "in the Summer after the Trade is over."[16]

When it was time for the North West Company's annual meeting in 1803, the Montreal canoes and the schooner cut their swaths across Lake Superior and the winterers sped their canoes down the rivers and lakes toward a new destination. No more would Grand Portage witness the exultant celebrations of the Company's more than 1,000 partners, clerks, guides, interpreters, and voyageurs. This magnet, known in the market places of London, Berlin, Moscow, and Canton, was slipping quietly from the events of the day, but not from memory.

Although the North West Company had left, a court case in 1803 brought the history of the Great Carrying Place very much to attention in Montreal. The testimony resulting from

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16. Daniel Sutherland, Jan. 27, 1802, to John Butler Grant; July 12 and Aug. 20, 1802, to Phyn, Inglish & Co.; Aug. 31, 1802, to Capt. Mills; Nov. 1, 1802, to Lewis Faraguharson & Co., Schenectady; and Nov. 27, 1802, to J. J. Astor, all in Sir Alexander Mackenzie & Co., Letter Book of Daniel Sutherland, 1802-09, Séminaire de Québec, Quebec.

the case of Dominique Rousseau and Joseph Bailly v. Duncan McGillivray brought out several details of the appearance and manner of things at Grand Portage that otherwise would have remained unrecorded.[17]

In 1802, Rousseau and Bailly, living then at Mackinac, secured an American license to trade at Grand Portage. This was but proper for the Jay Treaty, ratified in 1795, had called again for British withdrawal from American territory in the "Northwest." The two partners sent one canoe (under Paul Hervieux) to Grand Portage. Possibly the North West Company would not have objected to Hervieux's presence had he not pitched his tent in the midst of the voyageurs and begun to sell them liquor. Duncan McGillivray, in charge of the North West post, could not contain his anger. While he had no objection to the men's drinking, the Company had always controlled the supply, usually through a subsidiary. McGillivray promptly had Hervieux's tent torn down and forced the interloper to move his operations to a more distant site. He also forbade his men to trade with Hervieux. As a result, Rousseau and Bailly sued and eventually recovered f 500 for damages.

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17. Nute, "British Legal Case," Minnesota History 21 (1940), 117-48. I am in great debt to Miss Nute's translations of the French portions of the document and for her notes.

Hervieux, in his testimony, admitted that his goods were "partly dry and partly liquid." He described his first location of three tents as being close to the tents of the North West men and about 50 feet away from the Montreal canoes on the beach. Under duress, he moved his establishment "about a gunshot" to a location near the trading establishment of one Boucher, "about ten feet from the edge of the water on a level with the house of the said Boucher," and from 950 to 1,140 feet away from another trading establishment operated by one Mailloux.

One of Hervieux's voyageurs, Michel Robichaux, testified that his boss had but two tents and that they were not surrounded by North West tents, "but that there were several of them about fifty feet behind." He said that the Montreal canoes on the beach were about twenty feet from Hervieux's establishment and that his boss had to pass between these canoes in order to reach the spot where he camped. In describing the second location, Robichaux said that it was about 60 feet from Boucher's establishment. Although the testimony made very little reference to the XY Company and its post, Robichaux said that after they were prohibited from trading with the North West's men, they did carry out some trade with the men of the XY Company.

The statements of several of the North West Company's men showed that they had long exercised the privilege of bringing buffalo and elk skins out from the interior to trade on their

own at Grand Portage. A typical description of this fringe benefit was made by Charles Leger, a North West guide, who said that engagés could "trade buffalo robes and elk skins and other coarse skins, but not fine furs."

One of the XY Company's employees, Joseph Poissant, testified that Hervieux was "camped upon the shore between the fort of the Big Company and that of Mr. Boucher, in an unoccupied space." Unfortunately, Poissant did not volunteer any information concerning the location of his own fort in relation to these. On being cross-examined, Poissant said that the North West tents were from twenty to fifty feet from the Hervieux's first location, and that Hervieux moved about 285 feet to his second location.

Thomas Forsyth of the XY Company implied that the North West men pitched their tents in the general area between the North West fort and Boucher's establishment. During his time at Grand Portage he had learned that this area had been cleared for the past fifty years (since 1753, in the French régime). Although North West tents were located on this stretch of ground, Forsyth was of the opionion that "he would have a right to erect a tent there." He recalled that Hervieux's second location was "near to Boucher's fort and not more than half an acre from a little River" (Grand Portage Creek).

The most historic testimony given at the trial came from

Maurice Blondeau who had first visited Grand Portage in 1766, immediately after the British had captured Canada. Blondeau said that on his first visit, the shore had not yet been cleared of trees. However, as he remembered it, a man named Erskine cleared the land two or three years later. Grace Lee Nute believed that this was John Askin, an early associate of the North West Company who appeared earlier in this report. Blondeau went on to say that he had never known "of any hindrance to putting tents at the Grand Portage outside the fort" and, as far as he knew, it had always been the custom that anyone could place a tent anywhere he wished, outside a stockade of course.

A voyageur, Hyacinthe Marcot, when cross-examined, said that he "did not see the second tent of the said Hervieux, but that he saw a little cabin covered with bark, where his goods were stored, and a little tent where his men lived at a distance of thirty feet from Boucher's fort," and about 190 to 275 feet from the place where Hervieux had first erected his tent.

Daniel Sutherland, who had once worked for the North West Company but who now was a leading light in the XY Company, also testified. He stated that he knew well the locations of the North West fort and Boucher's fort. It was his opinion that any traveler had the right to pitch a tent in the cleared space between the two forts, since it was not enclosed.

When cross-examined, Sutherland further defined the cleared space, saying that it was "bounded in front by the lake, on the south West side by the old fort [North West Company's], on the North East by Fort Boucher [belonging to the North West Company as he believes] and in the rear by the woods." It is regrettable that Sutherland too did not pinpoint the XY Company's fort, but his description of the area suggests that it lay outside this cleared area. Before leaving the stand, Sutherland added the information that a public road passed through this open space, between the North West palisades and Boucher's fort, "and that a Cart may pass in the said Road from the Beach to the little River [Grand Portage Creek]."

A North West Company clerk, John Charles Stewart, confirmed that Boucher acquired his trade goods from McTavish, Frobisher and Co. and that both Boucher and Mailloux had operated their trading establishments since about 1798. Before this, Joseph Lecuyer had operated a similar establishment from 1794 to 1798, he too acquiring his goods from McTavish, Frobisher & Co.--according to the books of this firm. Stewart added a note that besides the engagés selling some skins to Boucher, freemen, or fur traders not associated with any company, came to the rendezvous each summer to sell their furs.

Joseph Lecuyer, identified above as a trader at Grand Portage from 1794 to 1798, testified. He stated that he traded with the North West Company's engagés, accepting their buffalo

robes, elk hides, and bons. He described bons as "notes of the bourgeois that he received from the men as money for goods and drinks that he sold. That these bons were paid like wages to the men." Lecuyer described his own establishment as being "a little house belonging to the Company . . . which was a little distance from the Big Fort." He had been told that his house was on the same site now occupied by Boucher.

Although the North West Company had moved all its operations to the new Kaministikwia post by 1803, the XY Company continued to hold forth at Grand Portage. Sir Alexander attended the rendezvous this year. He reported back to Montreal that his men had been better supplied than the Big Company's the past winter: "Some of their people had actually died" for want of provisions. An inventory of the XY Company's supplies at the portage, before the 1803 outfit goods had arrived, had shown over £ 7,000 worth on hand. Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Company were holding their own; but their operations were still much smaller than the North West Company's.[18]

Sir Alexander crossed Lake Superior this year aboard the company's new schooner, the Perseverance.[19] A fellow-passenger

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18. Burpee, "Grand Portage," Minn. Hist. 12 (1931), 375-76; Alexander Mackenzie & Co., Statement of Outfits, 1799-1805, Séminaire de Québec; Daniel Sutherland, July 21, 1803, to Phyn, Inglis & Co., in Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Letter Book, 1802-09, Séminaire de Québec.

19. American troops would burn the Perseverance during the War of 1812. See Milo M. Quaife, ed., War on the Detroit, the Chronicles of Thomas Vercheres de Boucherville and the Capitulation by

on board was a young French Canadian clerk, Thomas Vercheres de Boucherville, who was making his first trip to Grand Portage, "which I had so often heard mentioned when a boy by the voyageurs of the village." Although one might anticipate that the North West Company would have stripped its old fort of every possible item for its new establishment, it apparently left enough of the establishment standing for the XY Company to move into it by the time the Perseverance arrived. Boucherville wrote:

> I set myself to the task at hand, got my box and bed of two blankets ashore, and carried them up to the fort. Situated on the brow of a sloping hill, over a mile from the landing, the view from here was very fine. It had been built by the North-west Company and consisted of palisades of tall cedar pickets with bastions at the four corners. Within the enclosure were several good buildings for the use of members of the Company, and towering over all was an immense flagstaff from which, on Sundays and when heralding the arrival of the principal bourgeois, floated a large and very handsome flag.
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> During the whole stay at Grand Portage... I was employed at the shed where our liquors were stored. I was told to repair to...[the west end of the portage]. My effects were carried on the backs of my men and at the far end of the Portage, which is nine miles long, I found others busy gumming the canoes preparatory to our departure.[20]

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an Ohio Volunteer (Chicago, 1940), pp. 3, 6, and 6n.

20. Ibid., p. 10. Only Boucherville mentions 4 bastions, a structural detail not supported by archeological findings. It should be noted that he wrote this description more than 40 years after his visits there.

The year 1804 at Grand Portage belonged to the XY Company alone. Although some of the standard accounts seem to feel uncomfortable about identifying the XY's presence at Grand Portage this year, there is ample testimony to support the fact. During the winter of 1803-04, Michael Curot, in charge of the Pond du Lac Outfit, had an employee whom he considered impertinent. Curot wrote that he would punish "him for his impertinence, which will be reported at the Grand Portage." In June 1804, Curot returned to Grand Portage to attend the rendezvous. Presumably he carried out his threat.[21] A further witness to the XY's presence there that summer was François Victor Malhiot, an employee of the North West Company. Traveling from Kaministikwia he passed Grand Portage where he saw the "XY's schooner weighing anchor."[22]

Even though the XY Company held out on the ground at Grand Portage, other events were leading to a dramatic change. At age 54, Simon McTavish, who as much as anyone had built the North West Company, died. An admirer wrote that this giant of a man, who had fought "a heroic fight for a fortune, honours, and future ease," died just when these goals seemed within his grasp. In Montreal he had begun the construction

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21. Michel Curot, "A Wisconsin Fur Trader's Journal, 1803-04," ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, Collections of the Historical Society of Wisconsin, 20 (1911), 396, 413, and 417.

22. François Victor Mahiot, "A Wisconsin Fur Trader's Journal, 1804-05," ed. by Reuben G. Thwaites, Collections of the Historical Society of Wisconsin, 19 (1910), 169.

of a mansion on the brow of Mount Royal, known in later years as the uncompleted "McTavish Haunted House."[23]

McTavish's death seems to have been the catalyst for Sir Alexander Mackenzie to seek accommodation with the North West Company. Although some historians have decided that Mackenzie had left the North West Company because of his dislike for William McGillivray, it would seem that McTavish was the real antagonist, whereas he resented only McGillivray's rapid rise to power rather than the man himself. At any rate, by October 1804, Daniel Sutherland was to write: "An accommodation having taken place between the NW Co. and this Concern, we refer you to their Agents for particulars & for the Orders for the ensuing Season."[24]

Mackenzie did not have everything his way. His company, now called "The New Company," was to receive one-quarter of the shares in the unified concern; but Mackenzie himself had to agree not to interfere with the business from this time on. He was now but a coupon-clipper. McGillivray was the new king.

The North West Company finally had a true monopoly of the fur trade out from Montreal. Only the Hudson's Bay Company remained a serious rival throughout the Northwest. Al-

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23. An account of Simon McTavish by Jno. Horn, in Strathcona Papers, Box 1, "Northwest Co., 1791-1816," Public Archives, Ottawa.

24. Daniel Sutherland, Oct. 22, 1804, to Phyn, Inglis & Co., in Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Letter Book, 1802-05, Pub. Arch., Ottawa.

though the record is unclear as to the last date of the activities of the XY Company at Grand Portage, one may assume that 1804 marked the final curtain of a long era of discovery, hardship, economic growth, turmoil, and romance at the historic site. Grand Portage's future would indeed represent a different world--an out-of-the-way, northern corner of the United States. No longer would the fires of the great rendezvous brighten the short summer nights. The lonely shore would share silence with the lapping waves and the northwest wind. Men would come here; things would happen; but the drums of empire would beat no more. Only rarely would the dew-laden grass of the portage bend to the moccasins of the generations.[25]

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25. Fleming, "Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Company," Can. Hist. Review, 9 (1928), 147, says that it was in 1804 that Sir Alexander brought into being the title "Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Company." However, this writer has found this title in use as early as 1801. A copy of the Agreement of 1804 is in the Ontario Provincial Archives, Toronto. This Agreement lists the membership of the unified company as follows:

John Gregory William McGillivray Duncan McGillivray William Hallowell Roderic McKenzie	These are the partners comprising the House of McTavish, Frobisher and Company.

