

"AT THE HEARTH OF THE CROSSED RACES":
INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN
FRENCH PRAIRIE, OREGON, 1812-1843

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates two interrelated questions within the context of a local case study: What were the dynamics of intercultural relations in Oregon's Willamette Valley during the early colonial period (1812-1843); What does this history reveal about social change in the Pacific Northwest during the same period? The French Prairie area of the Willamette Valley is one of the oldest sites of extensive, continuous contact between the indigenous Kalapuyans and Euro-Americans in western Oregon, eventually becoming a major locale for agrarian settlement. This study opens with an overview of pre-contact Kalapuyan lifeways and then reconstructs the early decades of Kalapuyan-fur trader encounters. Later sections examine the establishment of a bi-cultural French-Indian agrarian settlement, the arrival of Methodist and Catholic missionaries and small groups of American settlers, and inter-community debates about the creation of a local provisional government.

Owing to the social, political, and demographic dominance of Anglo-American settlers following the great western migrations of the 1840s, a tenacious "founding mythology" became deeply ingrained in Pacific Northwest historiography. This mythology followed a common trope in rendering Anglo-Americans as the central actors in a progressive, triumphant settlement of Oregon. In this pioneer-centric narrative, Native groups, fur trade personnel, and their families are absent from the course of historical events, or they are portrayed as obstacles to Anglo-American settlement.

The present study of French Prairie offers a more complex picture of intercultural relations and the dynamics of social change in the Willamette Valley prior to American re-settlement. At differing periods, social relations in French Prairie were marked by tension, miscommunication, mutual self-interest, cooperation, and genuine compassion. Drawing on their experience in the fur trade, as well their connections with both aboriginal and Euro-American cultures, the French Prairie settlers tried to negotiate a middle course within the context of competing forces, especially at times when cross-cultural tensions were high. As a result, the early colonial history of Oregon was neither marked by irresolvable ethnic conflict nor unilateral Anglo-American dominance.

While the bi-cultural French-Indian families sought a middle course in their relations with all their various neighbors, their very presence also ultimately contributed to the Euro-American colonization of the Pacific Northwest. By establishing the first farming and husbandry operations in the Willamette Valley in the late 1820s, the French-Indian families initiated a process of social and ecological change that was accelerated following the overland migrations. This re-examination of Oregon history through a local case study of French Prairie thus contributes to a revisionist interpretation of Pacific Northwest history. It also contributes to larger discussions of contact zones, demonstrating not only the early multi-ethnic character of the Pacific Northwest, but also the historic connections between the British North American fur trade, the French Canadian diaspora, and the Anglo-American colonization of Oregon in the 1840s.

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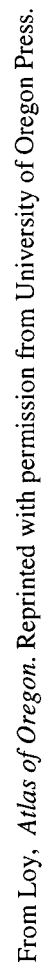
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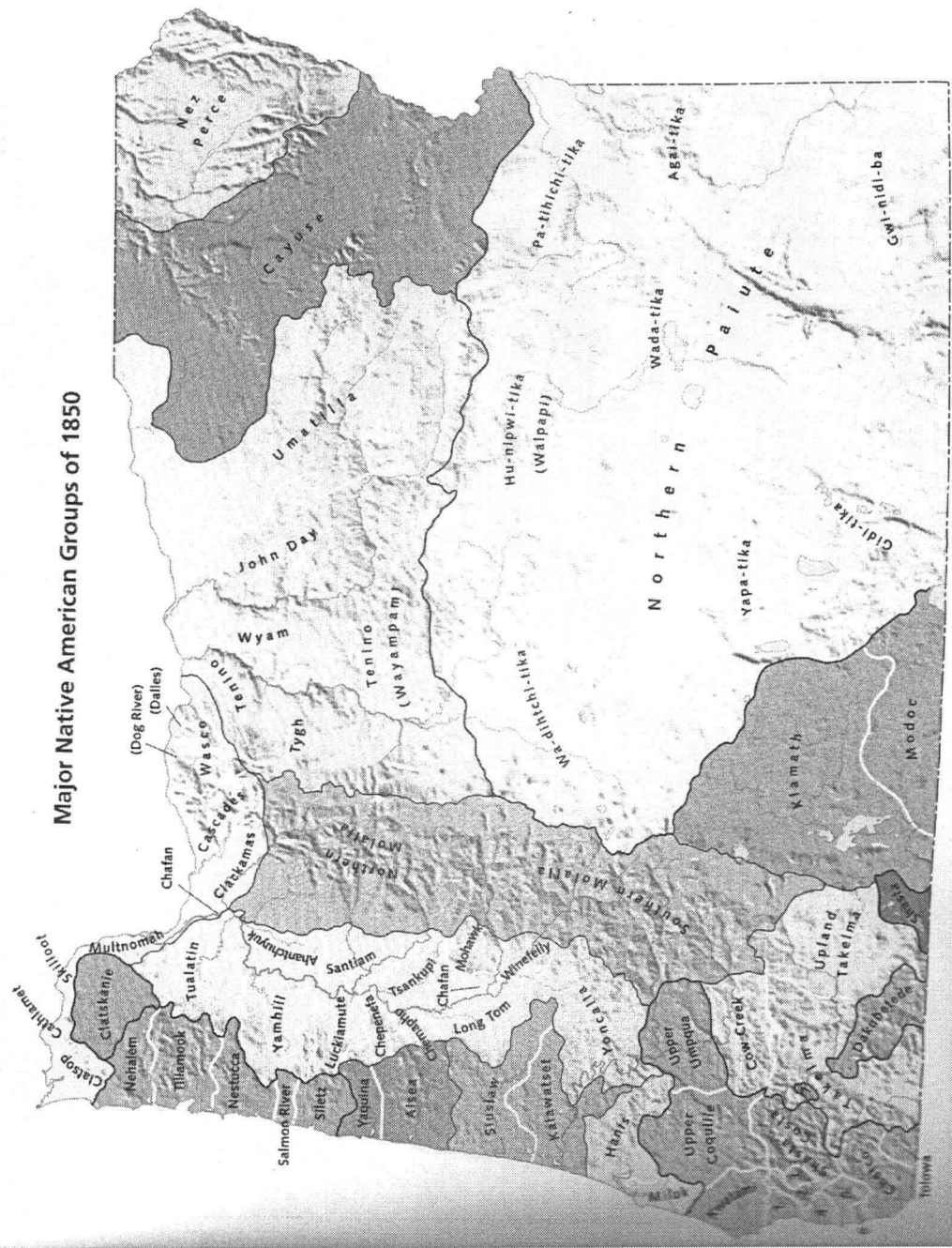
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
APOA	Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon Archives
BAN	H. H. Bancroft Library
<i>BCHQ</i>	<i>British Columbia Historical Quarterly</i>
<i>CHR</i>	<i>Canadian Historical Review</i>
<i>CCPNW</i>	<i>Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest</i>
<i>CRAS</i>	<i>Canadian Review of American Studies</i>
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
HBCA	Hudson's Bay Company Archives
<i>MCH</i>	<i>Marion County History</i>
<i>MVHR</i>	<i>Mississippi Valley Historical Review</i>
NWC	North West Company
<i>OHQ</i>	<i>Oregon Historical Quarterly</i>
PFC	Pacific Fur Company
<i>PNQ</i>	<i>Pacific Northwest Quarterly</i>
<i>WaHQ</i>	<i>Washington Historical Quarterly</i>
<i>WHQ</i>	<i>Western Historical Quarterly</i>
TOPA	<i>Transactions of the Oregon Pioneer Association</i>

Physical Feature Names



Map. 2. Major Native American Groups in Oregon, 1850



From Loy, *Atlas of Oregon*. Reprinted with permission from University of Oregon Press.

INTRODUCTION

In the late summer of 1851, French traveler Pierre Charles Fournier de Saint Amant visited the Oregon territory, spending several weeks with French-Indian families living in a district of the Willamette Valley known as French Prairie.¹ In the account of his travels published in 1854, Saint Amant painted a fanciful portrait of French Prairie as a pastoral backwater settlement. In one passage, he recorded that while “seated at the hearth of the crossed races,” he had observed the “patriarchal” customs of the settlers that bespoke contentment with the present and an absence of concern about the future. Saint Amant also noted with a tinge of annoyance that the settlers rarely discussed the “rise and fall of empires,” not even the violent revolutions that had erupted across Europe just a few years before.²

Given the class distinctions between the French-Indian families and Saint Amant—a former World Chess Champion and a foreign service envoy—the French traveler’s own cultural background colored his perceptions of the settlers. Their concerns appeared local and immediate, common for a class of unlettered former fur trappers and their Indian wives. Indeed, Saint Amant’s observations were not unusual for his day. Educated observers, who happened to mention French Canadian voyageurs in their writings, often portrayed them as

¹ French Prairie, the original territory of the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans, was named after the French-Indian families that settled there. Located in the mid-Willamette Valley, it is bounded by the Willamette River to the north and west, the Pudding River to the east, and what remains of Lake Labish (*Lac labiche*) to the south. The five major towns of French Prairie were Butteville, Champoeg, St. Paul, St. Louis, and Gervais. The Champoeg town site, located on the river, was washed away in floods in 1861 and 1891 and is now a state park. The other towns remain to the present.

² Saint Amant, M. [Pierre Charles Fournier de], *Voyages en Californie et dans l'Orégon* (Paris: Librairie L. Maisson, 1854), 170. Saint Amant was one of the first to use a version of the term “French Prairie” in print, referring to the area as *les prairies françaises*.

simple, carefree, even childlike. This stereotype of the happy-go-lucky French Canadian fur trapper was then becoming a staple of early fur trade and pioneer chronicles.³

While such an image may indicate the education level of the French Canadian men retired from the fur trade, and the semi-isolated nature of life in a contact or "frontier" zone, it evokes a simplified vision of a complex history. Here I draw on Mary Louise Pratt's notion of a contact zone as a geographic space wherein previously unknown groups come into direct contact and develop a pattern of interaction. As several U.S. historians have argued, the use of the term "frontier" most often emphasized the Euro-American perspective on such interactions, whereas I employ "contact zone" in an attempt to explore the differing experiences of the various groups involved in the process of Euro-American colonization.⁴

The French-Indian families living in French Prairie, that Saint Amant portrays as blithely unaware of the larger historical events, were in reality the vanguard of international commercial interests that set out to exploit the Northwest Coast in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Far from being perfectly ignorant of the rise and fall of empire, the elderly French Canadian fur trappers whom Saint Amant interviewed literally carried American and British imperial interests in the fur trapping brigades they manned throughout the Pacific Northwest for ten, twenty, sometimes thirty years. And following their permanent move to the Willamette Valley, they were actively involved in local debates about the nature of civil governance and national authority in the region during the years preceding large-

³ Evidence of the influence of this stereotype is present in an early ethnography of the French Canadian voyageur, Grace Lee Nute's *The Voyageur* (New York: D. Appleton, 1931; rpt; St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1955). For a more recent study, see Carolyn Podruchny, "'Sons of the Wilderness': Work, Culture, and Identity Among Voyageurs in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1780-1821," (Ph.D diss., University of Toronto, 1999).

⁴ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6-7. Patricia Nelson Limerick offers a strong critique of the term "frontier," in *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 17-32. Another useful volume is the collection of essays edited by Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde Milner, and Charles E. Rankin, *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1999).

scale American migration to Oregon. Indeed, the French Canadians' wives and children were the descendants of Native groups then coming under increasing pressure from Anglo-American westward expansion.