The following group appears to be the wintering partners of the old North West Company:

Angus Shaw Daniel MacKenzie William McKay John MacDonald	Donald McTavish John McDonell Archibald Norman McLeod Alexander MacDougall

Charles Chaboiller
John Sayis
Peter Grant
Alexander Fraser
Eneas Cameron
John Finlay
Duncan Cameron
James Hughes
Alexander MacKay
Hugh MacGillis
Alexander Henry
John McGillivray
James MacKenzie
Simon Fraser
John Duncan Campbell
David Thompson
John Thompson

Members who traded in Montreal under the firm of Forsyth, Richardson and Company:

Sir Alexander Mackenzie
Thomas Forsyth
John Richardson
John Forsyth

London merchants under the firm of Phyn, Inglis & Company:

John Inglis
James Forsyth
John Muse of Quebec

The following group appears to have been the wintering partners of the old XY Company (Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Co.)

Pierre Rocheblave
Alexander MacKenzie (not the "Sir")
John McDonald
James Leith
John Will
John Haldane

Also, the estate of the late firm of Leith, Jamison and Company, and Thomas Thaine of Montreal.

CHAPTER 6

After the Fur Trade

Sometime between 1803 and 1807, George Heriot learned of Grand Portage's great days. This deputy postmaster of British North America would gather his facts in a book about travel through the Canadas. He would describe the old North West Company post as a

> large picketed fort, with three gates, over two of which are guardhouses. The ranges of buildings for stores and dwelling houses...are very extensive. The canoe-yard...is upon a great scale, seventy canoes per annum having been constructed.

He said that the XY's post "was about a quarter of a mile" from the North West's, and "consisted of a fort, picketed, and of buildings on the same plan as those of the latter, but upon a more circumscribed scale." Heriot was not extravagant in disclosing his sources, yet his descriptions have the ring of accuracy and should not be dismissed lightly. Possibly, they are as accurate as any.[1]

Several students of the fur trade have stated that the unified company retained a fort of sorts at Grand Portage after 1804. This may have been the case, but the evidence is not firm concerning this point. To be sure, the term "Grand Portage" continued to be used after the firms moved to the Kaministikwia. This oddity may be explained, however, by

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1. George Heriot, Travels Through the Canadas (London 1807), pp. 203-04.

Article 21 of the North West's Agreement of 1802:

> That whenever the Grand Portage is mentioned in this Agreement it is understood to mean the place of rendezvous, for conducting and managing the general business of the Concern in the Summer, but should the parties concerned determine...to remove and change such place of rendezvous from the Grand Portage to any other place on Lake Superior more convenient..., the name of such place shall be taken and considered as applying in the same manner to all the purposes of this agreement and being syonimous [sic] to the Grand Portage.

The grand old name had now become a general term meaning the place of rendezvous.[2]

One trader who did return to Grand Portage, in 1806, was none other than Dominique Rousseau, who had taken the North West Company to court in 1803. He was no luckier this time. Although the Big Company had left, the f 500 damages still rankled, and its men felled trees across the old portages and creeks of the old trail to thwart Rousseau's canoes when they attempted to enter the interior. Once again Rousseau brought suit, but this time he and the giant settled out of court.[3]

In 1815, Lewis Cass, then Governor of Michigan Territory, entered the records of Grand Portage when he wrote the acting

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2. Agreement of 1802, Hudson's Bay Company Records, Public Archives, Ottawa; Buck, "Grand Portage," Minn. History, 5 (1922-24), 24 and notes.

3. Nute, "British Legal Case," Minn. History, 21 (1940), 120.

Secretary of War recommending additional army posts in the northwest. It was his opinion that "if the British traders are eventually to be excluded, a post near the Grand Portage will be necessary." Even if British traders should be allowed in U. S. Territory, "the post would still be necessary to ensure a collection of the duties and to enforce the regulations." He also thought that "a display of the power of the United States in that remote quarter would be productive of salutary effects upon the minds of the Indians." However, Cass' recommendations met with silence.[4]

The Grand Portage posts grew old and disintegrated. The once-famed carrying place had a brief return to prominence when Great Britain and the United States attempted to define the boundary between Lake Superior and the Lake of the Woods in the early 1820s. The Treaty of Paris, 1783, had defined this particular section of the international boundary on the basis of very inexact knowledge of its geography. The Treaty of Ghent, 1814, called for adjudication of this and other disputes involving the demarkation. It is not the intent of this report to analyze the millions of words written about this problem between the 1820s and the settlement in 1842. It is enough to note that at one point the Americans claimed

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4. Lewis Cass, June 20, 1815, to Actg. Sect. of War A. J. Dallas, in "The Fur-Trade in Wisconsin, 1815-1817," Wisconsin Historical Society Collections, 19 (1910), 378.

the Kaministikwia River as the rightful boundary while the British dipped far enough south to say that the St. Louis River (Fond du Lac) was the stream meant by the negotiations of 1783.

Although the North West Company had moved north to the Kaministikwia, the British were quite concerned that the Grand Portage route might again prove useful. The Canadas called on none other than William McGillivray to submit testimony supporting the St. Louis River. However, McGillivray died in 1825, before the problem was resolved. Both sides made extravagant claims and both misused the history of Grand Portage and the other routes to serve their respective ends. But as a result of the controversy one may glimpse the appearance of Grand Portage in the years 1822-23.

John Bigsby, who accompanied British officials through the area in 1822, later recalled his impressions of the fabled land. He learned that the North West Company "formerly had an important post here, of warehouses, stables, gardens, etc., which occupied a flat, backed by high hills." He had the fortune to walk the portage itself:

> We left Lake Superior on the 29th of June [1822], and walked over woody hills and waded through swampy bottoms to the west end of the portage (eight miles and one-sixth), greatly annoyed by mosquitoes and the closeness of the air, the path, such as it was, being overrun by briers and coppice. The trees were sometimes large, and fruits were in blossom.[5]

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5. John J. Bigsby, The Shoe and Canoe, or Pictures of Travel in the Cascades (London, Chapman & Hall, 2 vols., 1850), 2, 234-42. For extensive details on the border dispute in this area

Joseph Delafield, an American surveyor, traveled over the portage in 1823. He was not impressed with his hike over the old trail: "These two first posts [i.e. the distance between resting places] are very bad. There is a considerable ascent, and where it is not rock, it is mud; and the old road is so closed with a young growth of trees and bushes, that it is very difficult to carry anything the size of a canoe piece without injury." He did not make the eight miles the first day. On the second, he wrote: "Continue to labor on the Grand Portage; the road very bad, from the rain of yesterday." At the end of this day, he arrived "with all the luggage at the second river [creek?] that crosses the road & encamp, the canoe being advanced several posts beyond. At this place there is a little clearing now covered with high grass [Thompson's prairie?] It has every appearance of having been the common stopping place of the traders who formerly used the route."

Despite the fact that the North West Company used to expect its clerks to cross the portage between a late breakfast and an early lunch, with a hangover, Delafield wrote at the end of the <u>second</u> day: "Consider the distance come this day to be about one third of the portage."

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the reader may wish to turn to House Executive Documents, 25th Cong., 2d Sess., No. 451. For tracings of many historic maps involving Grand Portage, see House Documents, 25th Cong., 2d Sess., No. 450.

The third day was as difficult: "I advanced before the men to the third river [?] & encouraged them to get that far with the baggage." The men camped this night at "a little mud hole called a spring," but the canoe was sent on to the Pigeon River. And Delafield took heart, for the road this third day was "level and without rocks."

On the fourth day, in the afternoon, the party reached the Pigeon, "thus having passed the Grand Portage in three full days' work, and one broken day, it being rainy." He noticed that old Fort Charlotte was gone: "There is scarcely a trace remaining of its former condition except the cleared ground. A few stumps of burned pickets assist in tracing the extent of the former enclosures, and that is all. It is a pretty place," he added, "& a profusion of wild roses and sweet pea and high growth of grass...afford a momentary reconciliation to the spot." One other thing caught his attention: "The landing place or dock of the old North West Co. is still entire and affords some accommodation." This is the earliest notice that the Company invested in a dock at the western end of the portage. Considering the current of the river and the general setting, one assumes that the structure must have been parallel to the bank, providing a firm platform for loading and unloading large numbers of canoes.[6]

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6. Joseph Delafield, The Unfortified Boundary, A Diary of the first survey of the Canadian Boundary Line from St. Regis to the Lake of the Woods, ed. by Robert McElroy and Thomas Riggs (New York, privately printed, 1943), pp. 70 and 404-06.

Not only had the structures at Fort Charlotte disappeared, all was gone at the eastern end of the portage. The British government had hired none other than the great map-maker, David ("Mr. Astronomer") Thompson to assist in its survey of the boundary. Thompson, one hopes with a slightly bleary eye, gazed on the scene at Grand Portage Bay in the mid-1820s. All he could find of the grand old fort was some red clover blooming over depressions in the ground where once structures had stood. Another explorer, Stephen H. Long, on an expedition for the U. S. government in 1823, traveled down the Kaministikwia route in 1823. Although he did not see the Grand Portage, he delivered its epitaph, saying that it was "seldom travelled."[7]

Life was still to be found at Grand Portage. As they had since time before history, the Chippewa Indians continued to gather there, particularly in the summer months. The Hudson's Bay Company, having absorbed the North West Company in 1821, continued to trade with these Indians at Fort William. An American trader, attempting to take on the gigantic company in 1824, arrived at Grand Portage to carry on local trade.

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7. Grace Lee Nute, Lake Superior (New York, Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1944), p. 308; William H. Keating, Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River, Lake Winnipeek, Lake of the Woods, etc...1823...under the Command of Stephen H. Long (London, Geo. B. Whittaker, 2 vols., 1825), 2, 233. Great Britain and the United States signed a treaty in 1842, by which the Pigeon River became the international boundary. The Grand Portage was to be "free and open to the use of the citizens and subjects of both countries." Senate Documents, 27th Cong., 3d Sess., No. 1, p. 29.

He wasted his time. The British may have lost the territory, but they still knew how to do business with Indians. They "carried off in trains the band of Chippeways," leaving the American wholly frustrated.[8]

In 1831, Henry Schoolcraft, U. S. Indian Agent at Sault Ste. Marie, repeated the sentiments of Lewis Cass 16 years earlier, by recommending a military post at Grand Portage. He thought that such a fort would end "warfare between the Chippewa and Sioux nations." He recognized that the area had long, cold winters, but thought that Grand Portage "might be occupied as a summer encampment, by a part of the troops from Fort Brady and be left by them before the setting in of bad weather." Destined to fame as was Cass, Schoolcraft had no more success than he in interesting the Department of War in the site.[9]

An occasional trader set up his goods at Grand Portage in the 1830s and '40s. In 1831, a lone, unnamed American trader secured a license for the area. Four years later, the American Fur Company's Ramsay Crooks paid a visit to the British at Fort William. Soon thereafter he wrote his subordinates to "explore the north shore to the old Grand Portage

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8. Senate Documents, 22d Cong., 1st Sess., No. 90 (Henry R. Schoolcraft), 43; Buck, "Grand Portage," Minn. History 5 (1923-24), 24-25 and 25n. Schoolcraft gave the American trader's name as Mr. Johnston. Buck thought it was Bela Chapman.

9. Senate Documents, 22d Cong., 1st Sess., No. 90, p. 46.

Crooks was not interested in challenging the British in the northwest trade, rather his interests were in establishing a fishing station. From 1836 to 1840, the American Fur Company operated such a station at Grand Portage under the supervision of Pierre Coté.

Assisting Coté were two coopers (for barrel manufacture) and a handful of helpers (3 in 1838, 9 in 1839). Indians did most of the fishing, the Company supplying them with nets, salt, and barrels. A company inspection report of 1839 described the fishing station:

> The Establishment at this place consists of One dwelling House for Coté, situated on a gentle rising ground, overlooking the Bay, a dwelling occupied by his son on the West side, and a new Store fronting the last building on the East side, forming a hollow square; two mens houses, 1 Coopers Shop, 1 Fish Store, Stable Barn, Root house etc below or near the beach, placed here and there without order or symmetry.... The dwelling houses and Store on the hill are finished in a Substantial manner and all new.

The description added the interesting note that a second storehouse stood on the island (called Sheep Island in the report) at the mouth of the bay. Here the company vessels put off their cargoes of salt and picked up the barrels of fish. Such a procedure confirmed the shallowness of the bay, and also implies that the piers of the fur trade days were no longer serviceable. Finally, the report noted that Coté had three acres of potatoes. Despite the excellent whitefish and other delectables of Lake Superior, the fishing station was unable to make a profit. Crooks knew when to close down a

business and, in 1842, the station's activities came to an abrupt stop.[10]

At the same time Coté operated his business, three Slovenian priests arrived in the Lake Superior region to work among the Indians and the few stray whites scattered along the western shore. One of these, Father Frederic Baraga, was destined to become famous in Minnesota history. His two associates, Fathers Francis Pierz (or Franz Pierç) and Otto Skolla, along with Baraga, came to know Grand Portage.

Baraga apparently first visited Grand Portage in 1838. Observing the absence of religious activity among the fishermen and the Indians, he persuaded Father Pierz to go there the next year to establish a mission. Pierz remained a year on this first endeavor:

> I have made a beginning of agriculture by laying out a beautiful kitchen garden, a large cultivated field, and a little nursery planted with fruit seeds from Carniola [present Yugoslavia].... My house for the present is a small cabin of huge unhewn logs, chinked on the outside with mud plaster and white-washed on the inside with white earth. It is provided with windows and a stone fireplace.... My church is made of cedar bark, thirty feet wide and forty feet long and displays real workmanship.

Despite this considerable beginning, Pierz chose to start again at the mouth of the Pigeon River when he returned briefly in 1842. Still later, Father Skolla made itinerant missions

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10. Nute, Lake Superior, pp. 174-80; Buck, "Grand Portage," Minn. History, 5 (1923-24), 25.

to the area, describing the site in 1846. He saw the ruins of Pierz' second church, on the Pigeon. At Grand Portage, he wrote, no white men's houses still stood, "only poor Indian huts. The number of savages is about eighty, including children." Other priests visited the area in the late 1840s. but most of their activity seems to have been located at the mouth of Pigeon River, rather than at Grand Portage itself.[11]

In 1854, one Thomas Clark operated a trading store at Grand Portage. Two years later a post office was opened, H. H. McCullough being the postmaster. McCullough seems to have replaced Clark as the one and only trader by then. However, being active in other interests as well, he hired Henry Elliott and his wife to operate the store. He maintained ownership of the post until 1863, when he sold it along with several other establishments he owned to P. E. Bradshaw, Superior.[12]

An explorer, S. J. Dawson, traveling from the Red River to Lake Superior in 1858, found the portage still passable. He gave no details as to its condition, but he concluded that the route by way of the Kaministikwia was superior if a little longer. He purchased supplies at McCullough's store; otherwise, he made no comments on Grand Portage.[13]

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11. Nute, Lake Superior, pp. 309-10; Buck, "Grand Portage," Minn. History, 5 (1923-24), 26.

12. Nute, Lake Superior, p. 300.

13. S. J. Dawson, Report on the Exploration of the Country between Lake Superior and the Red River Settlement (Toronto, John Lovell, 1859), pp. 3, 7 and 8.

After the Civil War, notices of Grand Portage became even more rare. From time to time, the Chippewa Indians would gather there to collect their annuities. In 1865, a log church, "Our Lady of the Holy Rosary," was built and still stands. Sometime before 1900, a Canadian professor, George Bryce, visited the site. He said that he was able to see timbers in the water that marked the former wharves, "which were extensive." He followed the old trail and found it passable, but "with weeds and grasses grown up." A few years later, Solon Buck visited the site of Fort Charlotte and discovered "remnants of an ancient dock on the bank of the Pigeon River."[14]

There is still an Indian village at Grand Portage. Its population is about 500. The trail may still be walked. Archeologist have uncovered traces of the former greatness of the forts. Together these evidences stir the imagination of that time when great explorers and exuberant voyageurs enlivened the dark forest on the shore of Lake Superior.

French, Canadians, Scots, English, and Americans carved an empire that, in the words of Innis, extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Their enterprise built the foundations

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14. Nute, Lake Superior, p. 123; Buck, "Grand Portage," Minn. History, 5 (1923-24), 27; Bryce, Remarkable History, p. 95; Nancy L. Woolworth, "The Grand Portage Mission, 1731-1965", Minn. History, 39 (1965), 310.

of the modern nation, Canada. French Canadians supplied their young men, the voyageurs, who sweated and sang their way west. The Anglo-American merchants contributed capital and managerial skills. The Indian gave his canoe, corn, and pemmican, all essential to success. Adventure, economics, and geography came to focus on one small place; and the explosion opened half a continent.

I have worked hard and honestly for them, and I am satisfied that I have at least, done my duty. I have been an agent or Director, since 1794--and Chief Superintendent since 1799. The management has not been easy, for we had many storms to weather from without, and some...in the Household.

William McGillivray,
shortly before his death.

So dat's de reason I drink tonight
To de man of de Grand Nor' Wes',
For hees heart was young, an' hees heart was light
So long as he's leeving' dere-
I'm proud of de sam' blood in my vein
I'm a son of de Nort' Win' wance again
So we'll fill her up till de bottle's drain
An' drink to de Voyageur.

William Henry Drummond,
"The Voyageur"

APPENDIX 1

Summary of References to Structures at Grand Portage

		Page
1.	House for British Army escort, 1778	29-30
2.	One or two fur trading posts, 1778	29-30
3.	N. W. Co., 40-foot pickets, 1778	30
4.	N. W. Co., tolerable houses with stockades, 1778.	32
5.	McGregory & McLeod, a shed and a warehouse, 1785.	46
6.	McGregory & McLeod, buildings erected, winter, 1785-86.	48
7.	McGregory & McLeod, Office and fort, winter, 1785-86.	49
8.	McGregory & McLeod, fort had gates, winter, 1785,'86.	50
9.	Indian Lodge, winter, 1785-86	50
10.	N. W. Co., 6 horses, 1 colt, 5 cows, 1 bull, 2 oxen, 2 calves, 6 sheep, 1787.	53
11.	Four "lots" worth of structures at Grand Portage, 1790 (Possibly 1 N. W. & 1 ex-opposition at Grand Portage and also at west end of portage.)	57
12.	N. W. Co. post in good repair, 1791.	59
13.	Wall of N. W. Co. post 15-20 paces from L. Superior. Its opposite wall at foot of Mt. Rose. Gates. Sixteen cedar & white spruce buildings inside the fort. Whipsaw boards. Shingle roofs. Brown doors & windows. Six structures are storehouses, one a mess house, one a counting house, rest are dwellings & shops. One wharf, 1793.	63-64
14.	N. W. Co. men's tent camp spread over the road to the portage, but on one side of Grand Portage Creek, 1793.	65
15.	Montrealers' camp on other side of Grand Portage Creek. Lived under canoes rather than tents, 1793.	65
16.	Wharf, 1793.	67
17.	New opposition place 4 corner posts, 200-300 yds. east of N. W. Co. post, 1793.	69-70
18.	Montrealers camp between N. W. Co. post & new opposition site, 1793.	69-70
19.	N. W. Co. post, west gate, 1798.	81
20.	XY Co. post, 1798.	84

		Page
21.	N. W. Co. Several cattle die, winter 1798-99.	88
22.	XY Co., house & hangard, 1799	92
23.	A concern that XY Co. might build on the "point" 1800	95
24.	Montrealers camp under canoes on the "point", 1800	95
25.	"Premier's scaffold," 1800.	95
26.	Several N. W. fences near XY buildings, 1800	96-97
27.	Cooper's shop, 1800	97
28.	Two quays, 1799.	98
29.	N. W. Co. post, 24 x 30 rods (396'x495'). Has a number of temporary dwellings, shops, & stores. XY Co. post within 200 rods (3300') of N. W.'s, 1800.	100
30.	N. W. Co., a general shop, 1800	100
31.	Indian tents, 1800	101
32.	A ball held in dining room, N. W. Co., 1800	101
33.	A shop for an outfit, N. W. Co., 1800	101
34.	N. W. Co., two houses to be completed, winter 1800-01. Imported boards & planks.	104
35.	N. W. Co., Otter spent winter 1800-01 at Grand Portage.	104
36.	N. W. Co., Agent's room, with a trunk having a key, 1800.	104-105
37.	N. W. Co., powder house, 1800	105
38.	N. W. Co. grows potatoes, 1799.	105
39.	N. W. Co., hog, 1799-1800.	105
40.	N. W. Co., milk cows, 1799-1800.	105
41.	XY Co. values both its forts at f 300, 1801	108
42.	XY Co. has 23 panal doors, 30 window sashes, 10 bedsteads, 24 chairs, 3 japanned candlesticks, 1/3 box window glass, 1803.	109
43.	N. W. Co., cedar palisades, wooden houses, shingle roofs. North men live in tents, Montrealers live under canoes. Potatoes. Meadows. Up to 1800.	109-110
44.	N. W. Co., a large hall for upper levels of management, up to 1800.	110
45.	N. W. Co., milk cows, up to 1800.	110
46.	N. W. Co., post is near, regular; numerous buildings, 1802.	113
47.	XY Co. has a few buildings, a few hundred yards east of N. W. Co. post, below hill, 1802.	113
48.	XY Co. building new fort "upon the hill", 1802.	113
49.	XY Co., a store, 1802	113
50.	XY Co., farmer & barn, 1802. Barn was repaired.	115
51.	Hervieux has 3 trading tents among N. W. Co. Northmen, 1802, and 50 feet from the Montrealers the beach.	117

Page		Page
88	52. Hervieux moves tents one gunshot to a place near Boucher's fort, 1802.	117
95	53. Boucher's trading post, about 10 feet from lake, 1802.	117
95	54. Boucher's trading post, 950'-1,140' from Mailloux's trading post, 1802.	117
96-97	55. Hervieux's second trading place about 60 feet from Boucher's, 1802	117
97	56. N. W. Co. Northmen's camp 20-50' from Hervieux's first trading place, 1802.	118
100	57. Hervieux's second trading place was 285' east of his first, 1802.	118
100	58. Hervieux's second trading place was near Boucher's and ½ acre from the "little River", 1802.	118
101	59. Hervieux had a bark cabin & a little tent 30 feet from Boucher's, 1802.	119
104	60. Hervieux's second trading place was 190'-275' east of his first, 1802.	119
104-105	61. Cleared space at Gr. Portage had the N. W. Co. post on its S. W. side, the bay on its S. E. side, Boucher's fort on its N. E. side, and the woods on its N. W. side, up to 1802.	120
105	62. The road passed up from beach between N. W. Co. post & Boucher's, up to 1802.	120
108	63. A cart could travel road from beach to Gr. Portage Creek, up to 1802.	120
109	64. Lecruyer's trading store, 1794-98, same site as Boucher's and "a little distance" from N. W. Co. post, 1802.	121
109-110	65. XY Co. inventory, f 7,000, winter 1802-03.	121
110	66. XY Co. post over one mile from landing, 1803, but XY Co. now in old N. W. Co. post, 1803. (If indeed the XY Co. moved into the abandoned N. W. Co. post, its Montreal canoes may have landed at the XY's former landing place, reasonably near its former post?)	122
110	67. Old N. W. Co. post, cedar palisades, 4 bastions, good buildings, immense flag staff, 1803.	122
113	68. Liquor shed, old N. W. Co. post, 1803	122
113	69. N. W. Co. post—picketed, 3 gates, 2 guardhouses, a range of stores, a range of dwellings, canoe yard (70 canoes per yr.). Written between 1803 and 1807.	127
113	70. XY Co. post was ¼ mile from N. W. Co. post, written 1803-1807.	127
115	71. N. W. Co. post-warehouses, stables, gardens. Written 1822.	130
117	72. N. W. Co.—only depressions in ground remain, c. 1823.	133
	73. Piers still visible "in the water", c. 1900.	138

Summary of References to the Portage

		Page
1.	Had 16 resting places, 1793	65
2.	Thompson measured trail-8.02 miles, 1798. He mentioned: Parting Trees, Fountain, Meadow.	81
3.	Road "bad"- mud, clay, slippery, 1800.	103
4.	Horses & Oxen tried for transportation--failure. Sleds used in winter. Up to 1800.	110
5.	Overrun by briers & coppice, 1822.	130
6.	Considerable ascent, rocks, mud. Young growth of trees & bushes, 3 "rivers", small clearing, 1823.	131
7.	Seldom traveled, 1823	133
8.	Still passable, 1858	137
9.	Still passable, ca. 1900. "Weeds & Grasses"	138

Summary of References to Structures on Pigeon River

1.	McGregory & McLeod, a hangard or storehouse	46
2.	N. W. Co. fort, 1785	47
3.	N. W. Co. fort called Fort Charlotte by 1791	58
4.	Fort Charlotte, 1793	65
5.	Fort Charlotte, extensive stores, ca. 1794	71
6.	New opposition house, ca. 1794	71
7.	New opposition pickets torn down by N. W. Co., ca. 1794.	72
8.	Ft. Charlotte had a house, 1798	81
9.	Several fences, plowed ground, 1800	96-97
10.	Ft. Charlotte, 1800	101-103
11.	XY Co. valued both its forts at f 300,1801	108
12.	XY Co., stores, 1802	113
13.	Only cleared ground & stumps of burned pickets, 1823.	132
14.	Landing place or dock still there, 1823	132
15.	Remnants of old dock, ca. 1900.	138

APPENDIX 2

Returns

An example of the number and kind of furs (furs, skins, robes, and by-products) gathered by two small trading posts on the lower Red River in 1800 follows. The interest in the list is not so much that it represents a typical year's collection—which varied from post to post, but that it illustrates the wide variety of products that passed through Grand Portage. The following comes from Alexander Henry, Jr.'s journal—from an entry that he made in August 1801:

1,475 beaver skins, weight 1,904 lbs.
177 black bear skins
43 brown bear skins
6 grizzley bear skins
204 wolf skins
184 fox skins
16 kitt skins
197 racoon skins
178 fisher skins
96 otter skins
62 martin skins
97 mink skins
5 wolverine skins
20 loupcervier skins (lynx)
21 dressed moose & biche skins
92 shaved and parched moose & biche skins
27 muskrat skins
56 buffalo robes
10 badger skins
77 bags of pemmican, 90 lbs. each
4 kegs of grease
7 kegs of beef
10 bales of dried beef

APPENDIX 3

Alexander Henry, Jr. also recorded in his journal the materials he used in building a post at Park River in the fall of 1800:

Wood employed in our establishment at the Red River
Autumn of 1800:

564	stockades	of	15	feet	in	length	(oak)
564	"	"	8	"	"	"	for [rembrits?], oak
100	"	"	6	"	"	"	for a 3d lining to bastion
34	"	"	5	"	"	"	over the two gates
34	"	from 7 to 15 feet in "					of oak lath
14	"	of 8 feet, plank for					gates
20	"	of 7 feet, " "					bastions
770	pegs of 1½ feet, for stockade, etc., etc.						
2100							

Wood for Dwelling at Park River

72	oak logs	of	10	feet	for	the	square
18	" "	"	18	"	"	"	pinions
45	" "	"	15	"	"	"	cloisons
230	" "	"	9	"	"	"	covering
6	" "	contg.	100	feet	for	the	[sableries?]
6	" "	"	100	"	"	"	covering
5	oak logs	of	11	feet	for	the	[aiguilles?]
3	" "	"	20	"	"	"	faîte [ridge]
14	squared posts		8	"	"	"	doors and covers
11	squared posts		4	"	"	"	windows
105	planks		8	"	"	"	flooring bois
115	boards		6	"	"	"	doors, beds, etc., etc.
630							

Store House, etc., etc.