Saint Amant's penchant for overlooking the role of the French Canadian trappers—and by extension their interethnic families and Native relations—in the sweep of larger historical events illustrates a common perception then emerging in the historical writing of the period. Nicolas Biddle, editor of the Lewis and Clark journals, Oregon boosters, and overland pioneers who began to record the Euro-American exploration and settlement of Oregon in the first half of the nineteenth century inaugurated a tenacious “founding mythology” of the Pacific Northwest, a historical interpretation later reproduced and modified in succeeding generations. Akin to Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis first articulated in the 1890s, this “Oregon thesis” followed a common trope in American letters rendering Anglo-Americans as the central actors in a progressive, triumphant settlement of the western regions.⁵

The original “Oregon Country” was the vast region west of the Rocky Mountains that stretched from Russian Alaska to Spanish California. Following the international boundary treaty of 1846, the Oregon territory encompassed the entire Pacific Northwest (the present-day states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho). Even before Americans ventured to the region in larger numbers, there was an American “Oregon of the mind” shaped by the printed word. This mental geography was expansive enough to hold the dreams of a diverse citizenry, no

⁵ Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, *The Lewis and Clark Expedition*, eds. Nicholas Biddle and Paul Allen. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1814); Hall Jackson Kelley, *Hall J. Kelley on Oregon*, ed. Fred Wilbur Powell (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1932); Gustavus Hines, *Oregon: Its History, Conditions, and Prospects* (Buffalo: Geo. H. Derby and Co., 1851); Frederick Jackson Turner, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” and Other Essays*. With Commentary by John Mack Faragher (New York: Henry Holt, 1994). For essays on Western history and popular culture, see Richard White and Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Frontier in American Culture*, ed. James R. Grossman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

matter how fanciful. As the nineteenth century progressed, American visions of Oregon came to encompass Edenic landscapes, republican virtues, true religion, economic prosperity, and individual liberty. As James Ronda has noted, Oregon was “one more part of an American tradition to include Oleanna, the Big Rock Candy Mountains, Paradise Valley, and the Peaceable Kingdom.”⁶ This mental act of territorial possession was in keeping with the vision of President Thomas Jefferson, who dispatched Lewis and Clark on their expedition to the Far West in 1803. Jefferson believed that the United States must continue to expand westward in order to ensure the economic stability and social vitality of a republic built upon yeoman farmers. By cultivating new lands westward expansion offered “cultural salvation and imperial power” to the young nation.⁷

A few notable figures—Robert Gray, Lewis and Clark, John McLoughlin, Jason Lee, and Marcus Whitman—laid the foundation for this “inevitable” Anglo-American colonization and settlement of the Far West. The Oregon story was particularly heroic and celebratory in nature owing to the great hardships endured by American overlanders on their 2,000-mile trek from Missouri to Oregon beginning in the 1840s. Overland emigrants found their destination, Oregon’s Willamette Valley, to be a land providentially depopulated of its Indian population due to disease. The newcomers thereupon set out to create a progressive, agricultural-based economy, and establish American law and governance. Within fifteen years most of the Native American groups in the region were relegated onto reservations, small portions of their once vast ancestral territories. In this pioneer-centric narrative, Native

⁶ James P. Ronda, “Calculating Ouragon,” *OHQ* 94:2-3 (Summer-Fall 1993), 121.

⁷ Ronda, “Calculating,” 124-125. See also William H. Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed: The Romantic Horizon in American Expansionism, 1800-1860*, 2nd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 1-21; Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny in American History* (New York: Vintage Book, 1963), 3-23.

groups, fur trade personnel, and their families were either absent from the course of historical events or they played only minor supporting roles.⁸

Figure 1. Valley of the Willamette River



Or Hi 49030, reprinted with permission from the Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

This hand-colored lithograph printed is based on a watercolor and pencil sketch by Henry J. Warre. It was one of a series of included in Warre's *Sketches in North American and the Oregon Territory* (1848). The lithograph is actually an embellishment of Warre's sketch. In contrast to the Eastern or Plains Indians depicted here, the original featured two vaguely defined individuals who could either be Kalapuyans or fur trappers.

⁸ For a representative view of this founding mythology, with an emphasis of Oregon's progressive, agricultural-based economy, see James R. Robertson, "The Social Evolution of Oregon," *OHQ* 3:1 (March 1902): 1-37. The Bancroft histories largely written by Francis Fuller Victor solidified this interpretation: Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast*, 2 vols, and *History of Oregon*, 2 vols (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Co., 1884 & 1886). See also Keith D. Richards, "In Search of the Pacific Northwest: The Historiography of Oregon and Washington," *PHR* 50:4 (November 1981): 415-44; and Susan H. Armitage, "From the Inside Out: Rewriting Regional History," *Frontiers* 22:3 (2001): 32-47. David Peterson del Mar offers a particularly compelling critique of Oregon's founding mythology in the introduction to his new text, *Oregon's Promise: An Interpretive History* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003), 1-10.

This marginalization of Native groups, fur trade personnel and their families—a “silencing of the past” to employ the phrase of Michel-Rolph Trouillot—had several ramifications for Pacific Northwest historiography.⁹ First and foremost, analysis of the historical experiences of Indian peoples and fur trade laborers remained cursory into the latter decades of the twentieth century. In turn, knowledge about the relations *between* Natives and newcomers during the early colonial period also remained limited.¹⁰ Lacking a clear sense of the continuities and changes over the early colonial period, historians long overlooked the relationship between the British North American fur trade and the American settlement of the Pacific Northwest, thereby masking the colonizing process in the region.¹¹ Indeed, a common practice consisted of portraying Native peoples and fur trade personnel as obstacles to Anglo-American settlement. Thus, when not fully absent from the historical texts, these groups were depicted as maintaining an inherently conflictual relationship with the incoming American settlers. A classic case in point is the standard interpretation of the development of a provisional government in Oregon. Pioneer chronicles and historians alike viewed the French Canadians’ opposition to a provisional government in the early 1840s in highly nationalistic terms. They portrayed the French Canadians as spoilers intent on voicing their loyalty to the Hudson’s Bay Company and the British cause in Oregon.¹²

⁹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

¹⁰ Leland Donald recently noted that “there is no comprehensive or systematic treatment of the history of contact between the indigenous inhabitants of the Northwest Coast culture area and European” owing to the Euro-American political boundaries which have influenced scholarly research and to the lack of research on all the cultural groups and the sub-regions needed for such a comprehensive study. Donald Leland, *Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America* (Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 1997), 215.

¹¹ Kent D. Richards noted that in the 1950s, Norman Graebner was unable to “convince historians that merchant interests had much to do with bringing settlement to the Oregon Country.” Richard, 249. See Norman Graebner, *Empire on the Pacific: A Study in American Continental Expansion* (New York: The Ronald Press, 1955).

¹² The most well known statement underlining the strong ethnic, religious, and nationalistic attitudes of many American settlers with regard to the French Canadians, Catholic missionaries, and the HBC is William H. Gray’s *A History of Oregon, 1792-1849* (Portland: Harris & Holman, 1870). The most recent articulation of the

The notion of former French Canadian fur trappers opposing American-led efforts for a provisional government out of loyalty to the territorial and mercantile interests of Great Britain and the Hudson's Bay Company would be comical if this interpretation were not so ingrained in Oregon's founding mythology. Chad Reimer has observed that nationalist perspectives and racial ideologies played a central role in shaping the early historiography of the Pacific Northwest. During the 1830s and 1840s, Americans producing historical texts in support of the U.S. territorial claims in the Oregon Country attacked the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), portraying it as a tainted organization because of its monopolistic trade policies, its position as a representative of the anti-democratic British establishment, and its tolerance of sexual relations between company employees and Native women. Ignorant of the company's sometimes troubled relations with French Canadian laborers, aboriginal peoples, and Métis groups in Rupert's Land (the present-day Canadian Prairies), the American chroniclers conceived of a close, conspiratorial relationship between the HBC and Indians and French Canadians in the Pacific Northwest. Thus, the long-standing interpretation of French Canadian settlers in the Willamette Valley as representatives of the HBC and the British Crown flowed not only from notions of Anglo-Saxon, Protestant religious and ethnic superiority, but also from contemporary American attitudes toward Britain and her representative in Oregon, the HBC.¹³

Canadian historians have yet to mount a successful challenge to this founding mythology. Like their American counterparts, Canadian scholars tended to adopt a nationalist

French Canadians' ostensible "loyalty" to the Hudson's Bay Company and Great Britain in Oregon can be found in Dorothy Nafus Morrison, *Outpost: John McLoughlin and the Far Northwest* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1999).

¹³ Chad Rheimer, "Borders of the Past: The Oregon Boundary Dispute and the Beginnings of Northwest Historiography," in *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies*, edited by John M. Findlay and Ken S. Coates (Seattle and Montreal: University of Washington Press and McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 221-233.

perspective with regard to the history of the Northwest Coast prior to the Oregon Treaty of 1846. They have studied the region south of the forty-ninth parallel largely as it relates to broader questions of British imperialism and Canadian national development. The lower portion of the Oregon Country enters Canadian history insofar as it is a region for fur trade and mercantile interests before the boundary settlement of 1846. Thus, both the American and Canadian historiographical traditions have tended to represent the Northwest Coast in terms of larger national trends, rather than as a region with a distinctive historical trajectory that jointly affected the histories of the United States and Canadian.

This disconnection from the shared Canadian-American history of the Northwest Coast is evident in older histories such as Arthur S. Morton's *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71*, Margaret A. Ormsby's *British Columbia: A History*, and E.E. Rich's *The Fur Trade in the Northwest to 1857*.¹⁴ Although Western Canadian history has seen a growth in sophistication parallel to that of American Western history, recent histories have largely replicated the tendency to view the Canadian West through the geographic lens of current political boundaries.¹⁵ James Gibson's ode to the Oregon Country, *Farming the Frontier*, reinforces this division by laying the loss of the southern region at the feet of the Hudson's Bay Company.¹⁶ A handful of scholars working on specialized topics have underscored the needed for a broader view of the early colonial history of the Northwest Coast, notably

¹⁴ Arthur S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Saskatchewan and University of Toronto Press, 1973); Margaret Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1958); E.E. Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto: Macmillan and Stewart, 1967).

¹⁵ A recent bibliography on Western Canada by Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Mouat illustrates this point. See their edited collection, *Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization Settlement* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996), 267-282, 267-282. Cavanaugh and Mouat also note the tendency to view British Columbia and the prairies as distinctive regions. The collection edited by Howard Palmer, *The Settlement of the West* (Calgary: Comprint Publishing/University of Calgary, 1977), suggests Canadian "settlement of the West" was north of the forty-ninth parallel. See also Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, Rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

¹⁶ James Gibson, *Farming the Frontier: The Agricultural Opening of the Oregon Country, 1786-1846* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).

Donald Leland's treatment of aboriginal slavery, and Richard S. Mackie's study of the overland fur trade.¹⁷ One additional, often overlooked volume, *British Columbia and the United States: The North Pacific Slope from the Fur Trade to Aviation*, by F.W. Howay, W.N. Sage, and H. F. Angus, presents a close reading of the regional history, demonstrating the longstanding historical links across the forty-ninth parallel.¹⁸

The dominance of Oregon's founding mythology endured into the latter decades of the twentieth century, its staying power resting on an ability to meet the needs of Anglo-Americans who had dominated the state and the Pacific Northwest—demographically, politically, and economically—since the 1850s. The heroic, celebratory and, ultimately, reassuring tone of this mythology answered the cultural needs of the majority ethnic group, while also providing ideological support for an economy based on the exploitation of the region's natural resources. In this sense, the Euro-American resettlement of the Pacific Northwest was inevitable and progressive, and this view held together into the 1970s until both historical events and emerging trends in scholarly research challenged the long-standing hegemony.¹⁹

On the more concrete level, Michel-Rolph Trouillot has noted that the "production of history" is a complex process involving four sub-processes—"the making of sources . . . the making of archives . . . the marking of narratives . . . and the making of history in the final instance"—all of which contain their own "particular bundle of silences."²⁰ The scarcity of primary and secondary sources concerning the Kalapuyans is inextricably linked to the

¹⁷ Leland, *Aboriginal Slavery*; Richard Somerset Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).

¹⁸ F. W. Howay, W. N. Sage, and H.F. Angus, *British Columbia and the United States: The North Pacific Slope from Fur Trade to Aviation* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1942)

¹⁹ The standard text on Pacific Northwest history into the late 1980s was the aptly titled *Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest*, by Dorothy O. Johansen and Charles M. Gates, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967).

²⁰ Trouillot, 26-27.

epidemiological consequences of Euro-American expansion, and the exercise Anglo-American power in the nineteenth century. From the 1830s through the 1850s, the Kalapuyans experienced a catastrophic population decline due to the wide-ranging effects of infectious disease epidemics, loss of control over their natural resources, and displacement and dispossession resulting from large-scale American re-settlement. Of the estimated 9,200 Kalapuyans living in the Willamette Valley when Lewis and Clark visited the region in 1805-1806, approximately only 400 to 500, the remnant populations of once larger groups, survived to sign treaties with the U.S. government in the 1850s.

Most of these survivors and their descendants experienced re-tribalization on the Grand Ronde Reservation along with several other non-related groups from western Oregon.²¹ In 1877, the Grand Ronde Indian Agent's annual population count returned a total of 266 Kalapuyans on the reservation: 101 Northern Kalapuyans, 134 Central Kalapuyans, and perhaps 31 Southern Kalapuyans (Yoncalla).²² As a result, the indigenous sources related to the contact era Kalapuyans include a limited number of linguistic and ethnographic texts recorded by anthropologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These sources are narrow in focus, because the small number of informants had a circumscribed knowledge of pre-reservation Kalapuyan life, and they represented the last speakers of the Kalapuyan languages.²³ Other historical sources comprise occasional references to

²¹ For an overview of the Grand Ronde Reservation community and its history, see Henry Zenk, "Chinook Jargon and Native Cultural Persistence in the Grand Ronde Indian Community, 1856-1907," (Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 1984). Zenk demonstrates that Chinook Jargon (also known as chinuk wawa) became the primary indigenous language on the reservation as other tribal languages gradually died out.

²² The Grand Ronde Indian Agent's 1877 count as cited in Zenk, "Chinook," 96. Zenk notes inconsistencies in the treaty and reservation records with regard to Kalapuyan ethnic groupings. Thus, the tally for the Yoncalla remains speculative.

²³ Melville Jacobs published a bilingual edition of the ethnographic texts, see Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*. These include transcriptions of oral interviews conducted by Albert S. Gatschet (1877), Leo J. Frachtenberg (1914), and Melville Jacobs (1928-1936). Among the three collections, the Santiam and Tualatin groups are the best represented.

Kalapuyans found in the records of fur traders and early pioneers and missionaries. No general ethnographic accounts from the period (such as those left by Methodist missionary Henry Perkins on the Wasco Upper Chinookans) have yet surfaced.²⁴ Additionally, the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde were terminated by Congress in 1954 and their reservation lands liquidated. They did not regain federal recognition until 1983, and restored reservation lands until 1988.

In the early colonial period of the Pacific Northwest, Indian peoples, fur trade laborers and their families were at a distinct disadvantage in having their experiences recorded. They themselves were almost entirely illiterate, and Americans chronicling the resettlement of the Pacific Northwest were not particularly interested in writing about these groups in any substantive manner. Hence, both scholars and popular historians working in Pacific Northwest history long relied on written sources left by the Anglo-American and Anglo-Canadian fur trade officers, explorers, and pioneers. The lack of proficiency in French and the long-standing separation between the fields of anthropology and history only reinforced the reliance on Anglo-American sources. The historiography of the Pacific Northwest, especially that of the early colonial period, was thus in lockstep with trends in American West history, trends that came under attack in the latter half of the twentieth century.²⁵

Building on the work of scholars who came into prominence following World War II, such as Earl Pomeroy and Henry Nash Smith, and on the emerging scholarship in fields such

²⁴ Henry Perkins' documentation on the Wasco is one of the best sources of ethnographic information on a Native group in the Pacific Northwest during the pre-reservation period. See Robert Boyd, *Peoples of the Dalles: The Indians of Wascopam Mission, A Historical Ethnography Based on the Papers of the Methodist Missionaries* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

²⁵ Earl Pomeroy, "Towards a Reorientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment," *MVHR* 41: 4 (1955): 579-600; Wilbur R. Jacobs, "The Indian and the Frontier in American History—A Need for Revision," *WHQ* 4:1 (January 1973): 43-56.

as social history, ethnohistory, feminist and ethnic studies, and American Indian history, several Western historians called for a "New Western History" in the 1980s. They were particularly concerned about reconceptualizing western history as a counterpoint to Turner's influential "frontier thesis," which stressed the central role of westward expansion (the frontier) in shaping Anglo-American "civilization." Echoing contemporary debates about American historiography, this generation of historians sought a reinterpretation of the American West that would challenge the triumphalist, Anglo-centric narratives that were predominant through most of the twentieth century. This New Western History would unearth the historical experiences of the various peoples and communities in the face of an Anglo-American conquest, demonstrating the multi-ethnic, multi-layered nature of colonization in the American West.²⁶ For the past several decades scholars have debated the merits and "newness" of this "New Western History," while generally answering the call for more complex monographs and sub-regional narratives. The depth and breadth of the field have increased, though historians continue to grapple with the problem of narrative synthesis, which remains a central question in American historiography.²⁷

The dynamism of Pacific Northwest historiography has been somewhat muted in comparison to the larger field of Western history. Indeed, as I have noted elsewhere, the Northwestern borderlands have not received the same attention from historians as the

²⁶ Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987); Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner, and Charles E. Rankin, *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1999); and Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own;" A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991). Two volumes that attempt to balance new regional narratives with the strengths of previous interpretations include Clyde A. Milner, Carol A. O'Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss, *The Oxford History of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

²⁷ Thomas Bender, "Wholes and Parts: The Need for Narrative Synthesis in American History," *JAH* 73 (1986): 120-36; and Thomas Bender, "Strategies of Narrative Synthesis in American History," *AHR* 107:1 (February 2002): 129-153.

Southwestern borderlands.²⁸ The first new regional history in over twenty years, Carlos A. Schwantes's *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History*, was originally published in 1989 and revised in 1996. Susan Armitage has argued persuasively in her extended essay on Schwantes's textbook that he should be commended for attempting to construct a new vision of the Pacific Northwest—his emphasis being on the various processes leading to the cultural, economic, and political incorporation of this geographic hinterland into the United States. She notes, however, that his text suffers from several of the structural and analytical weaknesses that have long plagued Pacific Northwest. A facile reliance on current political boundaries encourages readers to view historical developments as an *inevitable* rather than a *contingent* story of Anglo-American dominance. Additionally, although Schwantes endeavored to write a more inclusive regional history, his narrative too often portrays Anglo-American males as the central historical actors and women and other ethnic groups as secondary characters. Armitage also criticizes Schwantes for not delving deeper into the Indian perspective, and for avoiding what she perceives as the generally conflictual nature of Pacific Northwest history (thus echoing the more somber tone of Patricia Nelson Limerick's *The Legacy of Conquest*).²⁹

While the current regional textbook might not meet all the high hopes for a New Western History that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, a number of monographs published in recent years have shed light on the indigenous societies at contact and Native-European relations in the Pacific Northwest during the early contact period. The works of Robert Boyd,

²⁸ Melinda Marie Jetté, Review of *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West*, *Social History/Histoire sociale* 23:65 (May 2000), 206-209; Ken S. Coates, "Border Crossings: Patterns and Processes along the Canada-United States Boundary West of the Rockies," in *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies*, edited by John M. Findlay and Ken S. Coates (Seattle and Montreal: University of Washington Press and McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 4.

²⁹ Armitage, 34-42.

Larry Cebula, Nathan Douthit, Alexandra Harmon, Donald Leland, James Rhonda, and Elizabeth Vibert have grappled with the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of colonialism, intent on giving a larger voice to Indian peoples who were the objects of this process.³⁰ The Willamette Valley itself came to play a pivotal role in this process as the destination of the Oregon Trail emigrants, the much-touted empty, Edenic landscape awaiting American colonization. Despite the modest gains in the literature on the early colonial period over the previous decades, the history of intercultural relations in the Willamette Valley has yet to be explored from a scholarly perspective. The present study addresses this salient oversight by focusing on the French Prairie district in the valley. French-Indian families, whose members had seasonally lived in the valley throughout the 1810s and 1820s, began to settle permanently in French Prairie in the late 1820s, thereby making it the first non-Kalapuyan community in the valley.³¹

By examining the complex socio-economic and cultural dynamics that shaped intercultural relations in French Prairie during the early colonial period (1812—1844), this study documents both the continuities and changes marking the first thirty years of

³⁰ Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Disease and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999) and *People of the Dalles: The Indians of Wascopam Mission* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996); Larry Cebula, *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003); Nathan Douthit, *Uncertain Encounters: Indians and Whites at War and Peace in Southern Oregon* (Corvallis: Oregon States University Press, 2002); Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Leland, *Aboriginal Slavery*; James Rhonda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press); Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders' Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).

³¹ Harvey McKay published a popular local history of Champoege and St. Paul, which included historical sketches of prominent settler families. Based on interviews with elderly residents, it evinces the French-Indian character of the early settlement: *St. Paul Oregon, 1830-1890* (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1980). John Hussey produced a study of the political history of Champoege in order to clarify its merit as a state historical site: J.A. Hussey, *Champoege: Place of Transition, A Disputed History* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society/Oregon State Highway Commission, 1967). Two unpublished dissertations examine aspects of French Prairie history as they relate to broader themes of gender, racial ideologies, education, and childhood: Juliet T. Pollard, "The Making of the Metis in the Pacific Northwest: Race, Class, and Gender" (Ph.D diss., University of British Columbia, 1990); Mary S. Wright, "The Circle Broken: Gender, Family, and Difference in the Pacific Northwest, 1811-1850" (Ph.D diss., Rutgers University, 1996).

intercultural relations. After the Oregon Trail migration of 1843 (also known as the Great Migration), Anglo-Americans gained a demographic superiority in the Willamette Valley, and achieved official political dominance with the signing of the Oregon Treaty of 1846. Prior to the mid 1840s, however, the American missionaries and settlers were just one of several ethnic groups in Oregon. This examination of intercultural relations in the decades preceding large-scale American resettlement, recounted in a narrative format, reveals a complex set of relationships between the nascent French-Indian community, the indigenous Kalapuyans, and later American settlers. These relationships were shaped by a host of factors: ancient indigenous trade networks of the Columbia-Willamette region, the centuries-old North American fur trade, the French Canadian diaspora, competing visions of global commerce and national conquest, Christian missionary zeal, Native and Euro-American cultural values, and the ordinary interests of Natives, French-Indian families, and American settlers.

This view of an early colonial society marked by cross-cultural negotiations rests upon an interpretive framework that has developed in North American scholarship over the past several decades. A comparative approach relying on both Canadian and American research not only enhances this study from a theoretical standpoint, but also challenges long-standing nationalist viewpoints on the history of the Northwest Coast prior to the Oregon Treaty of 1846. Since the late 1960s, Canadian and American scholars have investigated the dynamics and consequences of European colonialism from the perspectives of fur trade history, Native history, ethnohistory, social history, and cultural history. By focusing on the factors shaping Native-European relations, and the responses of various communities and individuals to colonialization, these studies have illustrated the uneven linkages between

power, economic interest, local cultures, ethnic identity, and social change.³² The literature on interethnic families and communities has been particularly noteworthy in challenging simplistic, dismissive notions about individuals once referred to as “half-breeds” and “mixed-bloods.”³³

Although Canadian scholars working in the first half of the twentieth century did not use the word “power” in their work on Native-newcomer relations, they did introduce the idea that aboriginal peoples influenced the economic and cultural exchanges involved in European colonialism. Following in the wake of Harold Innis and Thomas McIlwraith, Alfred Bailey proposed that intercultural contact must be viewed in terms of indigenous history and culture—not simply in the context of European culture and economic expansion. In later decades, both Bruce Trigger and Arthur H. Ray further developed this view. Trigger insisted that the tendency to minimize the long-standing relationships between Europeans and Indian groups not only distorted Canadian history, but also overlooked the complex relations between different European groups, such as illiterate French Canadians and colonial elites. In his study of Native groups of the Canadian sub-arctic, Ray found that these groups were able to sustain relative economic independence over two centuries as a result of overlapping economic systems that relied heavily on the regional ecology and geography.³⁴

³² For an overview of developments in Canadian Native history that draws on earlier studies, see Keith Thor Carlson, Melinda Marie Jetté, and Kenichi Matsui, “Major Writings in Aboriginal History, 1990-1999,” *CHR* 82:1 (March 2001): 122-171.

³³ For an introduction to the literature on the Métis in Canada, see Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, eds., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985). Three recent studies on the American context include Tanis Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (Columbia: University of Columbia Press, 1994); Theda Purdue, *“Mixed Blood” Indians: Racial Reconstruction in the Early South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002); Susan Sleep-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounters in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

³⁴ Alfred Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Alongkian Cultures, 1504-1700* (1934; rpt; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969); Arthur H. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson’s Bay, 1660-1870*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto

Early studies in Canadian ethnohistory thus demonstrated that the balance of power in Native-newcomer relations during the early colonial periods was not so exclusively weighted in favor European interests. Euro-American and Natives societies were relatively evenly matched so long as the Euro-Americans remained at a disadvantage demographically, economically, and militarily. Although Richard White does not mention scholarly predecessors to his well-known work, *The Middle Ground*, his thesis of a "middle ground" in the Great Lakes during the early colonial periods echoes the work of Canadian researchers. White's "middle ground" illustrates the socio-economic relationships and cultural practices that allowed Euro-Americans and Indians to find a relative means of accommodation over several generations. Euro-Americans were not in a position to dominate the indigenous population until after the War of 1812, but rather required their assistance "as allies, as partners in exchange, as sexual partners, as friendly neighbors."³⁵ Once Euro-Americans gained an upper hand in a region, they sought to dictate the terms of intercultural relations. The shift in power relations ultimately resulted from large-scale Euro-American migration and the territorial expansion of the United States and Canada. Facing these juggernaut forces, Native societies were less equipped to fend off the effects of disease, loss of control over natural resources, structural economic change, and social dislocation.