12	oak logs	of	24	feet	for	square
20	pine logs	of	13	feet	for	pin
120	oak "	"	9	"	"	the covering
1	" "	"	24	"	"	faîte
2	" "	"	22	"	"	covering
3	" "	"	11	"	"	[aiguilles?]
2	" posts"		5	"	"	the doors
3	" planks"		5	"	"	" "
50	" logs "		12	"	"	flooring
213						

Shop, etc. etc.

15	oak	logs	of	15	feet	for	the	square
20	"	"	"	13	"	"	"	pins
73	"	"	"	9	"	"	"	covering
3	oak	logs	of	15	feet	for	the	faîte, etc.
2	"	"	"	11	"	"	"	[acquilles]
2	"	posts"		5	"	"	"	doors
55	"	planks"		8	"	"	"	flooring
170								

3,113 pieces of timber and wood
1 oak stick of 55 feet for a flag staff.

3,114.

Silver Works (1820)

2 pairs midd[?] arm bands
1 " large wrist bands
1 " midd[?] " "
1 " small " "
Crosses
Earbobs
Rings
Gorgets
Silver Hair Pins
Imitation Wampum
Breast Pins
Hearts

Blacksmith (1820)

Bellow, complete, f 12
2 vices, 35 and 38 lbs.
4 grindstones
pitsaws
files
hammers, 14¼, 25&3/4, & 8 lbs.

APPENDIX 4

Fort William Inventory

Fort William replaced Grand Portage as the place of rendezvous at the head of Lake Superior. The following selected lists, although made almost twenty years after the abandonment of Grand Portage, are offered for the concept they give of a fur trading post of that general period. Unfortunately no similar inventories of Grand Portage have been located.[1]

Gum Store (1820)

20 barrels Gum, 4,356 lbs.
4½ " Pitch
3 " Tar

288 lbs. Shot Lead
1 large grindstone

Ship Carpenter (1820)

Cast steel handsaw
Foot rule with slide
Caulking irons
Auger
Chalk lines
Compasses
American ax
" adaze

Iron squares
Chisel, socket
Spoke shears
Hammers
Gimlets
Drawing knife
Files
Planes
Square, etc.

Cooper (1820)

Iron smoothing plane
Jointed irons
Cooper's ax, etc.

Mess House Cellar (1820)

9 wine decanters
6 glass tumblers

9 wine glasses
6 table cloths

1. Inventories of Fort William, 1820 and 1821, N. W. Co. Account Book, Hudson's Bay Co. Records, Public Archives, Ottawa. French terms are spelled as found in the inventories. Many of the English spellings have been retained.

3 brass candlesticks
13 knives
7 Japd. tumblers
14 " half gill tumblers
5 glass salt shakers
1 pewter bason
1 pepper box
1 vinegar cruet
64 queensware plates
9 dishes
1 bread basket
2 wooden trays
3 soap spoons
1 cupboard
a large number of kegs
9 pr. water buckets

7 kegs white paint
2 " green "
3 " Venetian red
1 large knife
13 forks
3 large forks
8 spoons
16 blue tea cups
2 tin wine coolers
3 Japd. quart mugs
5 kegs yellow paint
1 " patent "
1 " black "
138 lbs. putty
boiled linseed oil
raw linseed oil

Painter's Loft (1820)

oil cloths
painted oil cloths
boiled linseed oil
raw linseed oil
24 maple planks
9 walnut "
10 " boards
3 cherry planks

1 marble and knife
4 paint brushes
24 lbs. patent yellow paint
4 lbs. com. white paint
window glasses, large & small
16 lbs. blue paint
11 room doors
7 large windows

Fort Utensils (1820)

1 fire engine
1 fort flag
1 bell
2 corn mills
3 jack screws
1 potash boiler
1 copper boiler
1 hay knife
2 crosscut saws
9 hand saws
5 screw augers
16 shell augers
broad axes
second hand axes

square hand axes
shingling axes
picks
common hoes
garden hoes
Kent hammers
locks
butt hinges
20 panes window glass
scales
11 Fort William batteaux
4 Montreal batteaux
3 Sault batteaux
the Exmouth, etc., etc.

Shops listed in Inventory (1820)

Carpenter
Cooper
Blacksmith

Tinsmith
Armourer
Kitchen

Taits Box (1821-McTaitt's Box)
Dairy

Tailor's board (1 goose, shears, scissors)
Agret store

Cattle (1820)

3 horses
4 mares
2 colts, 3 years old
2 " 2 " "
31 cows
16 steers & heifers, 2 years
4 calves, 1 year old

2 bulls
51 sheep
[7?] young calves
28 lambs

Books (1820)

James Dispensary
Allston's Lectures
Holmes Experiments
Johnsons Essays
Beddois & Watt
Wallons Essays
Dickson's Essays
Nisbitts Medicines
Bells Surgery
Munro on Health
Collins [Practice?]
Duncan Lectures

Chymical Nomenclator (Chemical Nomenclature, 1821)
Ferdenand Lebes
Rush on Fevers
Analomcal Dialogues
Skinner on Poisons
Allans Medicines (Allen's Synopsis Medicine, 1821)
Bell's [Treatise?]
Twelfers Pharmacopia
Douglass on Muscels
Pharmoca, London
Wotherbys Dictionary

Armory (1820)

48 English muskets & bayonets, with cartridge boxes and betts
59 American muskets & bayonets
13 iron guns
4 brass field pieces
3 blunder bushes [sic]
2 wall pieces
20 cutlasses
4 swords
60 haversacks
19 pr. fine pistols

17½ pr. common pistols
3½ pr. brass barrelled pistols
8 cannisters ea. ½ battle powder
400 pistol flints
5 lbs. battle powder
57 fusils
130 powder horns
1,000 gun flints
1 parcel fine lint
24 fine sabres
2 pr. gold epaulets

Beads

round white
" blue
" colored

seed assorted
enamelled
smalta

bright red
black pipe
china, large
seed

blue agate
mock garnet
barley corn
mock coral

Cance Yard (1821)

1 scu. headed half axe
12 canoe awls
986 rolls bottom bark
1,730 rolls side bark
1 cast iron boiler
840 bourages
1,025 canoe bars
1 brace and bitt
2 old Montreal canoes
67 new North canoes, this year
16 new North canoes, last year
25 2d hand North canoes
5 old North canoes
1 new fishing canoe
2 good canoes
1 good small voyage canoe
3 old wooden canoes
36 Etraves [stems]
4 bundles of narangues for Montreal canoes
20 bundles of narangues for small canoes

1 gabaret for Mont. canoes (outline?)
1 gabaret for Bast.d canoes
1 " " North "
1 " " Bast.d 16 ps. canoes
1 " for fish canoes
2 claw hammers
3 crooked knives
5 old tin kettles
126 bundles (scies?-saws)
1,173 faux maitres, p. sett of 6 [?]
13 pr. canoe maitres
346 planchets [planes?]
1 hand saw
2 troughs
142 bundles of narangues for North canoes[?]
372 bundles of wattays [?]

N. W. Office (1821)

blank memo books
note books
abstract books
2 ivory pounce boxes
5 pr. tin candlesticks
4 cassettes
1/6 doz. blk. ink powder
1/6 doz. red ink powder
5 pewter ink stands
6 tin ink stands
3 glass ink stands
3 ivory paper folders
drawing paper
folio poit paper, ruled
foolscap paper, ruled & plain
quarto paper, plain

folio paper, plain
blotting paper, plain
royal paper, plain
imperial paper, plain
2 watering pans
½ lb. pounce
½ € fine quills
7 rulers
5 pr. snuffers
1 oil stone
1 silver seal, N. W. Co.
1 wafer seal
3 hair trunks
1 box wafers
12 sticks red sealing wax
1 " black " "

Instruments (1821)

1 case amputating
1 case cupping
1 case teeth
1 case trepanning
2 silver catheters
2 " trocars, silver canulas
2 " lancet cases

1 set pocket instruments
8 fine lancets
24 new bougies [?]
4 doz. old "
7 ivory syringes
10 pewter syringes
1 electrifying machine

APPENDIX 5

The Route, Grand Portage to Rainy Lake

Clerk John Macdonell guided his future readers along the waterways from Grand Portage to Rainy Lake. He counted no fewer than 37 portages, more than one-third of the 96 portages he found between Montreal and Lake Winnipeg. The names and spellings that follow are Macdonell's own. They are of interest to those who today are concerned about the future of this still unspoiled water route, be they summer canoeists or park planners:[1]

1. Grand Portage, 3 leagues long
2. Perdrix
3. Grosse Roche
4. Carribou
5. L'Outarde
6. L'Orignal
7. Grand des Cerises
8. & 9. Two vases
10. Petit Portage Noeuf
11. Grand Portage Noeuf, ½ league long.
12. La Marte
13. Les Perches
14. Height of Land
15. L'Escalier
16. Le Cheval de Bois
17. Gros des Pins
18. Petit Rocher de Saguinaga
19. Petit Rocher de la Prairie
20. La Prairie
21, 22, & 23. The 3 Roches des Couteaux
24. La Carpe
25. Gros des Bois Blancs
26. Petit des Bois Blancs
27. Grand des Pins
28. La Pointe de Bois
29. Petit Rocher de Lac Croche
30. Le Rideau
31. Le flacon
32, 33, & 34. Les 3 Portages La croix
35. & 36. Les deux petits Portages Neuf.
37. La Chaudiere in view of Fort L. L. P.

Henry Hind, in 1860, published a more detailed description

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1. Gates, Five Fur Traders, p. 117.

of the route.[2] Despite some small problems in Hind's tables, caused by poor editing, a seemingly accurate count emerges of the portages, rapids, décharges, lakes, navigable channels, and "lake straits" encountered. In total, Hind found the distance to be 207.86 miles, of which 16 1/3 miles were non-navigable (15.3 miles where canoes had to be carried, 0.6 miles where canoes had to be lightened—décharges, and 0.3 miles of rapids). He identified 34 portages, 4 décharges, 12 rapids, 28 lakes, and 23 lake straits and navigable streams. By Hind's time, French had given way to English names and many of the portages were without names at all:

Name	Length	Distance from Lake Superior
Grand Portage	8.16 miles	8.16 miles
Pigeon River	1.5	9.66
Partridge Portage	0.25	9.91
Pigeon River	4.25	14.16
Décharge	0.25	14.41
Pigeon River	1.75	16.16
Décharge	0.35	16.51
Pigeon River	3.13	19.64
Fowl Portage	1.13	20.77
Fowl Lake	4.55	25.32
Moose Portage	0.41	25.73
Moose Lake	4.25	29.98
Great Cherry Portage	0.48	30.46
Lake	0.25	30.71
Mud Portage	0.15	30.86
Lake	0.30	31.16
Lesser Cherry Portage	0.13	31.29
Mountain Lake	7.81	39.10