I would argue that similar forces were at play in the Willamette Valley during the first half of the nineteenth century. Mercantile capitalism in the form of the overland fur trade gave rise to the French-Indian settlement in French Prairie while Americans supporting westward expansion advocated various schemes of economic, religious, and military

Press, 1998); Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's Heroic Age Reconsidered* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985).

³⁵ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, in the Great Lakes Region, 1615-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), x.

intervention in the Oregon Country. Given the scholarship on Euro-American colonization and intercultural relations, it is important to consider how French Prairie compares with other contact zones in North America. As in other regions, both the indigenous Kalapuyans and the French-Indian settlers proved themselves able to adapt long-standing aboriginal trade and kinship practices to changing economic circumstances. While the Kalapuyans did not have the economic clout of the Chinookan peoples who controlled the Columbia River, nor the advantages of the equestrian cultures of the Plateau peoples, the Willamette Valley peoples demonstrated a willingness to engage in both local and regional resistance against the newcomers until some accommodation could be reached. On the other hand, the Willamette Valley was unique in several respects. The catastrophic decline of the Kalapuyan population due to “intermittent fever” (malaria) in the 1830s—just twenty years after the first direct contact with Euro-Americans—played a pivotal role in shaping fanciful notions of an untouched idyllic landscape in Oregon. The “Oregon Fever” that resulted, together with social and economic conditions in the Midwest, led to the massive migration of American settlers into the valley in the mid 1840s. By the late 1850s, nearly all of the surviving Indian groups of western Oregon were confined on reservations under military guard (the Grand Ronde Reservation counting several French-Indian families from French Prairie on its census rolls). Thus, in comparison with other contact zones such as the Canadian prairies and the Great Lakes region, the early colonial period in the Willamette Valley was compressed into a much shorter time span.

Although the French Prairie settlers labored under colonial forces similar to those in other regions, it was this compression of the early colonial period combined with the juggernaut of American migration in the 1840s that ultimately influenced the ethnic identity

of their descendants.³⁶ Over the past decades, Canadian scholars have studied the connections between intermarriage, Native women's roles in the fur trade, interethnic community formation, and the rise of a Métis national ethnic identity in Canada. Their research suggests that although mixed race populations developed in every contact situation (also known as *métissage*), the emergence of a separate Métis ethnic identity in selective regions in Canada was the result of specific historical circumstances.³⁷ As identified by Dickason, keys component in the process of a Métis ethnogenesis included isolation of the bi-cultural groups from Native and European relations, a markedly slow pace of Euro-American settlement, and "the enduring importance of the fur trade."³⁸

Research on the development of a Métis consciousness within the United States is less persuasive. Jacqueline Peterson has argued that a distinctive Métis culture developed in the Great Lakes region over the period from 1680-1830. Peterson links the viability of this Métis identity to the fur trade such that when the fur trade waned, the Métis communities ostensibly declined as well.³⁹ Although cognizant of the historic presence of bi-cultural communities in the interior regions dating from the French period, others have rightly questioned Peterson's central thesis.

More convincing than Peterson is the work of Tanis Thorne and Susan Sleeper-Smith, which re-affirm Dickason's conclusions. In Thorne's work on the French and Indian peoples

³⁶For a discussion of the various stages of Euro-American colonization on the regional level, see Gray H. Whaley, "Creating Oregon from *Illahée*: Race: Settler-Colonialism, and Native Sovereignty in Western Oregon, 1792-1856," (Ph.D diss., University of Oregon, 2002).

³⁷Olive Patricia Dickason, "From 'One Nation' in the Northeast to 'New Nation' in the Northwest: A Look at the Emergence of the Métis," in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, eds., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 19-36; Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties, Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980).

³⁸ Dickason, 30.

³⁹ Jacqueline Peterson, "The People in Between: Indian-White Marriage and the Genesis of a Métis Culture and Society in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1830," (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois Chicago Circle, 1981).

of the Lower Missouri from 1750 to 1880, she found that people of bi-cultural ancestry “may have shared a collective identity as members of a community, but not necessarily a nationalistic identity as a ‘new people.’”⁴⁰ Similarly, Sleeper-Smith’s research on the western Great Lakes illustrates the long persistence of ethnic French-Indian families from the late seventeenth century through the late nineteenth century. This persistence of bi-cultural families was due in large part to the role of Native women in incorporating French Canadian men into their indigenous communities and in acting as cultural mediators in the fur trade. Following the transition to a settler society and the Indian reservation system, bi-cultural families and individuals made varying decisions regarding their ethnic identity, some purposefully distancing themselves from their Indian heritage, others taking an opposite route.⁴¹

With regard to methodological concerns, the experience of the French Prairie settlers parallels that of the interethnic communities in the Great Lakes and the Lower Missouri. There is little evidence to suggest the development of separate Métis ethnic identity in the Willamette Valley over the relatively short early colonial period. Especially significant is the demographic factor, the French-Indian population, roughly 75-100 families at its largest in the late 1840s, remained relatively small in comparison to the thousands of American settlers who came to Oregon during the same period. For this reason, I have elected to use the term “French-Indian” when referring to the bi-cultural families and individuals who settled in the Willamette Valley. I employ more specific terms such as “French-Algonquin” when more information is available on individual historical figures. Following previous researchers, I occasionally use the French term *métis* when referring to people of French Canadian and

⁴⁰ Thorne, 12.

⁴¹ Sleeper-Smith, 1-9.

Native ancestry. I use this approach in order to avoid any confusion with the Métis peoples of Canada who retain a distinctive national ethnic identity.⁴²

In order to overcome the problem of limited documentation on the French Prairie settlers, I have undertaken an in-depth analysis of all the relevant sources of the period that might contain even the briefest references to the Kalapuyans and the French-Indian families. This survey led me to discover references not previously utilized in standard historical texts. I have also mined all the available French-language sources recorded by the first generation of French Canadian missionaries to Oregon. The bulk of these sources are the letters and reports of Father Francis Norbert Blanchet, who later became the first Catholic archbishop in Oregon. The *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest*, a life-long project of the late Harriet Munnick, have also provided key factual information on the Kalapuyans and the French-Indian families.

The end result is a narrative history that presents a largely collective portrait, one more suggestive than definitive. The names of individual French Canadian men occasionally come to the fore, the names of individual Indian men and women less so. This qualitative portrait of intercultural relations between the French-Indian settlers and their Kalapuyan and American neighbors presents a more complex view of early colonial society in Oregon than previously seen in the scholarship. Although beyond the scope of the present study, additional avenues of research that might offer a fuller view of the period would include comprehensive statistical analyses of church registers and census records, land claim records created under the Oregon Provisional Government (1844—1849), and the account books of the various fur trade companies that operated in Oregon.

⁴² Peterson and Brown, *The New Peoples*, 1-8; Thorne, 12.

This study covers the period from the initial date of direct contact between Kalapuyans and Euro-Americans in the spring of 1812 through the inception of the Oregon Provisional Government in 1843. Its structure is dictated by the availability of sources, and the pace of recorded events on the ground. Chapter One examines the landscape and ecology of the Willamette Valley, as were as the society and culture of the Kalapuyans on the eve of direct contact with Euro-Americans (1700s-1812). Although Meriwether Lewis and William Clark did not venture into the valley above Willamette Falls in 1805-06, the Kalapuyans had some degree of indirect contact with Euro-American culture as a result of the maritime fur trade and the aboriginal networks of the Columbia-Willamette region. Chapter Two, examines the first years of Native-newcomer relations in the Willamette Valley under the trapping, and trading expeditions of the Pacific Fur Company and the Northwest Company (1812-1822).

Chapter Three, chronicles the initial agrarian settlement by several French-Indian families and the devastating effects of the "intermittent fever" (malaria) on the Kalapuyans during this earlier settlement period. (1823-1833). Chapter Four demonstrates the community initiatives that bound the French-Indian families to the initial wave of American Methodist missionaries to Oregon (1834-1837), further marginalizing the Kalapuyans. Chapter Five follows the establishment of the first Catholic mission in the Willamette Valley, and with a strong bi-cultural French community and Catholic religion, the rise of sectarian tensions between American Protestant and Canadian Catholic missionaries (1838-1840). The final chapter explores the final years of a heterogeneous colonial society fuelled by a growing, confident, and dynamic French-Indian community on the eve of the mass migration of American settlers to the Willamette Valley via the Oregon Trail, beginning in 1843 (1841-

1843). The dominance of the new Anglo-American settlers was assured by the Treaty of Oregon of 1846.

Notwithstanding the powerful force of Oregon's founding mythology, the Willamette Valley was not an empty Eden awaiting settlement by hardy American pioneers. Rather, it was one of the early sites of extensive and continuous intercultural contact. Although various tensions developed following the influx of non-Kalapuyans in to the Willamette Valley, such conflicts were not irresolvable as demonstrated by the actions of the French-Indian families and their Kalapuyan and American neighbors. From this perspective, Saint Amant's image of French Prairie as a "hearth of the crossed races" can be re-evaluated as an alternative vision of early Oregon history. Rather than erasing the complexity of intercultural relations, we might conceive of French Prairie as another type of hearth: a gathering place where people of differing ethnicities—sometimes bound by common interests, sometimes in conflict over those same interests—attempted to ford the cultural divide. This then, was an "Oregon Story," that preceded the great Oregon Trail migrations.

CHAPTER ONE
 “THE COUNTRY THEY INHABITED WAS LEVEL
 AND WHOLY DESTITUTE OF TIMBER”:
 THE KALAPUYANS’ WORLD, 1700s to 1812

He informed that the Cush-hooks and Char-cow-ah nations who reside at the falls of that river are not numerous; but that the Cal-lâh-po-e-wah nation who inhabited both side of this river above the falls as far as it was known to his nation or himself were very numerous. That the country they inhabited was level and wholly [sic] destitute of timber. That a high range of mountains passed the Multnomah river at the falls, on the upperside of which the country was one vast plain. The nations who inhabit this country reside on the river and subsist like those of the Columbia on fish and roots principally.¹

On March 23, 1806, the Corps of Discovery, commonly known as the Lewis and Clark Expedition, departed their winter headquarters at Fort Clatsop on the Pacific Coast for their return trip to the United States. The first week of April, they reached the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, having missed sighting the Willamette on their outward voyage in November 1805. Captain William Clark thereupon led a small detachment to explore the area. The party proceeded to visit several Upper Chinookan villages in the vicinity of the lower Willamette watershed. On April 2, the travelers visited a village identified by Clark as “Nechecole” (*ni-cáq^wli*), located at the site of present-day Blue Lake Park. There Clark inquired about the Native groups to the south. An elderly man, perhaps a village headman, gave Clark a concise description of the Willamette Valley and its inhabitants, including the Kalapuyans who lived in the valley’s large upper region.

¹ Moulton, Gary, E., ed., *The Journals of Lewis & Clark*, vol. 7, *From the Pacific to the Rockies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 86.

Although the American exploring party did not ascend the Willamette River as far as the falls, Clark's discussions with villagers in the lower watershed piqued the curiosity of the expedition leaders. Captain Lewis noted in his journal that he had "but little doubt that this river waters a vast tract of country lying between the Western mountains and the mountainous country of the sea coast extending as far south as the waters of the gulph of California."² Lewis' speculative geography, gleaned from the local Chinookans, was somewhat off the mark, but his belief about a tract of land between the Cascades and the Coast Range was correct. Some forty years later, the Willamette Valley would become the destination of choice for many Americans wishing to re-settle the Far West after a long, arduous trek along the Oregon Trail.

Due to the Willamette Valley's rich natural resources, it was an important site of Native-European interactions during the decades preceding large-scale American settlement. The succeeding chapter sets the stage for these later encounters by examining the landscape and ecology of the Willamette Valley in the pre-contact era, the ways in which the Kalapuyans themselves interacted with their environment, and the social changes that marked the initial period of contact between Natives and newcomers in the lower Columbia region (1790s-1810).

Since the Kalapuyans inhabited western Oregon's largest inland river valley, a place marked by a temperate climate, they were distinctive hunter-gathers in comparison to other groups on the Northwest Coast. Their economy was based on the seasonal exploitation of many local resources (plants, roots, wild game, fowl, and aquatic life). Though not a salmon-based culture like their Chinookan neighbors to the north, the Kalapuyans were linked by geography, kinship, trade, and cultural affiliation to the lower Columbia River region—and

² Moulton, 83.

to a lesser degree to the Plateau cultures east of the Cascade Mountains. The Kalapuyans did not experience direct contact with Euro-Americans until 1812, yet the far-reaching consequences of Euro-American expansionism began to have an impact on the lower Columbia region in the 1700s. European goods arrived in the region via long-standing aboriginal trade networks, and then in the 1790s, the Chinookan peoples of the Columbia River estuary encountered British and American maritime-based fur traders for the first time. The ensuing twenty years brought various social changes to the lower Columbia. One of the most salient was the emergence of the Chinook-proper as middlemen in the maritime fur trade and their subsequent rise to regional dominance. For the Kalapuyans of the Willamette Valley, these regional developments likely exposed them to both the benefits and disadvantages of Euro-American expansion experienced by similar hinterland groups, such access to trade goods and additional prestige goods, as well as the possibility of increased slave raids.

Landscape and Ecology

The Willamette Valley, homeland of the pre-contact Kalapuyan peoples, is the largest valley in western Oregon. It lies between the Coast Range to the west and the Cascade Mountains to the east. The valley is roughly 110 miles (160 km) long from the Columbia River in the north to the convergence of the two mountains ranges in the south near Cottage Grove. It varies in width from 20 to 30 miles (30-50 km), and covers approximately 3,500 square miles (9100 square km). At several locations, minor hill chains (e.g. Eola Hills,

Waldo Hills) rise several hundred feet above a valley floor marked by relatively low relief, especially in the upper-most section south of Corvallis.³

Flowing north, the Willamette River is a major tributary of the Columbia River. Unlike the Columbia west of the Cascade Range, the Willamette slowly meanders its way back and forth over a broad alluvial floodplain, fed by numerous smaller tributaries, streams, and wetlands.⁴ The Willamette River Basin comprises roughly 11,500 square miles (29,800 square km). In the early nineteenth century, the river was characterized by an extensive, multiple channel flow, whereas today the river tends to follow a smaller, single channel.⁵ The valley soils include gravel and sand, significant sections of adobe clay, and large sections of silts and alluvium, which, though lacking significant lime deposits, are rich in humus.⁶ The central feature separating the lower Willamette Valley from the upper Willamette Valley is the large lava sill, forming the Willamette Falls (at present-day Oregon City). In the early contact era, the falls were apparently a territorial marker separating the Kalapuyan lands from the territory of the Chinookan peoples who occupied the lower Willamette Valley. This territorial separation was likely related to the differing economies of the two groups, the

³ Ewart M. Baldwin, Elizabeth L. Orr, William N. Orr, *Geology of Oregon*, 4th ed. (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1992); Patricia A. Benner and James R. Sedell, "Upper Willamette River Landscape: A Historical Perspective," in *River Quality: Dynamics and Restoration*, edited by Antonius Laenen and David A. Dunnette (New York: CRC Publishers, 1997), 23-49; Samuel N. Dickens, "Western Oregon and Washington," in *The Pacific Northwest: An Overall Appreciation*, ed. Otis W. Freeman and Howard H. Martin, 2nd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1954), 54-64; Jerry F. Franklin and C.T. Dryness, *Natural Vegetation of Oregon and Washington* (Portland: U.S. Forest Service, 1973; rpt, Corvallis: Oregon State University 1988); John A. Hussey, *Champoeg: Place of Transition, A Disputed History* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society/Oregon State Highway Commission), 1; William G. Loy, Stuart Allan, Aileen R. Buckley, and James E. Meacham, *Atlas of Oregon*, 2nd ed. (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 2001)

⁴ "Willamette" is derived from the name of an Upper Chinookan village *wálamt*, originally located on the west shore of the Willamette River, across from Oregon City. See Michael Silverstein, "Chinookans of the Lower Columbia," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 7, *Northwest Coast*, edited by Wayne Suttles (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 534.

⁵ Benner and Sedell, "Upper," 24.

⁶ M.E. Peck, *A Manual of the Higher Plants of Oregon* (Portland: Binford & Morts, 1941), cited in James R. Habeck, "The Original Vegetation of the Mid-Willamette Valley, Oregon," *Northwest Science* 35:2 (May 1961), 66.

Chinookans exploiting the large salmon runs at the falls while the Kalapuyans focused their attentions on the choice gathering country above the falls.⁷

The Willamette Valley's proximity to the Pacific Coast and its location midway between the equator and the North Pole affords it a relatively mild climate. To the north lies the region of the stormy and cool North Pacific westerlies, and to the south the warm, stable air of the subtropics. In the crucible between these two atmospheric systems, the valley receives wet winters and dry summers. The often remarked climatic feature is the annual rainfall, between 195-400 mm (30-60 inches) per year in the valley, and double that figure in the mountains: 645-1300 mm (100-200 inches) in the Coast Range, and 515-775 mm (80-120 inches) in the Cascades.⁸ There is a relatively minor seasonal temperature range variation compared with the more extreme conditions east of the Cascade Mountains, due to the westerly flow of marine air. Studies in historical climatology have shown that a cooler, wetter climate emerged in the Pacific Northwest 4000 years before the present (B.P.), lasting until the mid-nineteenth century, when temperatures began a slow rise in the Pacific Northwest as elsewhere around the globe.⁹ Late twentieth-century monthly means for the Willamette Valley were a January low of 2-4⁰ Celsius (the upper 30s Fahrenheit) and a July high of 18-20⁰ C (the upper 60s F).¹⁰

⁷ I would like to thank Henry Zenk for bringing this point to my attention.

⁸ William A. Bowen. *Migration and Settlement on the Oregon Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 6; George H. Taylor and Raymond R. Hatton, *The Oregon Weather Book* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1999), 8.

⁹ Henry Hansen, *Postglacial Forest Succession, Climate and Chronology in the Pacific Northwest*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series 37:1 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1947), 114-115, 120; Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History, 1300-1850* (New York: Basic Books), 194-205.

¹⁰ Bowen, 6-7; Rick Minor, Stephen Dow Beckham, Phyllis E. Lancefield-Stevens, and Kathryn Anne Toepel. *Cultural Resources Overview of BLM Lands in Northwestern Oregon: Archeology, Ethnography, and History*, edited by C. Melvin Aikens. (Eugene: University of Oregon Department of Anthropology), 11.

Due to heavy rainfall and mild temperatures, the Willamette Valley has long had a large and diverse biomass. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the upper section of valley was comprised of several microenvironments, or ecological niches.¹¹ The largest of these was the oak savannah-woodlands complex, which consisted of wet lowland prairies, dryer upland prairies, oak openings, and occasional oak forests. Two types of perennial grasses dominated the prairies (*Festuca rubra* and *Deschampsia cespitosa*). Additional natural vegetation included several shrub species such as hazel (*Corylus californica*), Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa*), rose (*rosa* sp.), and ninebark (*Physocarpus capitatus*). In the oak openings and oak forests, Oregon white oak (*Physocarpus capitatus*) was the prevailing species. Douglas fir, (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), alder (*Alnus rubra* Bong.), and laurel (*Umbellularia californica*) were also present as isolated trees or in scattered groups. Understory plants included a collection of grasses, forbs, shrubs, ferns, and berries.

A second microenvironment was the wetland, including marshes, sloughs and swales, and larger inland bodies such as Lake Labish and Wapato Lake (both now drained), all created as a result of low elevations, high water tables, and seasonal flooding. These wetlands were home to the wapato (*Sagittaria latifolia*), a bulbous marsh herb, while the wet lowland prairies were home to the bulbous camas lily (*Camassia quamash*).¹² A third microenvironment consisted of the gallery forests located along the Willamette's tributaries and streams. The bottomland timber included Oregon white ash (*Fraxinus oregana*), big leaf

¹¹ Habeck, 65-77; Robert Boyd, "Strategies of Indian Burning in the Willamette Valley," in *Indian, Fire, and the Land in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Robert Boyd (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1999): 94-98; Franklin, *The Natural Vegetation*, 110-129; Carl L. Johannessen, et al., "The Vegetation of the Willamette Valley," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 61:2 (June 1971): 286-303; Jerry Towle, "Changing Geography of Willamette Valley Woodlands," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 83:1 (Spring 1983): 66-87. Boyd suggests the three valley microenvironments outlined here.

¹² Boyd, *Strategies*, 95-97; B. Jennifer Guard, *Wetland Plants of Oregon and Washington* (Vancouver, B.C.: Lone Pine Publishing, 1995); Jim Pojar and Andy MacKinnon, eds, *Plants of the Pacific Northwest: Washington, Oregon, British Columbia, and Alaska* (Vancouver, B.C.: B.C. Ministry of Forests & Lone Pine Publishing, 1994).

maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*), western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and Douglas fir. Secondary species were oak, laurel, alder, cherry (*Prunus emarginata*), and willow (*Salix* sp.). Salmonberry (*Rubus Spectabilis*), red elderberry, (*Sambucus Racemosa*), hardhack (*Spiraea douglasii*), ninebark, cascara, rose, and Oregon Grape were amongst the understory vegetation in these bottomland areas.¹³ A final ecological niche was the coniferous forest of the foothills and mountains of the Coast Range and Cascades Mountains. Due to the higher elevations, Douglas fir was the prevailing arbor species, alongside the secondary presence of big-leaf maple, hemlock, dogwood, vine maple, oak, laurel, and cedar. Understory plants included various berries, and the Oregon grape.

The ecology of the upper Willamette Valley circa 1800 was not the primeval natural phenomenon, as it was often portrayed in the Euro-American travel literature of the early nineteenth century. In fact, the Willamette Valley's oak savannah-woodlands complex was a managed landscape, developed through the use of fire by the valley's indigenous peoples and their ancient ancestors.¹⁴ Over the centuries, the Kalapuyans created a society and economy that was built upon an astute combination of human savoir-faire, an extensive knowledge of botany, ecology, and climate, and a subsistence way of life that made maximal use of these natural and human resources. The mythology and cosmology of the Kalapuyans played an essential role in knitting these intellectual skills and material culture into a coherent worldview.

¹³Boyd, "Strategies," 95-97; Stephen Dow Beckham, *The Indians of Western Oregon: This Land Was Theirs* (Coos Bay, OR: Arago Press, 1977), 33.

¹⁴ Johannessen, 286 & 292.

The Pre-Contact Kalapuyans

Due to the limited scope of the secondary literature on the Kalapuyans, any study of the Willamette Valley's indigenous inhabitants during the pre-contact period (1700s-1812) is best viewed as speculative. This literature, a legacy of salvage ethnography, consists of several MA theses in anthropology, essays from early ethnographic works, and a series of scholarly articles. In these works, anthropologists have focused on a number of specialized topics related to the pre-reservation period, including ethnobiology, ethnolinguistics, cultural affiliation, land tenure, subsistence patterns, and landscape management.¹⁵ Archeologists have produced studies on questions related to Kalapuyan material culture and long-term human habitation in the Willamette Valley.¹⁶ While these works have provided crucial information on the contact-era Kalapuyans, they have not been followed by comprehensive ethnohistorical studies owing to the later history of the Kalapuyans as noted in the introduction.¹⁷

Anthropologists have recognized the term "Kalapuyan" as a general ethnic identifier for the culturally and linguistically related groups who originally inhabited the Willamette

¹⁵ Boyd, "Strategies;" Lloyd R. Collins, "The Cultural Position of the Kalapuya in the Pacific Northwest," (MA thesis, University of Oregon, 1951); Yvonne Hajda, "Mary's River Kalapuyan: A Descriptive Phonology," MA thesis, Portland State University, 1976); Melville Jacobs, ed. *Kalapuya Texts, University of Washington Publications in Anthropology*, vol. 11 (Seattle: University of Washington, 1945); Henry Zenk, "Contributions to Tualatin Ethnography: Subsistence and Ethnobiology," (MA thesis, Portland State University, 1976); Henry Zenk, "Tualatin Kalapuyan Villages: The Ethnographic Record," in *Contributions to the Archaeology of Oregon*, edited by Paul W. Baxter (Portland: Association of Oregon Archeologists, 1994), 146-165.

¹⁶ C. Melvin Aikens, *Archeology of Oregon* (Portland: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1993); C. Melvin Aikens, *Archeological Studies in the Willamette Valley, Oregon* (Eugene: University of Oregon Department of Anthropology, 1976).