2. Henry Youle Hind, Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857...(2 vols., London, 1860), 2, 427-33.

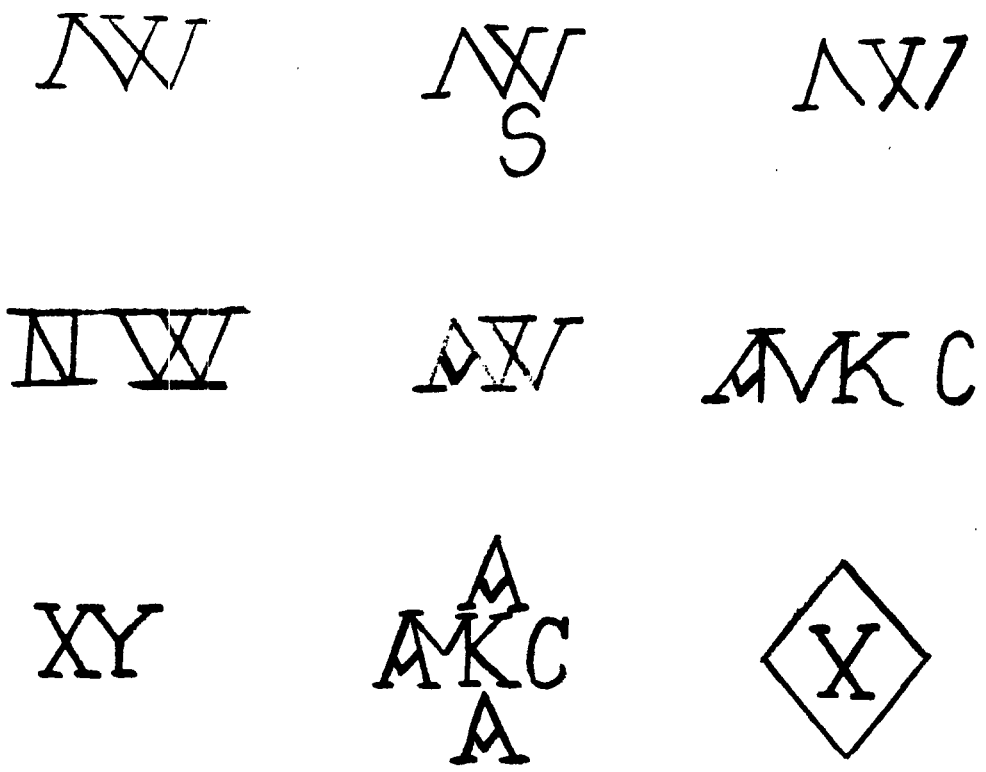
Watap Portage	0.30	39.40
Watap Lake	3.70	43.10
Great New Portage	1.46	44.56
Rose Lake	3.0	47.56
Portage	0.01	47.57
Mud Lake	2.62	50.19
Portage	0.21	50.40
South Lake	2.84	53.24
Height of Land Portage	0.26	53.50
Gun Flint Lake E.	2.77	56.27
Décharge	0.01	56.28
Gun Flint Lake W.	8.92	65.20
Rapid	0.01	65.21
Lake Strait	0.25	65.46
Little Rock Portage	0.02	65.48
Lake Strait	0.75	66.23
Rapid	0.01	66.24
Lake Strait	0.25	66.49
Mid-Fall Portage	0.06	66.55
Lake Strait	0.25	66.80
Island Portage	0.29	67.09
Lake	1.35	68.44
Rapid	0.02	68.46
Lake	0.85	69.31
Rapid	0.07	69.38
Lake Strait	0.75	70.13
Rapid	0.05	70.18
Lake Strait	0.50	70.68
Rapid	0.40	70.72
Lake Strait	0.20	70.84 [sic]
Rapid	0.01	70.85
Lake Strait	0.45	71.05
Rapid	0.01	71.06
Lake Strait	0.70	71.51 [sic]
Rapid	0.02	71.53
Lake	5.35	76.88
Décharge	0.05	76.93
Lake Strait	----	77.63
Portage	0.01	77.64
Lake Seiganagh	10.07	87.71
Portage	0.01	87.72
Swamp Lake	0.82	88.54
Swamp Portage	0.24	88.78
Cypress Lake	5.35	94.13
Portage	0.02	94.15
Knife Lake	10.70	104.85
Portage	0.04	104.89
Lake Strait	0.20	105.09
Portage	0.09	105.18
Lake	0.60	105.78

Carp Portage	0.15	105.93
Birch Lake	4.0	109.03
Portage	0.11	110.04 [sic]
Basswood Lake	16.00	126.04
Portage	0.10	126.14
Lake Strait	0.25	126.39
Fir Portage	0.20	126.59
Lake Strait	0.22	126.81
Rapid	0.04	126.85
Lake Strait	0.35	127.20
Rapid	0.02	127.22
Lake Strait	1.50	128.72
Portage	0.07	128.79
Lake	0.65	129.44
Portage	0.09	129.53
Crooked Lake	16.80	146.33
Curtain-Fall Portage	0.10	146.43
Rapid	0.03	146.46
Iron Lake	4.50	150.96
Bottle Portage	0.25	151.21
Nequaquon Lake	22.10	173.31
Portage	0.02	173.43
Lake	5.60	179.03
Portage	0.15	179.18
Lake Strait	0.50	179.68
Portage	0.04	179.72
Loon's Narrows	7.60	187.32
Sand Point Lake	9.67	196.99
Nameukan Lake	5.20	202.19
Nu. Portage	0.08	202.27
Lakelet	0.25	202.52
Portage	0.14	202.66
Lake Strait	5.20	207.86

APPENDIX 6

Seals and Marks

Scattered throughout the correspondence of the fur trading companies at Grand Portage are the marks used to identify packs of furs and trade goods. A few samples decorate the space below, representing the North West Company, John Askin, Alexander Mackenzie and Company, and the XY Company. According to some authorities, the companies often added an additional mark to indicate which post the pack came from. None of these additional marks appeared in the correspondence studied:



APPENDIX 7

Glossary of Fur Trade Terms

les Anglois	-the English, meaning employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, from either Great Britain or Canada.
avant, avant de canot	-top man in a canoe, who stood in the bow. Also seen as devant and ducent.
bâtard	-a bastard canoe, larger than the North canoe but smaller than the Montreal canoe
bois-brulés	-half-breeds, offspring from Indian mothers and white fathers.
bon	-a kind of currency issued by the North West Company to its employees.
bout	-steersman of a canoe.
canots de maître	-the bigger canoes, 35-40' long, for lake transport, weighed about 600 lbs. Also called Montreal canoes. Usually had a crew of 8. Three of four of these canoes made a brigade. Such a canoe carried 60 pieces of 90-100 lbs. each, 1,000lbs. of provisions, 8 men, and 8 bags of 40 lbs. each, a total of 4 tons. Sir Alexander Mackenzie described the contents of one such canoe: 8-10 men, plus their luggage 65 pieces 600 lbs. biscuit 200 lbs. pork 3 bu. peas 2 oilcloths for cover 1 sail 1 ax 1 towing line 1 kettle 1 sponge (for bailing) gum (these 3 bark items are waterage for repairs.)

canots du Nord	-the canoes used west of Grand Portage, the North canoes. About 25 feet long.
ceinture fléchée	-the bright sash worn by a voyageur
commis	-clerk
cordelle	-to tow a canoe with a rope or cable
coureur de bois	-a runner of the woods, an independent and usually illegal operator in the fur trade during the French régime.
décharge	-a place where a canoe and part of its load were towed rather than carried, not quite a portage. This word was also applied to the starting place of a portage.
dégradé	-to go ashore to wait out a storm
demi-chargé	-traversing rough water by unloading half the canoe and making two trips over the rough place. See décharge also.
engagé	-an employee, a voyageur
engagement	-the employee's contract
fil d'eau	-canoe course
gouvernail	-the steersman in the stern of a canoe. Steers with a sweep paddle.
la grand rivière	-Ottawa River
guide	-person in charge of a brigade of canoes.
habillement	-a suit of clothes
hangard	-a storehouse for merchandise
hauteur des terres (de terre)	-height of land. The high land, full of small lakes, that occupies the region between the drainage of Pigeon River, flowing eastward, and the drainage of the Rainy River, flowing westward.
hivermants	-wintering partners at the interior posts

hommes du nord	-voyageurs who had been to the interior.
hommes libres	-free men, not under contract
manageurs du lard	-pork eaters, voyageurs from Montreal who did not go beyond Grand Portage. They could not wear a plume in their hats as did the hommes du nord.
milieux	-common voyageurs, the middle men of a canoe.
pays d'en haut	-the northwest country
piece	-a package, weighing about 90 pounds, designed for the portages.
posé	-1. a set pace when portaging, 2. a resting place, 3. the distance between two resting places.
sac-a-feu	-beaded bag, carried by a voyageur
Saulteur liquor	-alcohol, or "high wine," diluted to suit an Indian's stomach. Generally a gill or two of alcohol plus enough water to make one quart.
watap, or watape	-a thread made of stringy roots of various coniferous trees, used for sewing bark in canoe manufacture.

APPENDIX 8

French Canadian Voyageurs

The report makes little note of the French Canadian voyageurs. They cannot be passed in silence. They were the muscle that enabled the fur companies to operate. Many writers have compiled excellent accounts of these men, especially Grace Lee Nute, The Voyageur, who said that they "have the distinction of being one of the few classes of men in American and Canadian history who have been unique on this continent, not only in their origins as a class, but also in their manner of life, customs, language and dress."

Rather than repeat that which is readily available on the voyageurs, there follow two quotations that came to light during the research. Joseph Hadfield, an Englishman visiting Three Rivers in 1795, wrote in his diary:

> Some, particularly the young men, are accustomed to make voyages to the upper county, and it is held disgraceful not to have been to Mackinac or the Grand Portage. The girls will not even receive that addresses of a man without he has been on one or more of these expeditions.

Ramsey Crooks, the second-in-command of the American Fur Company, wrote John Jacob Astor in 1817, making these comments on the French Canadians:

> It will still be a good policy to admit [into the U.S.A.] freely & without the least restraint the Canadian boatsmen, these people are indispensable to the successful prosecution of the trade, their

> places cannot be supplied by Americans, who are for the most part...too independent to submit quietly to a proper control, and who can gain any where a subsistence much superior to a man of the interior and although the body of the Yankee can resist as much hardship as any man, tis only in the Canadian we find that temper of mind, to render him patient docile and persevering, in short they are a people harmless in themselves whose habits of submission fit them peculiarly for our business.

A popular image of the voyageur is a cheerful, ignorant, young man, brightly dressed, dancing a jig by the light of a campfire, and singing the romantic songs of his way of life. All this may be true. But true too was the endless hard work, the rain, the sweat, the Indian arrows, the sickness, the mosquitos, and the loneliness of the wilderness. They have left a rich heritage; they have also left their bones in a thousand unmarked graves across a continent.

APPENDIX 9

Archeology at Grand Portage

In 1936-37, the Minnesota Historical Society carried out the first archeological investigations at Grand Portage. The U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs sponsored the excavations as a CCC project. The supervisor of the project, hindered by a lack of funds and other problems, reported only briefly on his findings. In the early 1960s, Alan R. Woolworth, Minnesota Historical Society, analyzed the field notes, photographs, and artifacts of that first archeological work and recreated the results in a masterful report, "Archeological Excavations at the Northwest Company's Fur Trade Post, Grand Portage, Minnesota, In 1936-37," 224 pages, plus plates and catalogues.

This appendix makes no attempt to duplicate Woolworth's report or the others mentioned below. It tries only to summarize them and to urge all concerned with Grand Portage to study them.

The 1936 project was primarily exploratory in nature. It located the outline of the stockade, found traces of one gate, discovered two interior stockade walls, and located two former structures within the stockade. The next year's project also concentrated on the stockade area. During this period the foundations of the Great Hall were discovered.

In addition, the archeologist discovered the remains or traces of 12 other structures or possible structures and a well. In addition he found a considerable number of artifacts, many of which were subsequently lost. Based on this work a conjectural reconstruction of the Great Hall was completed in 1940. It is fair to say that more historical research should have been done before this reconstruction took place.

Future planning and interpretation at Grand Portage must take the Woolworth report into the greatest consideration. This writer fully agrees with Woolworth's conclusion that

> Further archeological excavations must be conducted within the stockade well in advance of any structural restorations. Fortunately, there remain a considerable number of unexcavated areas which will be productive of further structural evidence. It will also be possible in some instances to re-excavate structural sites and to recover more information concerning them.

In 1951 Grand Portage became a part of the National Park System. A decade later archeology was renewed when the University of Minnesota carried out excavations in compliance with a Memorandum of Agreement with the National Park Service. Later that season, fall of 1961, the Minnesota Historical Society continued this project. This season, work was concentrated at selected sites outside the stockade, to the east. In his report, "Archeological Test Excavations at Grand Portage National Monument, June-September, 1961," Archeologist

Alan R. Woolworth concluded that

> no significant archeological remains were found in the area initially tested which lie north of the lakeshore road and east of the road which leads to the Grand Portage Reservation School. No significant archeological remains were found in the elevated area about 400 yards east of the Grand Portage stockade, and now occupied by two local Indian houses.

Woolworth again made recommendations for the future. He wrote that excavations should be made directly north of the lakeshore road and east of Grand Portage Creek where there was some evidence of an Indian lodge and possibly other structures. He also recommended that excavations be made south of the lakeshore road and immediately east of Grand Portage Creek. He referred to this latter area as the traditional XY Company area. (This writer suggests that the XY Company post was farther to the east, but that the traditional area, above, is nonetheless important.)

One year later, 1962, Woolworth carried out the **fourth** season of archeological work at Grand Portage. The projects this year involved additional work on the features uncovered in 1961 and work on the traditional XY site that Woolworth recommended a year earlier. His report, "Archeological Excavations at Grand Portage National Monument, 1962 Field Season," was issued in December 1968. Again no attempt is made to recapitulate the report; planners should refer to it directly.

In the vicinity of a small hill, east of Grand Portage

Historical Base Map

This map contains only those structures or features for which measurements or distances are given in the narrative. In some instances different writers gave different figures; the map includes them all. Thus, the sites should be considered as being generally located rather than specifically identified. A large number of structures listed in Appendix 1 do not appear on the map because the descriptions of them are too vague or brief for plotting.

1. North West Company Post. Archeological excavations, while raising many questions about details, reasonably locate the stockades surrounding the North West Company post, the principal establishment at Grand Portage.

2. An opposition company, D & P Grant, set out 4 posts to mark a potential site for a fort, in 1793. These posts were 200-300 yards east of the North West Co. post. (P. 117)

3. Montrealers' camp (on beach, under canoes). This camp was to the east of the N. W. Co. post, 1793 (p. 117). It was described as being on the "point" in 1800 (p. 158). It is thought that the point was that piece of land in the angle formed by Grand Portage Bay and Grand Portage Creek.

4. Northmen's camp. Tent camp located on west side of Grand Portage Creek, athwart the road to the portage, 1793 (p. 110).

There was a west gate to the N. W. Co. post, 1798 (p. 134). It seems probable that the men from the Northwest came down the portage and camped just west of the gate on that side. At the peak of activity, late 1790s, there were several hundred northmen at the rendezvous; the size of the camp and the number of tents would be considerable. (Archeological evidence supports idea of a gate on the west wall.)

5. XY Company post. In 1800, it was described as being within 200 rods (3300') of the N. W. Co. post (p. 166). A description written between 1803 and 1807 said that the XY Co. post was ¼ mile from the N. W. Co. post (p. 214). Worth noting is the fact that in the 1803 court case involving the area immediately to the east of the N. W. Co. post, no mention is made of the XY Co. post in that area; this absence of note supports the above two statements that it was farther off toward the east. Both the distances given here are shown on the map--the XY post probably being someplace within the dotted enclosure, No. 5.

6. Hervieux's trading store (3 tents), 1802, was first located 50 feet from the Montrealers' beach encampment (p. 196) and 50 feet from the Northmen's encampment (p. 197). Another witness said the store was only 20 feet from the Montrealers' beach encampment (p. 197). Still another testified that it was from 20 to 50 feet from the Northmen's camp (p. 198).

7. Hervieux's second location of his trading store was said to have been 285 feet east of his first location (p. 199). Another witness said that it was from 190 to 275 feet east of the first site (p. 201).

8. Boucher's trading post, 1798-1802, said to be about 60 feet from Hervieux's second location (p. 197). A second person testified that Boucher's fort marked the eastern boundary of the area cleared of trees by the traders, especially those of the North West Company (p. 201).

Lecruyer's trading store, 1794-98, said to have been on the same site as Boucher's. It was described as a little house, "some distance" from the N. W. post (pp. 203-04).

9. One new arrival said that the landing place was about one mile from the N. W. Co. post, 1803 (p. 206). This is so marked on the map but it does not seem to be a likely location for a landing place. One would expect the one or two piers built by the N. W. Co. to have been close to the post.

10. A young clerk wrote in 1802 that the XY Co. had begun building a new post on "the hill." (p. 190) Apparently this construction was stopped when the XY Co. moved into the abandoned N. W. Co. fort that year or early the next. No further evidence exists to aid in identifying the hill. The dotted circle on the map is supposition only.

Bibliography

In past reports I have restricted the bibliography to those sources cited in the footnotes. In the case of Grand Portage, I am including dozens of sources not cited. One of the objectives of this study was to examine archival material and published documents concerning the Grand Portage wherever they were found. Thanks to the policies of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, the time and the funds were available to visit the various archives. Even the material that added little or nothing to knowledge of the Grand Portage is listed below. Thus, by referring to this bibliography, one may determine if a particular document was consulted. Hopefully, the future will bring more details of the appearance of and life at Grand Portage. However, the future researcher, by referring to this bibliography, will know what has already been consulted.

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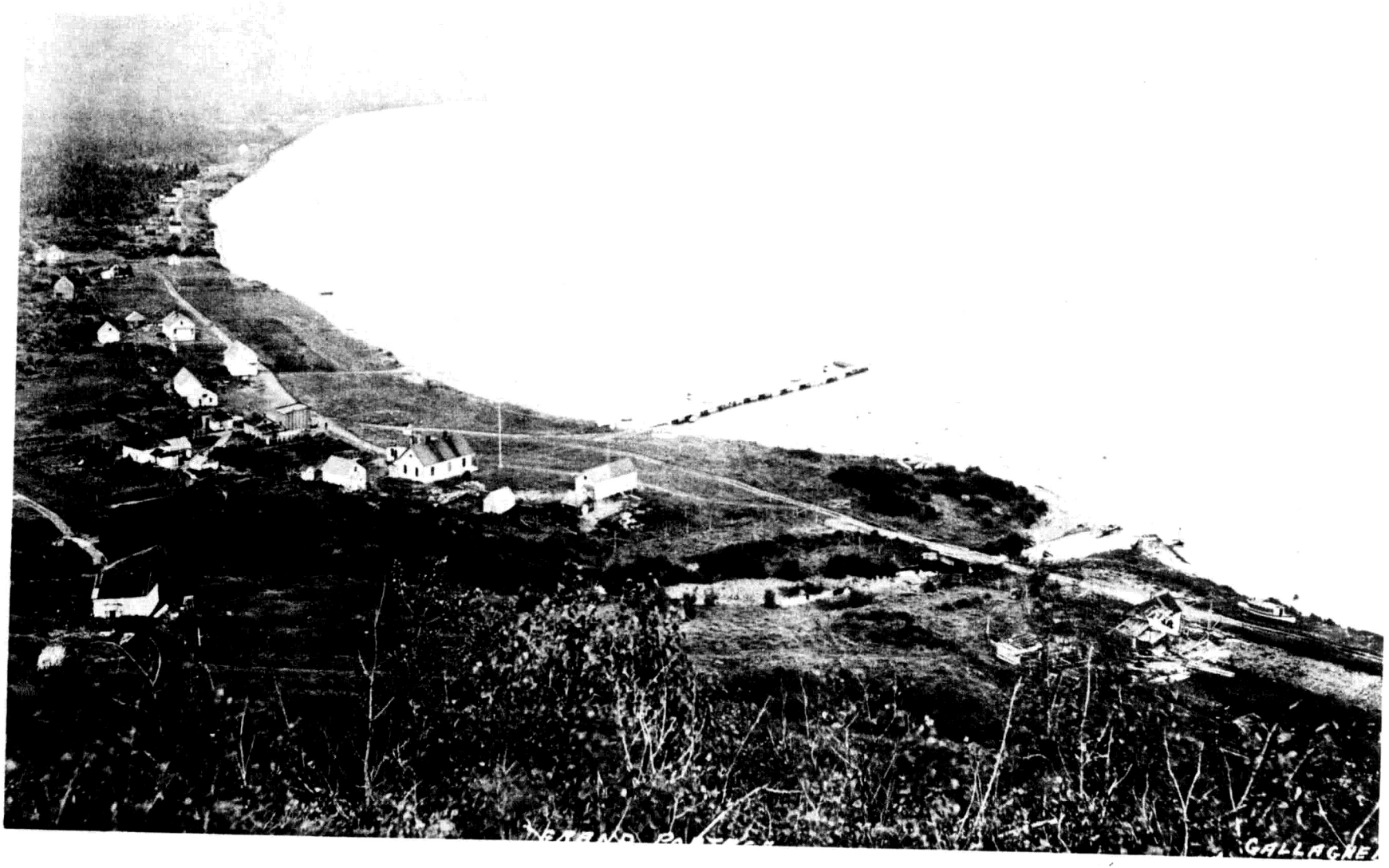
ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Painting of Grand Portage by Eastman Johnson, 1857. All traces of the North West Company's establishment have disappeared. The Indian encampment and the cabins, at the foot of Mount Rose, are approximately within today's national monument's boundaries.

2. Painting of Grand Portage by Eastman Johnson, 1857. More than fifty years after the North West Company moved from Grand Portage, this painting catches Indian tents and cabins along the shore of Grand Portage Bay. In the distance lies Grand Portage Island.

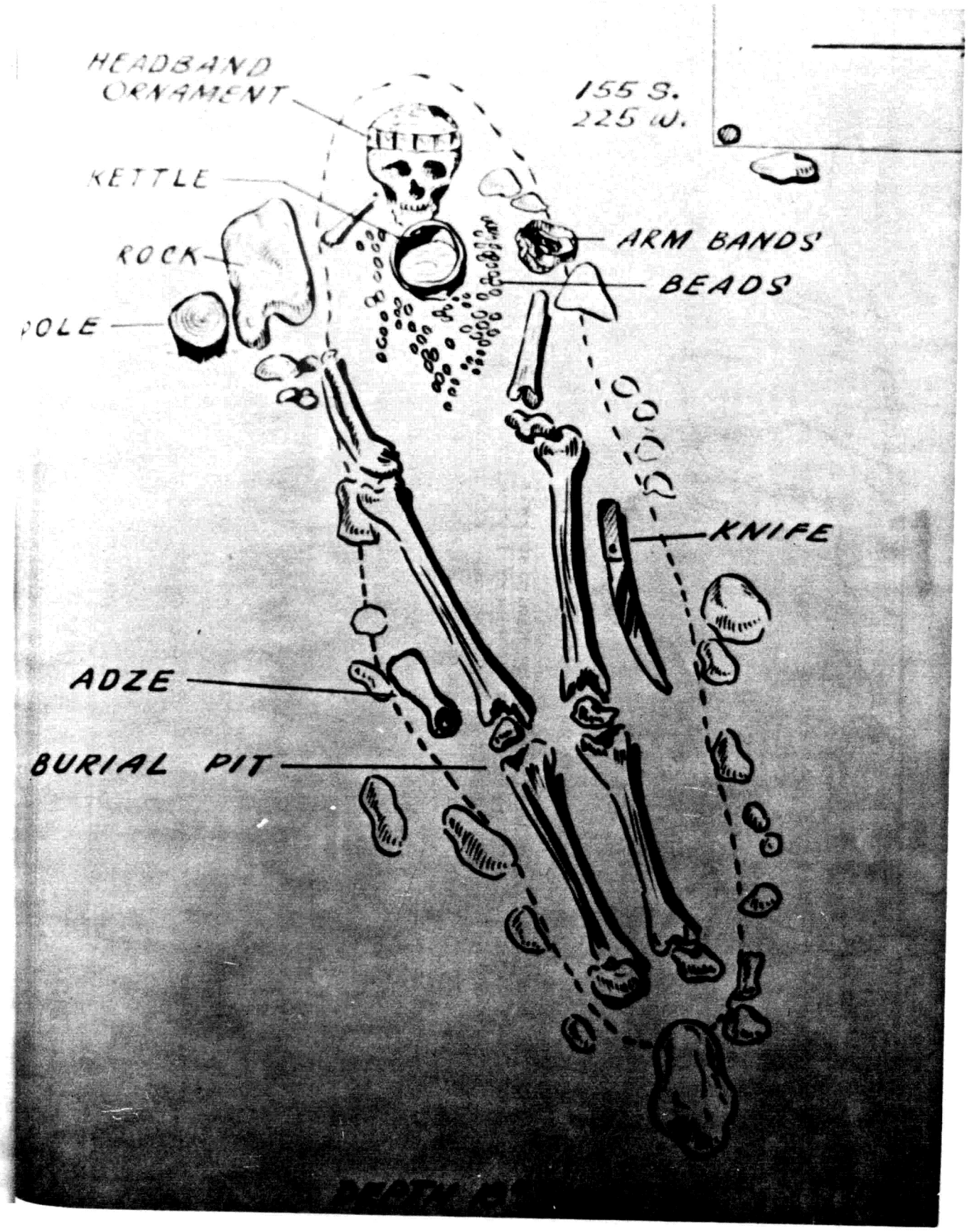
3. Indians and buildings at Grand Portage about 1890. Photograph by C. A. Newton. Courtesy, Minnesota Historical Society.

4. Grand Portage village about 1920. The reconstructed North West Company stockade today stands in the area shown in the lower right corner of the photograph. The dock shown is not the present one. The largest white building, just beyond the school, was an Indian school. It was located on a small mound that was investigated by archeologists in 1962.


GALLAGHE

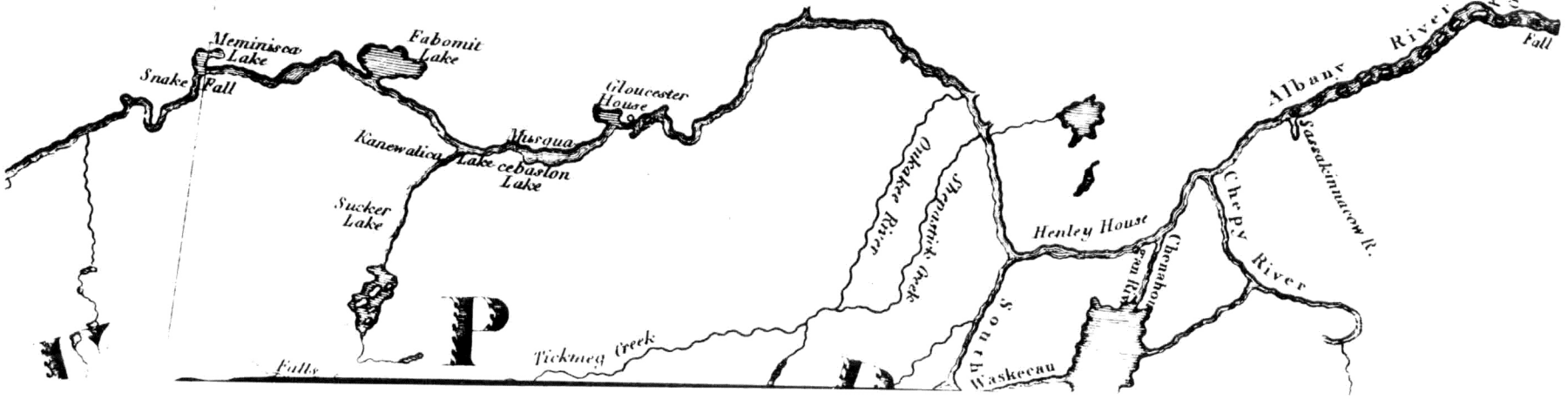
5. Aerial of the reconstructed North West Company stockade at Grand Portage. The reconstructed Great Hall within the stockade has since burned. The white lines just to the right of the stockade indicate trenches dug during archeological work in 1962. The wider-spaced parallel lines to the right of the road junction are from survey work, not archeology.