¹⁷ There are several general studies on the history and culture of the Indians of western Oregon, including the Kalapuyans. These volumes are based on the anthropological studies and historical sources. See Stephen Dow Beckham, *The Indians*; Carolyn M. Buan and Richard Lewis, eds., *The First Oregonians* (Portland: Oregon Council for the Humanities, 1991); Rick Minor, et al., *Cultural Resources*; Jeff Zucker, Kay Hummel, Bob Høgfoss, *Oregon Indians: Culture, History, and Current Affairs* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1983).

Valley above Willamette Falls (Oregon City).¹⁸ Michael Silverstein (cited by Zenk) observes that the name "Kalapuya" originated as a lower Chinookan term. The root of the Chinookan term *galapúywi* or *k'alapúyw* does not itself appear to be Chinookan.¹⁹ Anthropologists have identified three related language groupings for the Kalapuyans: North, Central, and Southern.²⁰ The Northern language comprised two dialects spoken by the Tualatin and the Yamhill peoples, who lived in the northwestern portions of the Willamette Valley. The Central language encompassed between six to ten mutually intelligible variations on both sides of the river from Willamette Falls to the valley's southern limit (Cottage Grove). The Southern language, which may have included more than one dialect, was the language of the Yoncalla, who lived in the Elk Creek and Calapooya Creek drainages of the Umpqua River basin.²¹ The groups speaking the various dialects of these three languages each occupied a watershed of one of the Willamette River tributaries, or in the case of the Yoncalla, the watersheds of the Umpqua River tributaries.

¹⁸ Laurence C. Thompson and M. Dale Kinkade, "Languages," in *Handbook of the North American Indian*, vol. 7, *Northwest Coast*, edited by Wayne Suttles (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 41; Henry Zenk, "Kalapuyans," in Suttles, *Handbook*, 547-553; Zenk, personal communication, 2002.

¹⁹ Henry Zenk, "Kalapuyans," in *Handbook of North Americans Indians: Volume 7, Northwest Coast*, edited by Wayne Suttles, series editor William C. Sturveant (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 552.

²⁰ Ethnographic data collected in the late nineteenth century, attested to the fact that the Kalapuya had similar customs and lifeways, but distinct languages. See W.W. Oglesby, "The Calapooyas Indians," [circa 1880] H.H. Bancroft Library (Hereafter BL), P-A 82, 6.

²¹ Jacobs, *Kalapuya* Texts, 7; Zenk, "Kalapuyans," 547; Zenk, "Contributions, 2; Beckham, *The Indians*, 38; Collins, 18-19.

Table 1. Kalapuyan Group Divisions

<u>Northern Kalapuyan</u>	<u>Historical Variations</u>	<u>Watershed/Location</u>
Tualatin	Atfalati, Twalaty	Tualatin River
Yamhill	Yamel	Yamhill River
<u>Central Kalapuyan</u>		
Ahantchuyuk	Pudding River, French Prairie	Pudding River
Luckiamute	Alakemayuk	Luckiamute River
Santiam	Ahalpam, halpam	Santiam River
Chepenefa	Mary's River	Mary's River
Chemapho	Muddy Creek	Muddy Creek
Tsankupi		Calapooia River (Brownsville)
Tcanschifin		McKenzie-Willamette Confluence
Mohawk		Mohawk River, McKenzie River
Chelamela	Long Tom	Long Tom River
Winnefelly		Coast Fork – Willamette River
		Middle Fork – Willamette River
<u>Southern Kalapuyan</u>		
Yoncalla	Ayankeld	Elk Creek
		Calapooya Creek

Sources: Beckham, *Indians*; Collins, "Position;" Jacobs, *Kalapuya*; Mackey, *Kalapuyans*; Zenk, "Contributions;" Zenk, "Kalapuyans."

Anthropologists have distinguished at least thirteen group divisions amongst the Kalapuyans, though there may have been upwards of twenty distinct tribes in the pre-contact era (see Table 1, Kalapuyan Group Divisions). Since the historical and ethnographic data on the Kalapuyans is limited, and sometimes contradictory, researchers have struggled to determine the nature of Kalapuyan group boundaries, and the relevancy of the term "tribe." Stephen Beckham has argued that "tribe" does not accurately describe aboriginal socio-political organization in western Oregon prior to Native-Newcomer encounters because the Native peoples of the region lived in societies organized along village lines, with political authority residing primarily with the local headman.²² Henry Zenk's research on the Tualatin Kalapuyan ethnographic texts, both published and unpublished, supports the contention that village leaders were the wealthiest members of the community. He concludes that "it seems unlikely then there was any institutionalized 'tribal' level of chiefly *authority*."²³

²² Beckham, *The Indians*, 45.

²³ Zenk, "Contributions," 16. The italics are the mine.

Zenk has also written about the speculative nature of the Kalapuyan ethnic groupings established by anthropologists, raising the possibility that these designations may be the result of colonial forces, which had caused bands to come together following catastrophic depopulation, and the loss of territory and resources.²⁴ However, he does contend that these names do reflect some measure of the Kalapuyans' pre-contact world. The ethnic identity markers appear consistently in the various Kalapuyan ethnographic texts, markers by which the Kalapuyan informants identified themselves. In addition, the earliest fieldwork notes, which are those collected by Albert S. Gastchet in 1877, document the views of Kalapuyan informants who had achieved adulthood prior to the reservation period. They indicate that the "various Tualatin village groups functioned as a unit at least for certain subsistence purposes."²⁵ Melville Jacobs, the linguist who worked with the last native speakers of some of the Kalapuyan dialects, gleaned from his interviews that:

Each dialect was localized in a cluster of villages situated on some one creek or stream flowing into the Willamette or in some small area near the Willamette. Each village cluster was identified by the natives themselves as a dialect, economic, cultural, political, unit and given a name.²⁶

In Zenk's reading of the ethnographic data, the Kalapuyans did identify "group entities larger than the village group: a number of group names (Tualatin, Yamhill, Santiam, Luckiamute, Yoncalla, and others) designated clusters of dialectically and culturally identical or closely related villages or hamlets."²⁷ The Tualatin are one of the best documented Kalapuyan peoples. Zenk surmises that prior to the population loss of the historic period, the Tualatin lived in between fifteen to twenty winter villages. Although these hamlets were not

²⁴ Zenk, "Contributions," 16.

²⁵ Zenk, "Contributions," 16.

²⁶ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 145.

²⁷ Zenk, "Contributions," 15.

consolidated into a tight tribal political structure, they likely retained a collective identity, based upon the social (including marriage ties), cultural, and economic relations between the villages in the territory.²⁸

This collective identity, which Zenk has called a "dialectal-ethnic entity," apparently did correspond to a socio-political identity.²⁹ From Gaschet's field notes, Zenk surmised that these dialectal-ethnic entities were a "cluster of socially and politically closely interrelated winter-village groups," and each group retained access rights to specific resources in specific locations, and shared access rights to other "productive locales" within their larger common territory.³⁰ Zenk also noted that the Gaschet information points to a firm notion of Tualatin territorial boundaries with regard to "title."³¹ This idea of territorial limits can be found in Tualatin accounts about their relations with the neighboring Yamhill and the Athapaskan-speaking Clatskanie to the north, as well in the treaty negotiations with the remaining Kalapuyan bands in 1851 and 1855.³²

With regard to the historic Kalapuyans, I use the term "tribe" with qualification, referring not to a unified political structure with a tendency toward hierarchical forms of governance, but rather a collective identity grounded in a specific territoriality and a shared local culture, including a common dialect. This notion of a tribal status and ethnic identity extended beyond the local village group to include a multi-village locus:

Thus winter-village groups were perhaps relatively small, with each necessarily having access to a comparatively large territory. Therefore, the loose organization of Kalapuyan local groups into larger dialectal-ethnic units (the specific organizational structure of which is . . . unknown) could have had an adaptational significance: such

²⁸ Zenk, "Contributions," 1-2.

²⁹ Zenk, "Contributions," 46.

³⁰ Zenk, "Contributions," 46.

³¹ Zenk notes that the term "title" originates with George Gibbs, *Tribes of Western Washington and Northwestern Oregon*, vol. 2, *Contributions to North American Ethnology* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1877).

³² Zenk, "Contributions," 2.

a form of organization would have provided a territory large and diverse enough to offer each local group sufficient access to an adequate range of subsistence resources, but at the same time it would have kept population suitably dispersed by preserving the separate existence of small local groups. The treaty territories indicated for the Kalapuyans seem to bear out the possibility that this was an aboriginal pattern: each 'tribe' or 'band' elsewhere documented to have probably been a dialectal-ethnic entity seems to occupy its own valley or basin formed by one of the larger tributaries of the Willamette Valley; each such major valley offered a range of riverine, lowland, and upland types of habitat.³³

Historical and ethnographic sources indicate that "Ahantchuyuk" was the name of the Kalapuyan tribe that lived in the Pudding River watershed, an eastern tributary of the Willamette River. The name literally translated means "the ones belonging behind, away."³⁴ Their territory roughly corresponded with the toponym "French Prairie," which is bounded on the north and west by the Willamette River, the Pudding River on the east, and the marshy Lake Labiche to the south (now drained). Synonyms of the name were "Hanchoiks" and "Hanshoke." Anglo-Americans referred to the Ahantchuyuk as the "Pudding River Indians" or "French Prairie Indians." Although Stephen Beckham identifies two Kalapuyan ethnic groups for the region, Champoeg and Ahantchuyuk, it is also possible that "Champoeg" (which may be based on a Kalapuyan term *campuik*) was the name of an Ahantchuyuk village originally located near the later French-Indian hamlet of Champoeg.³⁵ Champoeg may well have been a local center for the various Kalapuyan tribes. The site was historically a

³³ Zenk, "Contributions," 18.

³⁴ Zenk, "Kalapuyans," 552. The only extant linguistic record in the Ahantchuyuk dialect of the Central Kalapuyan language is a short vocabulary list collected by Albert Gaschet in 1877. Zenk, personal communication, 2002.

³⁵ Beckham, *The Indians*, 36; Zenk's writes: "There was a village somewhere near Champoeg State Park, on the north bank, or possibly both banks, of [the] Willamette River. While this village is mentioned in the Tualatin ethnography material (. . . giving *cámpuick* as the name of a 'town' in the French Prairie area where Indians gathered to dig the root *puicik*), it is not mentioned as having been Tualatin – I thus speculate that it was *hanciyuk* [Ahantchuyuk] unless . . . it represents some undocumented entity" in Zenk, "Contributions," 4. Zenk's 1976 speculation is based on the ethnographic field notes of Albert Gatschet, collected in 1877, and Hussey's analysis of historical documentation from the testimony of American settler, William R. Rees, see Hussey, 17 and note #8, 341. Another hypothesis is that Gatschet's informant may have noted the name of the historical French-Indian town, Champoeg, rather than a contact era Kalapuyan toponym. Zenk, personal communication, 2002.

useful landing for river traffic because of the break in the dense gallery forests, which lined the Willamette River.

The Ahantchuyuk's neighbors included both Kalapuyans and non-Kalapuyans. To the east were the Molala, a Penutian-speaking group, who occupied the foothills and both the western and eastern slopes of the Cascades. To the northeast Upper Chinookan peoples occupied the lower Willamette Valley, beginning with the coveted salmon fishing grounds at Willamette Falls. North and west across the Willamette was Tualatin territory, and due west across the river lived the Yamhill. Due south of the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans was the homeland of another Central Kalapuyan tribe, the Santiam. The territorial boundary between the two Central Kalapuyan groups was north of present-day Salem.³⁶

Kalapuyan Society

In contrast to the hereditary caste system of the Chinookan peoples of the lower Columbia and lower Willamette (in which chiefly, free, and slave status, at least, were inherited), Kalapuyan society was apparently less stratified.³⁷ The Kalapuyans dwelt in ethnically-related, autonomous villages, each with its own headman.³⁸ A headman's position was based on wealth, rather than on heredity. Additional community leaders would include

³⁶ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 86.