6. One of several burials discovered by archeologists in 1962 at Grand Portage National Monument. Of interest was the red cloth headband having six small silver plates attached. No evidence of a grave house was found.

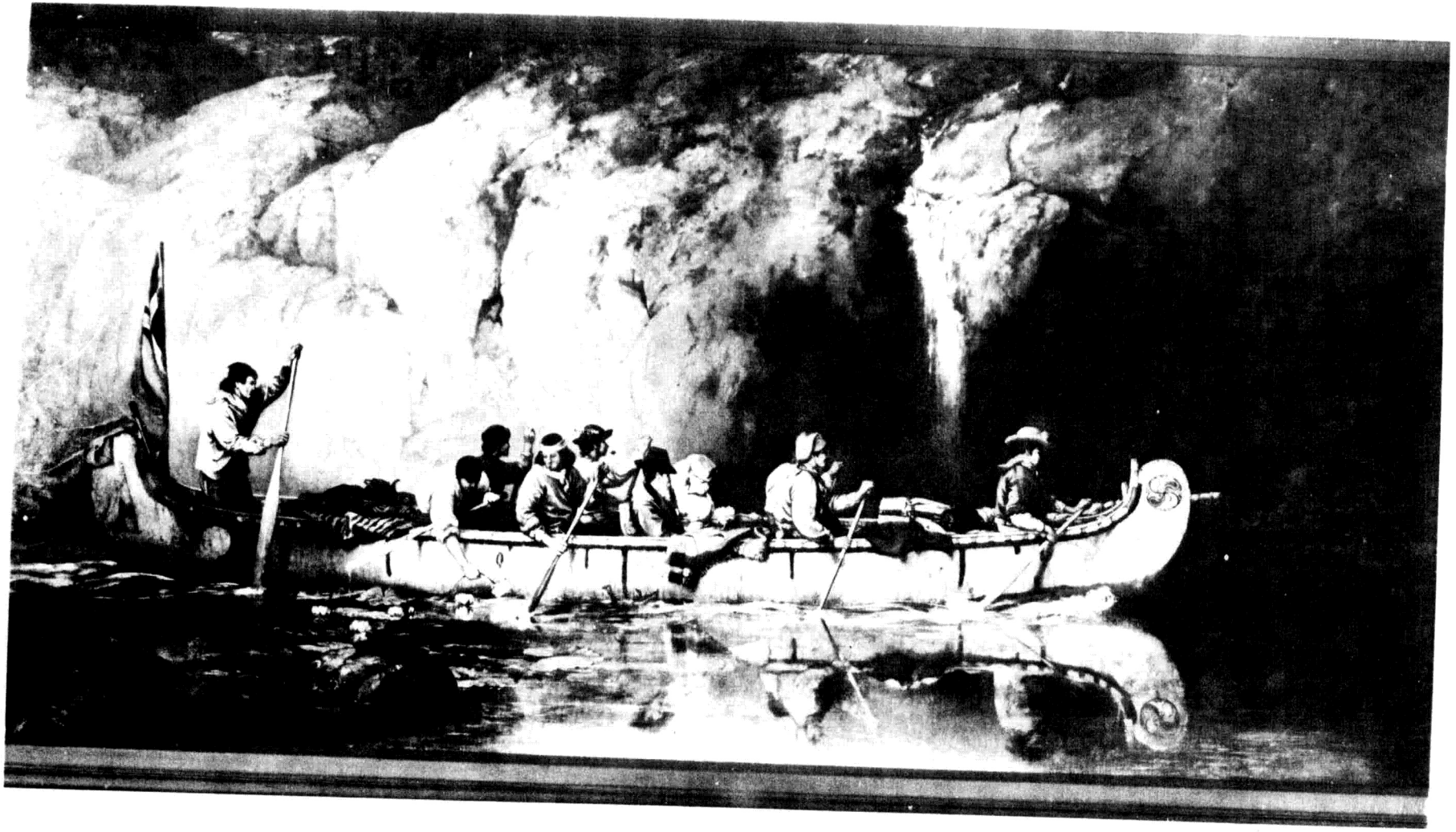

HEADBAND ORNAMENT
155 S.
225 W.
KETTLE
ROCK
POLE
ARM BANDS
BEADS
KNIFE
ADZE
BURIAL PIT

7. Fort William on the Kaministikwia River (Ontario), sketched in 1812 by Robert Irvine, master of the North West Company schooner Caledonia. In 1815 this sketch appeared on Joseph Bouchette's "Map of the Provinces," where it was captioned as Grand Portage. Courtesy, Public Archives of Canada.

VIEW of the GRAND PORTAGE on LAKE SUPERIOR.

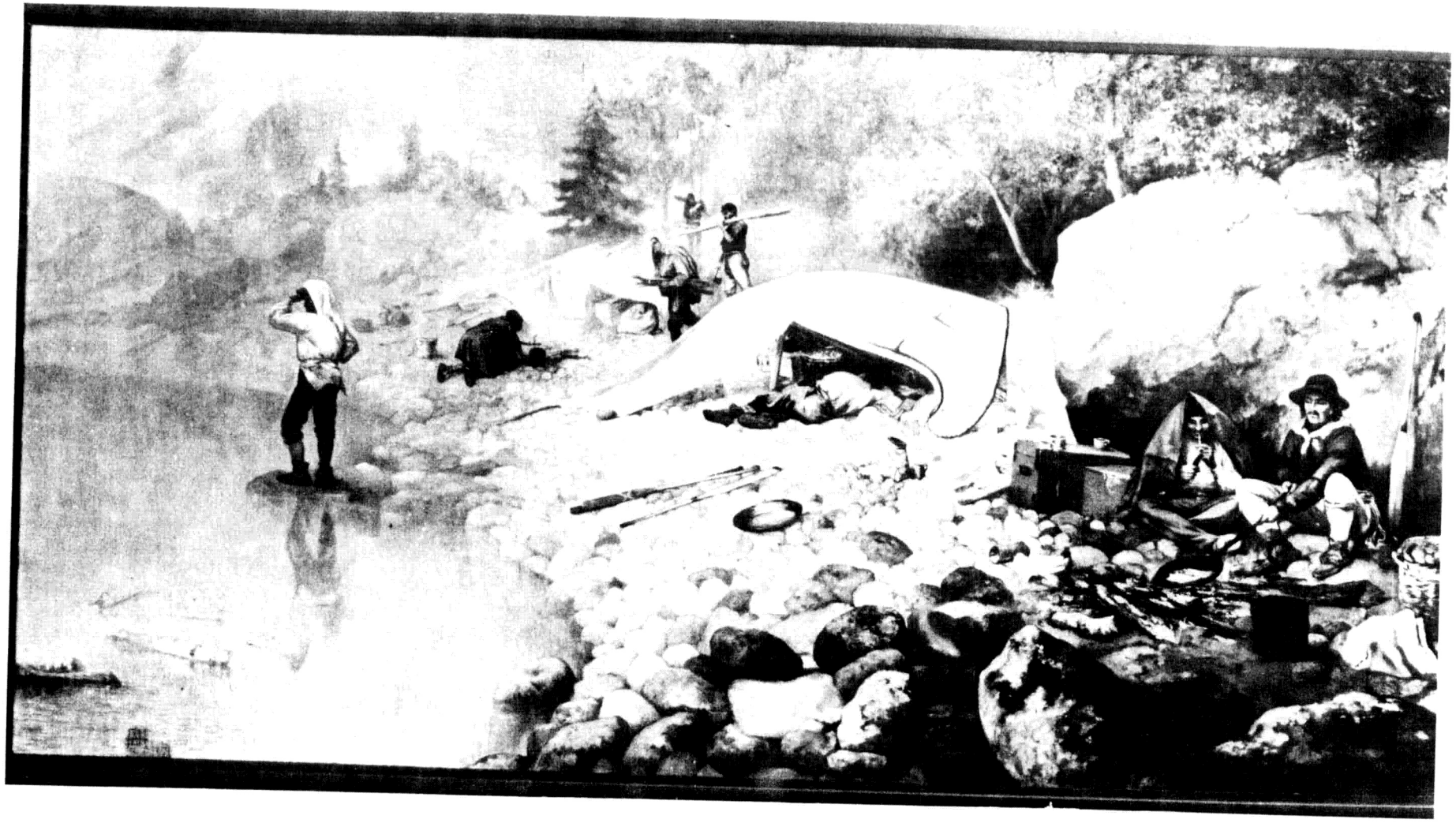


8. Frances Ann Hopkins, wife of the private secretary to Sir George Simpson, Hudson's Bay Company, painted this and the following illustrations from life. Remarkably faithful in her details, Mrs. Hopkins accurately captured the life of the voyageurs. Had she not placed herself and her husband in the picture, they could have been done at Grand Portage one hundred years earlier. She called this painting "Canoe Manned by Voyageurs," 1869. Courtesy, Public Archives of Canada.

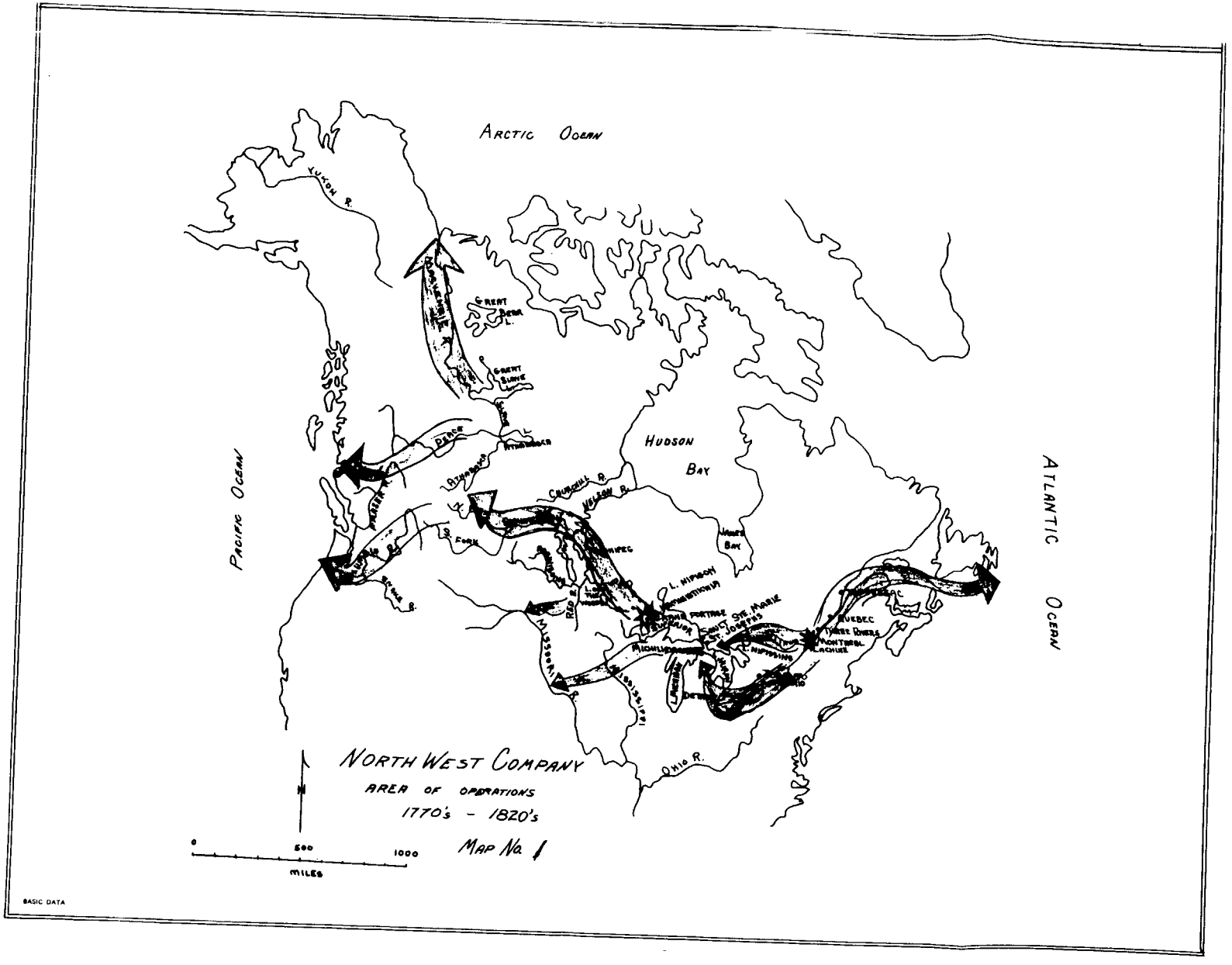


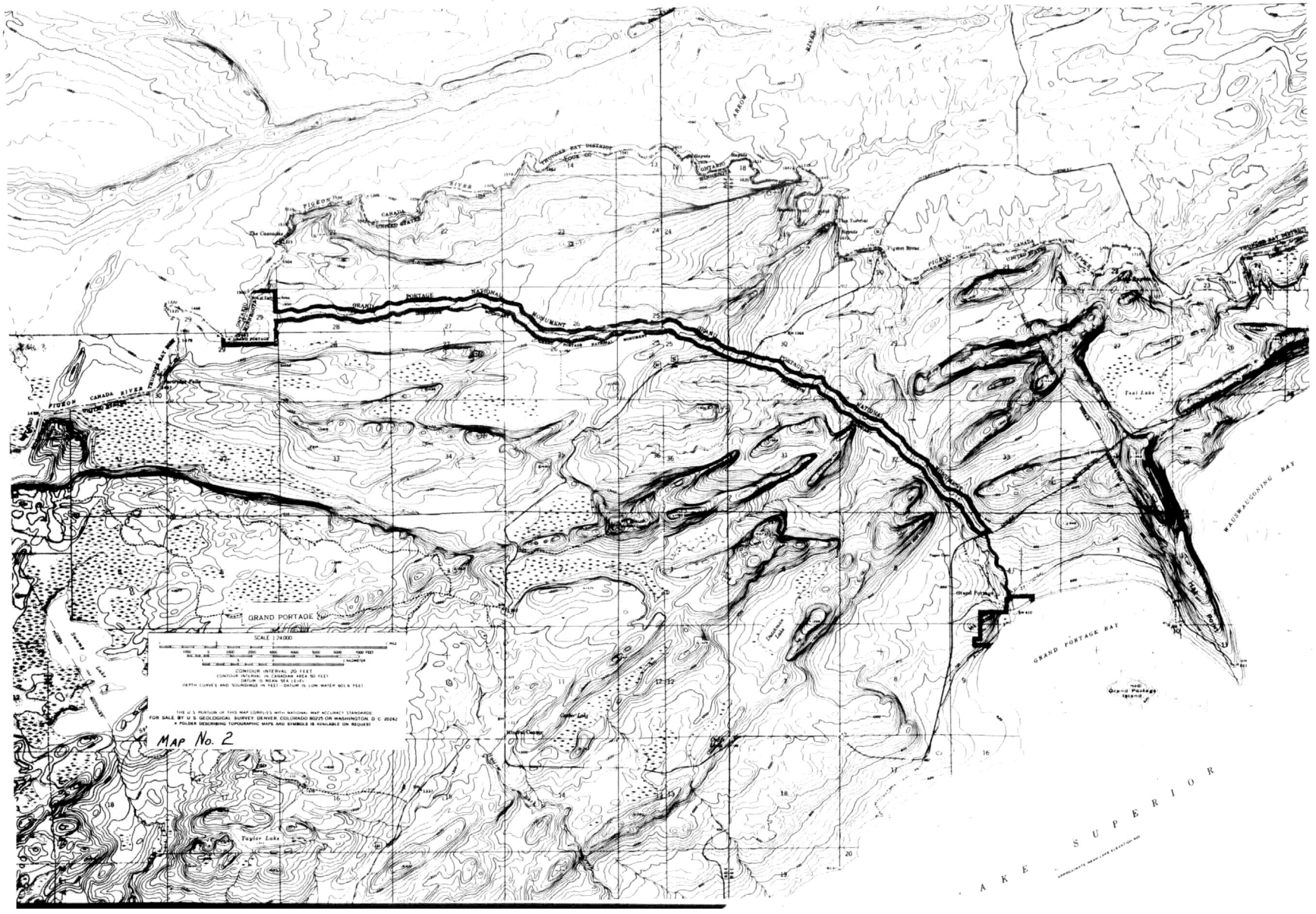
9. Shooting the rapids. Mrs. Hopkins painted this picture probably in 1869 or 1870. Courtesy, Public Archives of Canada.

10. Mrs. Hopkins' misty, moody Voyageurs at dawn catches the cold damp morning and the voyageurs' simple camp better than any amount of words. The descriptions of Grand Portage indicate that the Montreal voyageurs lived very much like those shown here when they were at Grand Portage. Courtesy, Public Archives of Canada.

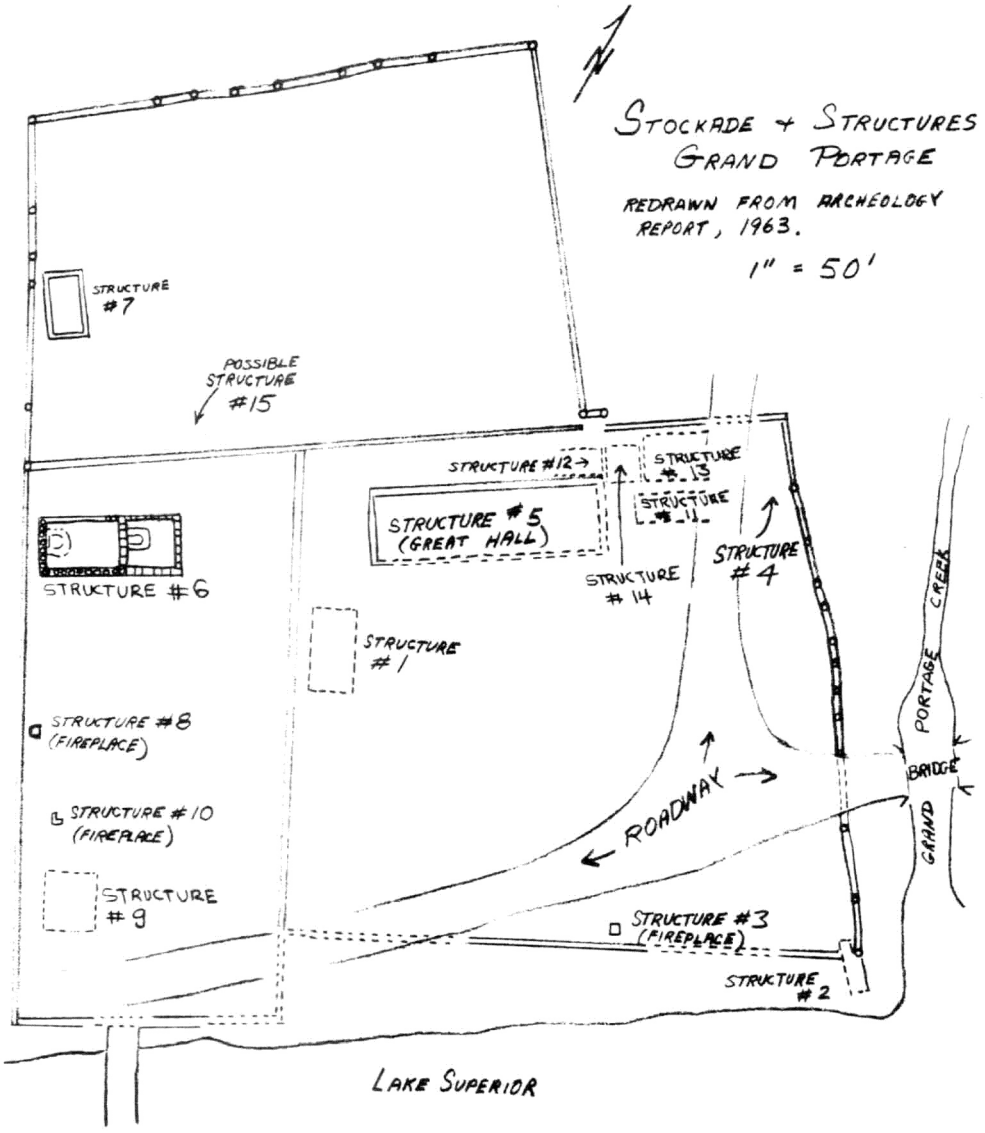


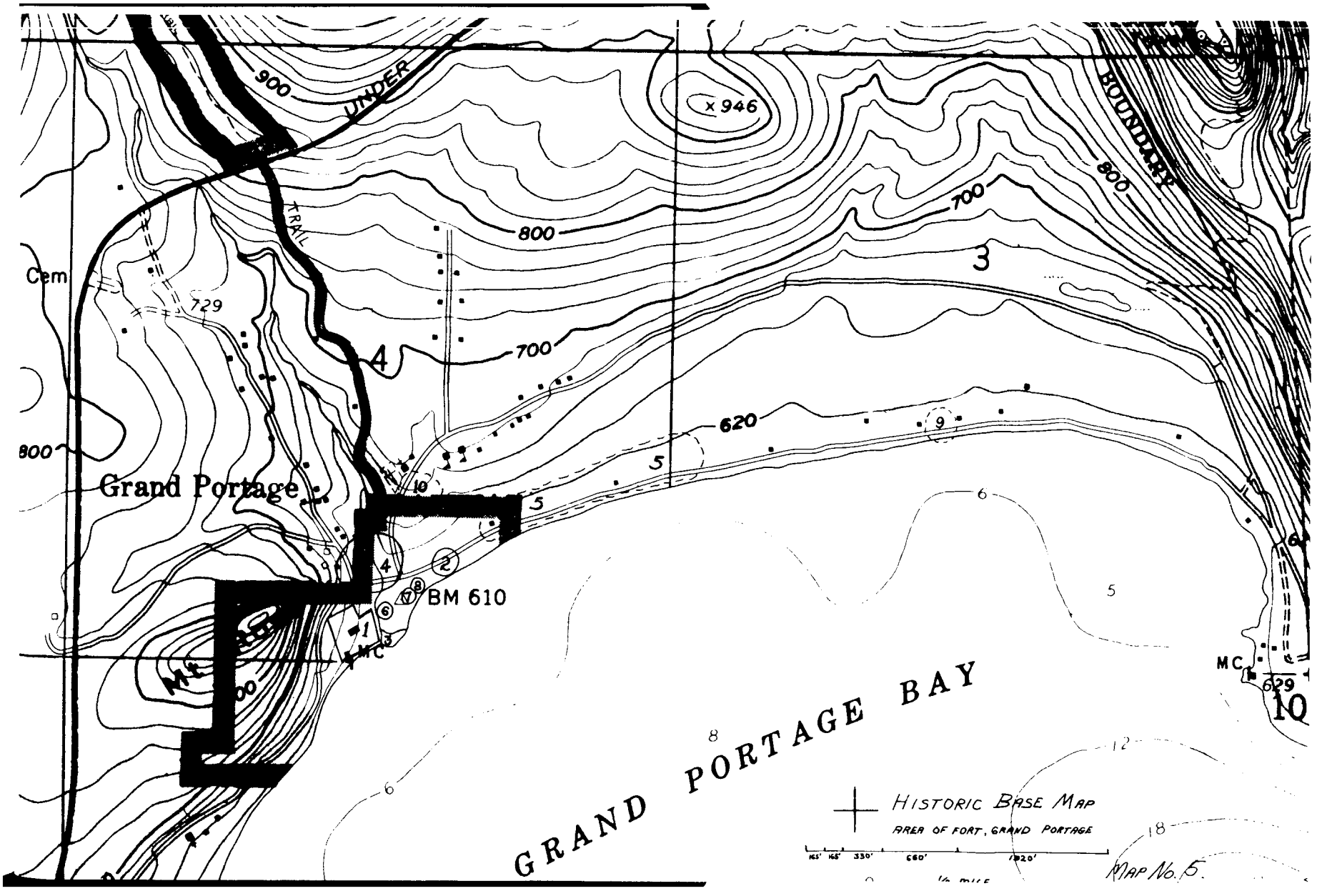
11. Mrs. Hopkins traveled in the Red River Expedition of 1870, commanded by Col. G. J. Wolseley. Here the expedition begins a difficult portage, an exercise in stamina repeated annually at Grand Portage. Courtesy, Public Archives of Canada.


ARCTIC OCEAN
PACIFIC OCEAN
ATLANTIC OCEAN
HUDSON BAY
JAMES BAY
YUKON R.
GREAT BEAR L.
GREAT SLAVE L.
PEACE
ATHABASCA
CHURCHILL R.
NELSON R.
L. NIPIGON
SAULT STE. MARIE
ST. JOSEPHS
MICHILLIMAKINAC
L. NIPISSING
QUEBEC
THREE RIVERS
MONTREAL
LACHINE
MISSOURI R.
MISSISSIPPI
OHIO R.
NORTH WEST COMPANY
AREA OF OPERATIONS
1770's - 1820's
MAP No. 1
0
500
1000
MILES
BASIC DATA


GRAND PORTAGE
SCALE 1:24 000
CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
CONTOUR INTERVAL IN CANADIAN AREA 50 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS LOW WATER 601.6 FEET
THE U.S. PORTION OF THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225 OR WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST
MAP No. 2
GRAND PORTAGE NATIONAL MONUMENT
PIGEON CANADA RIVER
WAUSWAUGONING BAY
GRAND PORTAGE BAY
Grand Portage Island
Taylor Lake
Teal Lake
LAKE SUPERIOR

MAP No. 3


STOCKADE + STRUCTURES
GRAND PORTAGE
REDRAWN FROM ARCHEOLOGY REPORT, 1963.
1" = 50'
STRUCTURE #7
POSSIBLE STRUCTURE #15
STRUCTURE #12
STRUCTURE #13
STRUCTURE #11
STRUCTURE #5 (GREAT HALL)
STRUCTURE #4
STRUCTURE #14
STRUCTURE #6
STRUCTURE #1
STRUCTURE #8 (FIREPLACE)
STRUCTURE #10 (FIREPLACE)
STRUCTURE #9
ROADWAY
PORTAGE CREEK
BRIDGE
GRAND
STRUCTURE #3 (FIREPLACE)
STRUCTURE #2
LAKE SUPERIOR



900
UNDER
TRAIL
x 946
800
700
BOUNDARY
800
3
Cem
729
4
700
620
9
5
800
Grand Portage
10
5
4
2
BM 610
6
7
8
1
3
MC
6
5
MC
629
10
GRAND PORTAGE BAY
8
6
12
18
HISTORIC BASE MAP
AREA OF FORT, GRAND PORTAGE
165' 165' 330' 660' 1320'
MAP No. 5.