³⁷ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 7; Zucker et al., *Oregon Indians*, 54-55. See also Leland Donald. *Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

³⁸ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 186-187. Henry Zenk indicates that there may likely have been a historical shift with American colonization and the push for treaty negotiations in the 1850, which would have required identifiable chiefs to sign treaties with American officials. Zenk writes: "The villages of this [Tualatin] and other Kalapuyan tribes were apparently politically basically autonomous. Treaty documents, and some ethnographic sources, further suggests that the tribes themselves were political entities, headed by tribal chiefs. However, it may also be that tribal chieftainship was a historical development, the result of population considerations and government agents' demands to deal with authoritative representatives of tribes." Zenk, "Kalapuyans," 549. See also Collins, 48-49. Here he discusses the historic Chief Sande-am who apparently held sway over several hamlets. Again, this may be the result of post-contact dynamics. Zenk, "Contributions," 15-16.

shamans and other members of wealthy families.³⁹ The main cleavage in Kalapuyan society was between freeborn villagers and enslaved foreigners. Within the ranks of the freeborn were the headmen and their families, respectable commoners, shamans, and the poorer people of the hamlet (i.e., those with little material wealth). Wealth was not an absolute, since one might gain or lose wealth within the community. Thus, there was a possibility for social mobility.⁴⁰ Santiam Kalapuyan informant John B. Hudson explained that what identified a “good” (wealthy) man was his dentalia money (trade beads in the post-contact era), and his ability to purchase wives and slaves.⁴¹

Slavery appears to have been more common amongst the Northern Kalapuyans, particularly the Tualatin, than amongst the Central and Southern tribes. This may have been a historical development resulting from the cross-cultural relations between the Northern Kalapuyans and their Chinookan neighbors, as there is evidence of both kinship and trade connections with the Upper Chinookans of the lower Willamette Valley.⁴² The Tualatin supplied the Chinookan peoples, who relied heavily on slave labor, with slaves from both inside and outside the Willamette Valley. Slave trading was thus a distinctive component of the Tualatin economy. Since the Tualatin acquired slaves through kidnapping as well through trade, they—like the neighboring Molala to the east—apparently preyed upon the Central and Southern Kalapuyans.⁴³

³⁹ Beckham, *The Indians*, 45.

⁴⁰ Zenk, “Contributions,” 6.

⁴¹ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 47.

⁴² Melville Jacobs, *Clackamas Chinook Texts*, vol. 2 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics/*International Journal of American Linguistics*, 1959), 517.; Zenk, personal communication, 2002.

⁴³ Zenk, “Kalapuyans,” 550.

In Kalapuyan society, as in other aboriginal societies in the Pacific Northwest, slavery was a hereditary social status whereby the descendants of foreign captives were slaves.⁴⁴ In keeping with the more flexible Kalapuyan social structure, however, the status of the slave class was not quite equivalent to that of the Kalapuyans' Chinookan neighbors, for occasionally marriages did occur between freeborn and slave, which thereby freed the slave.⁴⁵ There is evidence of infant head-flattening amongst the Tualatin Kalapuyans, a practice that distinguished the freeborn and from the slave. As with the Chinookans, those with "beautiful" sloping foreheads were freeborn and those with "ugly" round heads were slaves.⁴⁶

Ethnographic information suggests the Kalapuyan practiced patrilocal residence, exogamy, and had a preference for polygyny, especially amongst the more wealthy members of a community. Kalapuyan men married women from nearby villages or tribes. The Kalapuyans viewed marriage as an exchange between families, the groom's family securing the prospective wife with gifts to the woman's family.⁴⁷ As a result, a father with several daughters might increase his wealth through the marriage of his daughters. In the event of sexual assault or adultery, the guilty party might secure the transfer of the wife from the woman's husband. In the case of the death of a husband, the husband's family held possessory rights over the widow, which could be acquired through the exchange of gifts.⁴⁸ The articles used in marriage exchanges included slaves and dentalia in the early contact period, and horses and cattle in the mid-nineteenth century. In return, the wife's family gave

⁴⁴ Zenk, "Contributions," 6.

⁴⁵ Zenk, "Kalapuyans," 550.

⁴⁶ Collins, 90; Beckham, *The Indians*, 48. For the Kalapuyans who practiced this tradition, it appears to have begun to decline in the late 1850s following the move to the reservations. See Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 194-195.

⁴⁷ Beckham, *The Indians*, 55; Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 45; Oglesby, 6; Zenk, "Contributions," 6.

⁴⁸ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 43-45.

the groom's family blankets, guns, and other trade items. When a woman joined her husband's family, she did not take any personal belongings with her.⁴⁹ In his recollections about the Indians of western Oregon, Willamette Valley settler John Minto recalled that a man could change his mind about his wife, sending her wife back to her family, and demanding a return of the property he had exchanged. Minto also mentioned incidents of spousal abuse, enslavement, and murder of women by their husbands.⁵⁰

In Robert Boyd's study of the historical demography and epidemiology of the Native Northwest Coast (1774-1874), he compiled the most detailed estimates for the Kalapuyan populations prior to the intermittent fever (malaria) epidemics of the 1830s. Using the small number of Euro-American estimates for this pre-1830 period, he concluded that the Kalapuyan population ranged between 8,000 and 9,500. The Lewis and Clark population count for the Kalapuyans in 1805 was 9,200 (2,200 Northern, 6,000 Central, 1,000 Southern). These numbers came from the Chinookans of the lower Columbia as the Corps of Discovery did not explore the Willamette Valley. In 1820, Jedediah Morse estimated the Kalapuyan population to be 20,000 (1,800 for the Northern tribes). Boyd identifies Samuel Parker's 1838 estimate, taken from Hudson's Bay Company records, as a late 1820s figure. Parker gave two estimates, the first 7,800 and the second 8,800. This second figure may include Chinookan villages below Willamette Falls and on the lower Willamette or perhaps the Yoncalla Kalapuyans of the Umpqua River Valley.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 191-192.

⁵⁰ John Minto, "The Number and Condition of the Natives Race in Oregon When First Seen by White Men," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 1:3 (September 1900), 299.

⁵¹ Boyd, *The Coming*, 324-25.

Kalapuyan Cosmology and Religious Practice

The Kalapuyan peoples shared many of the same spiritual and philosophical orientations as other Native groups along the North West Coast.⁵² The Kalapuyans recounted creation stories that explained how the world was formed, and how it remained flawed, always in need of improvement. In Kalapuyan cosmology, time was cyclical rather than linear. A central component of the origin stories was the narrative of transmogrification: at the close of the mythic age, the transformers became the flora, fauna, and landscape features of the Kalapuyans' world. This transmogrification provided the symbolic linkage between humans and the natural world. Peter Boag has characterized the relationship between the Kalapuyans and their environment as both a physical and spiritual kinship. The various elements—weather, physiography, ecology, fauna—were not distinctive from the Kalapuyans, but rather were important components of their culture, and ultimately their survival.⁵³ Thus, Kalapuyan cosmology and religious practice interwove place, local history and lore, resource use, social behavior, and personal identity.⁵⁴

At the core of Kalapuyan spirituality was the guardian-spirit power ("supernatural power" in the Central-Kalapuyan language). There were several types of such powers, related to fauna, supernatural creatures, natural phenomena, and inanimate objects. These sundry guardian-spirit powers varied in both strength and import with regard to human affairs, some powers producing positive outcomes, others inflicting harm. The Kalapuyans viewed

⁵² Beckham, 1-40; Dell Hymes, "Mythology," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 7, *Northwest Coast*, edited by Wayne Suttles (Washington, D.C.: 1990), 593-601; Kathryn Toepel, "Traditional Lifeways—The Western Interior," in *The First Oregonians*, edited by Carolyn Buan and Richard Lewis (Portland: Oregon Council for the Humanities, 1991), 15-20.

⁵³ Peter G. Boag, *Environment and Experience: Settlement Culture in Nineteenth-Century Oregon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 18.

⁵⁴ The Kalapuyan ethnographic texts edited and published by Melville Jacobs are the main source of information on worldview and religious practice: Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*; see also Henry Zenk's essay "The Kalapuyans," 550.

important events or accomplishments as the result of the possession of such powers. Thus, the guardian-spirit powers helped shape human events.

While it appears that all members of Kalapuyan society, women and men (even slaves) might acquire guardian-spirit powers, the ethnographic sources stress the necessity for such powers on the part of shamans, wealthy community leaders, and hunters.⁵⁵ The onset of puberty was the common period in the Kalapuyan life cycle when individuals would undertake a vision quest to acquire the guardian-spirit power. A youth would venture to established power sites in the mountains and near lakes of the Willamette Valley for a five-day regimen of fasting, work, and finally, dreaming. If a guardian-spirit power came to the youth, it would manifest itself in human form during a dream. In 1914 William Hartless, a Chenepenfa (Mary's River) Kalapuyan, stressed the transformative effect of the acquisition of a guardian-spirit power:

The people did not just merely become strong (have the power to do certain things). We went to the hills and to the water, and in consequence (of the acquisition there of spirit-powers) we were transformed into shamans, and wealthy headman, and hunters.⁵⁶

In addition to the acquisition of guardian-spirit powers, another important religious practice was the winter dance held during the season when the Kalapuyans engaged in fewer subsistence activities. As the long rainy winter extended from November through March, villagers would sing power songs at these special occasions. Individuals, particularly shamans, would host the dances and invite other dancers and singers to aid in the quest to enhance a guardian-spirit power. The winter dances featured drums and rattles, ceremonial

⁵⁵ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 345.

⁵⁶ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 345.

headdresses, regalia, sashes, and dance costumes decorated with feathers, beads, shells, and human hair.

Although shamans, who could be both male and female, often hosted special winter dances, their social position was ambivalent.⁵⁷ This stemmed from an underlying combination of admiration for and fear of the shaman's guardian-spirit powers. Shamans would be called upon to heal the sick, though there was always a risk that a shaman might abuse his or her power, and bring distress upon an individual, family, or community. If patients continued to die under a shaman's care, he or she could become the object of a retaliatory murder. One way to avoid this end (in addition to flight from the community) would be to compensate the victim's family with a blood-money payment. This practice of shaman assassination would be one reaction to the introduced infectious disease epidemics visited upon the Kalapuyans beginning in the 1830s.

The Kalapuyan Economy

The Kalapuyans' pre-contact economy was based on several elements: subsistence patterns following seasonal migrations, the division of labor in food procurement and preservation, the use of fire for resource management, and participation in the regional aboriginal exchange network. Unlike the salmon-based Chinookan cultures of the lower Willamette and lower Columbia, the Kalapuyans lived in an inland valley and as a result, relied on a variety of plant, animal and aquatic resources. As hunter-gatherers, their

⁵⁷ There is ethnographic evidence for transgenderism amongst the shaman class. The impetus to live as the opposite sex was itself a command from the shaman's guardian spirit. For examples, consult informant John B. Hudson's description of a male to female shaman from the Tualatin Kalapuyan tribe in Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 48; and Victoria Howard's description of her grandfather's sister, *qa'nat'amax*, a Tualatin shaman who dressed as a man, in Jacobs, *Clackamas Chinook Texts*, 517.

migration patterns were based on the seasonal exploitation of various ecological resources within their territories: riverine, lowland, and upland habitats.⁵⁸

The Kalapuyans' subsistence calendar consisted of two cycles: one spent in the permanent winter villages, and the second spent in various temporary harvesting camps over the spring and summer months.⁵⁹ For the men, the major subsistence activity during the winter months was game hunting; however, hunting might not bring in enough food to offset any drop in food stores. As a result, the late winter could be a time of hunger for the Kalapuyans.⁶⁰ During the warmer, drier months from March through October, the women could once again set out on their subsistence grounds in the valley. Based in windbreak shelters or in the open air under stands of trees, they would migrate to various the microenvironments: to the wetlands and lowlands to harvest camas and wapato; to the dryer oak savannah, oak openings, and prairies to harvest tarweed seeds, hazelnuts, and acorns; and to the mountain forests to harvest understory berries. The fall was a particularly important period for the men and boys to engage in small- and large-scale hunts in order to procure meat for the winter. Following the completion of the harvest season, the Kalapuyans would return to their semi-permanent winter village sites, located along riverbanks or the confluences of tributary rivers and streams.⁶¹

Henry Zenk determined that the resource base of the Tualatin Kalapuyans, and other Kalapuyan groups more generally, was highly diversified as a result of the great variety of the Willamette Valley's flora and fauna. This "regional distinctiveness of Kalapuyan subsistence" distinguished them from their non-Kalapuyan neighbors, such as the salmon-

⁵⁸ Collins, 39; Minto, 301.

⁵⁹ Zenk, "Contributions," 42; Collins, 40-41.

⁶⁰ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 34.

⁶¹ Zenk, "Kalapuyans, 548.

based Chinookan peoples to the north.⁶² Zenk has outlined four major categories for the Kalapuyan subsistence base, emphasizing the primary role of vegetable resources and the secondary role of aquatic life and wild game. Vegetable foodstuffs included camas, wapato, tarweed (*madia* spp.), hazelnuts (*Corylus cornuta*), acorns, and various dried berries. Aquatic resources included Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), steelhead (*salmo gairdnerii*), lamprey eels (*Entosphenus tridentatus*), and non-anadromous fish such as trout (*Salmo clarkii*) and sturgeon (*Acipenser* spp.). The Kalapuyans' major large game animals included elk (*cervus canadensis*) and white-tailed (*Odocoileus virginianus leucurus*) and black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus heminus columbianus*). They also hunted small and medium-sized game various animals of all kinds, as well as waterfowl and birds. Finally, the Kalapuyans also included insects in their diet, such as grasshoppers, caterpillars, and yellow jacket larvae. This diversified resource base shared affinities with other regional aboriginal cultures, such as those of the Plateau (camas, roots, and berries) and California (acorns, hazelnuts, tarweed, grass seeds).⁶³

Amongst the many vegetable resources, camas and wapato were the most important plants for their nutritive value and for their value as trade items with other Native groups.⁶⁴ Women would harvest the blue camas lily using digging sticks. They would then roast the camas bulbs in pit-ovens specially constructed for that purpose. Afterwards, the roasted camas could be eaten immediately or dried and made into cakes for both trade and consumption during the wintertime. The other items Kalapuyan women dried and stored for the winter included Chinook salmon, dried eels, hazelnuts, acorns, tarweed seeds, berries,

⁶² Zenk, "Contributions," 35.

⁶³ Boyd, "Indian Burning," 99

⁶⁴ Zenk, "Kalapuyans," 547; Zenk, "Kalapuyans," 33; Boyd, "Indian Burning," 99.

roots, blossoms, and sprouts.⁶⁵ Women produced a mushy dish from leached acorns that was served immediately, and bread made through a drying process using warmed rocks near the campsite fires.⁶⁶ Hazel was important because women used the withes from the small tree for basket making, baskets being essential for harvesting and food storage. With great skill and knowledge, Kalapuyan women harvested hazelnuts in late summer and then stored them to be used in the wintertime. They and the children harvested an impressive array of nutrition rich and flavorful berries in many different ecological niches, systematically drying desirable varieties such native blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), strawberry (*Fragaria* spp.), huckleberry (*Vaccinium* spp.), salalberry (*Gaultheria shallon*), blackcaps (*Rubus leucodermis*), thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*), and salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) not just for local use but possibly for trade.⁶⁷ For the Kalapuyans, successful food production relied on skilled and knowledgeable individuals, cooperative work parties, some level of processing, and possibly elaborate storage techniques.⁶⁸

In addition to the essential plant food sources, harvested in the spring and summer, the Kalapuyans exploited their year-round access to a variety of animals: Black-tailed and white-tailed deer, elk; water-oriented mammals such beaver (*Castor canadensis*) and land otter (*Lutra canadensis*); small and medium-sized mammals such as rabbit (*O. lagomorpha*) grey and brown squirrels (*Sciurus griseus* and *Tamiasciurus douglasii*), and various carnivores; blue grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*), mountain quail (*Oreortyx picta palmeri*), doves, band-tailed pigeons (*Columba fasciata*); and native waterfowl such as geese (*Branta*

⁶⁵ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 190.

⁶⁶ Beckham, *The Indians*, 49.

⁶⁷ Boyd, "Strategies," 121.

⁶⁸ For an overview of the importance of food production for the Native peoples of Northwest Coast, see Dianne Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 32-43.

canadensis), swan (*Olor* sp.), and pheasant (*Bonasa umbellus*).⁶⁹ Migratory waterfowl using the Willamette Valley lowlands as wintering grounds were another source of food in the wintertime. One such species was the band-tailed pigeon, which migrated to the region to feed on the prairie grass seeds.⁷⁰

While year-round hunting likely involved single hunts, the Kalapuyans also organized large communal hunts in the fall. The prey of these communal events certainly included deer and perhaps elk as well.⁷¹ Knowledge of animal biology led the Kalapuyans to time these hunts for the autumn. Nearing the cold winter months, the prized white-tailed deer were fattest because they had gorged themselves on the acorns that had fallen from oak trees in the valley. Seeking elk in a fall hunt also had a distinct advantage. Normally, elk are solitary creatures, but as autumn is their mating season, hunters would have occasion to find them in herds of ten to fifteen animals.⁷² After the hunt, women smoked the deer and elk venison and stored it for winter use.

The Kalapuyans' great communal hunts in the fall involved several operations: the use of snares and large fires to drive the animals, which were cooperative efforts. Once a fire was lit, hundreds of men and boys herded the animals into an ever restricted common center. When the center was small enough, skilled hunters went in and shot the animals they judged appropriate. Around 1880, the journalist Samuel Clarke learned from John Hudson (*Al-qe-ma* or *Yelkma*), a Santiam Kalapuyan, and Quinaby, another Kalapuyan on the Grand Ronde Reservation, that the participants in the annual hunt had an intimate knowledge of how to manage the large game animals as a resource. "They preserved the best males, the very

⁶⁹ Zenk, "Contributions," 38.

⁷⁰ Towle, "Settlement," 17.

⁷¹ Boyd, "Strategies," 113.

⁷² Jerry C. Towle, "Settlement and Subsistence in the Willamette Valley: Some Additional Considerations," *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes* 13:1 (Spring 1979), 17.

young and the best animals with care. They could always find enough to answer their purposes without exterminating the game."⁷³

Aquatic resources played a complementary role in the Kalapuyan economy. Living along the streams and tributaries of the Willamette River, the Kalapuyans had access to year-round aquatic life, including non-anadromous fish species (trout, suckers, sturgeon), crabs, mussels, crawfish, and lamprey eels.⁷⁴ Although the upper Chinookans appear to have prevented the Kalapuyans from engaging in large-scale salmon fishing at Willamette Falls, ethnographic information indicates that they did harvest the lamprey eels at the falls during the summer, as well as in the streams and creeks of the valley. They would eat some of their catch, and smoke the remainder for use in the wintertime. One method of storage was to put the dried items in soft bags and hang them in trees.⁷⁵

Some scholars have argued that the Kalapuyans did not themselves harvest salmon, the regional anadromous fish, because it was not able to mount the barrier posed by the Willamette Falls, stressing that any salmon in the Kalapuyan diet would have been obtained through trade with Chinookan groups from the lower Willamette and Columbia.⁷⁶ In support of this theory, there is evidence that the Chinookan peoples at Willamette Falls held the area as their territory and did not grant the Kalapuyans access rights, though they did trade with the Kalapuyans for items such as camas and wapato. For example, the Chinookans would prevent the Kalapuyans from using seines or spears to catch salmon at the falls.⁷⁷

⁷³ Oglesby, 5; S.A. Clarke, *Pioneers Days in Oregon History*. vol. 1, (Portland: J.K. Gill), 89-91; See also Boyd's comments, "Indian Burning," 111 and footnotes #51 and 52, 135

⁷⁴ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 18, 25, 188.

⁷⁵ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Text*, 24-25.

⁷⁶ Rick Minor, Stephen Dow Beckham, Phyllis E. Lancefield-Steves, and Kathryn Toepel, write that the Kalapuyans' position above Willamette Falls limited their access to salmon and smelt runs. See their volume, *Cultural Resource Overview*, 56.

⁷⁷ Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 181.

Two anthropologists who examined the historical, ethnographic, and scientific evidence concluded that the question of anadromous fish above Willamette Falls in pre-contact times is too complex to provide a simple negative answer. Although the historical evidence from Euro-American sources is contradictory, hydrology, biology, and ethnography suggest that a spring Chinook salmon run likely mounted the Willamette Falls barrier and spawned in the upper Willamette River and its tributaries.⁷⁸ The high spring water levels would have afforded spring Chinook the best opportunity to pass the falls. Henry Zenk has cautioned that this theory cannot rule out the migration of additional salmon runs during other high water periods, such as the winter steelhead.⁷⁹ Given this research and the ethnographic evidence, it is highly likely that salmon were a supplemental food source to the vegetable and game resources harvested and hunted by the Kalapuyans. If indeed salmon runs were light or poor in one year or in a season, the Kalapuyans' diversified economy put them in a position to exchange their food and craft products with the neighboring aboriginal groups for dried salmon. Since salmon products were high-value trade items throughout the Columbia-Willamette region, and the Northwest Coast, any exchange would have to be equitable. In the case of the Kalapuyans, their processed game, dried camas, and dried berries from the Willamette Valley would have been specialty items for such exchanges.

Environmental resource management was an essential aspect of their traditional economy. As noted above, the Kalapuyans maintained the oak savannah-open woodlands complex of the upper Willamette Valley through controlled prairie fires. Robert Boyd, the most well-versed researcher in Kalapuyan burning practices, concluded that "with control over and knowledge of the ecosystemic effects of fire, the Indians established an important

⁷⁸ Zenk, "Contributions," 69-74; F. Ann McKinney, "Kalapuyan Subsistence: Reexamining the Willamette Falls Salmon Barrier," *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes* 18:1 (Spring 1984): 23-33.

⁷⁹ Zenk, "Contributions," 69-74.

symbiotic relationship with their environment. Put in other words, the Kalapuyans, like other Native Americans, became an environmentally selective force, acting through their agent, fire.”⁸⁰ The evidence for this use of fire as a tool for resource management on a grand scale comes from historical sources and studies on the historical ecology of the Willamette Valley.

Following the agricultural settlement in the mid-nineteenth century (when American settlers forced a cessation of the ancient practice), significant changes occurred in the valley landscape. Those areas not used for agricultural production or grazing witnessed an increase in woodland and forest cover. In the case of the Willamette Valley, the cessation of the burning led to a dominance of Douglas fir trees, which replaced the oaks.⁸¹ Researchers on the ecology of the Willamette Valley agree that the “potential vegetation” of the valley is a forest cover, not an oak savannah, because the major environmental barriers to tree growth are lacking, such as climatic and edaphic features.⁸² Carl Johannessen and his colleagues concluded that annual fires had likely directed the development of the Willamette Valley ecology for millennia, yielding the prairie and open-woodlands complex that was present prior to large-scale Euro-American colonization.⁸³

The use of fire by aboriginal peoples has been documented for groups in North America and around the world. Omar Stewart’s research on Native North America, which was inspired by the works of geographer Carl Sauer, revealed various motivations for landscape burning. In addition to facilitating the hunting and corralling of large game animals, fire was helpful for the following reasons: improving pastureland; increasing visibility; collecting of insects; raising the yields of seeds, berries, and native vegetable

⁸⁰ Boyd, “Strategies,” 128.

⁸¹ Towle, “Settlement,” 15.

⁸² Towle, “Settlement,” 18.

⁸³ Johannessen, “Burning,” 292.

foods; thinning trees for better growth of accompanying species; clearing land for horticulture; assisting tobacco growth; thinning the populations of snakes and insects; and assisting with communication and warfare.⁸⁴

One of the long-term objectives of the annual burning was to foster proper vegetation growth for future food gathering activities. Clearing the brush under oak trees aided with acorn gathering and made hunting individual deer much easier. By using an ethnographic analogy with the Shasta of California and southern Oregon, Robert Boyd has theorized that the burning aided the development of plants for basket-making materials, wild berries and root crops.⁸⁵ Edible plants, seeds, and berries grew in the prairie savannah ecology. These included the native blackberry on the open range; the strawberry on the dry prairies; other prairie plants such as tarweed and the sunflower. Hazel is an understory plant in oak openings. In addition, oak trees provide a higher acorn yield in oak openings in contrast to forest settings. The annual firing reduced the growth of woody plants, opening the way for the different wild roots eaten by the Kalapuyans: liliaceous camas and wild onion and the tuber of the lupine and the rhizome of bracken fern.⁸⁶ Some small areas were also fired for sowing tobacco seeds.

A second major motivation for the annual fires was the maintenance of the desired animal habitats. Robert Boyd reached this conclusion by linking the Kalapuyan subsistence calendar with plant succession. This linkage provides the logic for the burnings as witnessed in the historical and ethnographic sources. The summer burning of the prairie grasses resulted in an important second growth in the fall. This second growth provided elk and deer with their primary winter forage. Boyd and Towle surmised that this second-growth grass

⁸⁴ Boyd, "Strategies," 109-110.

⁸⁵ Boyd, "Strategies," 116.

⁸⁶ Boyd, "Strategies," 122.

provided a food source for year-round herbivore population that would not have been possible without the use of fire. The fall grasses were soft and highly nutritious because of the fertilization from ash. In contrast, without the annual burning, the native grasses would become "tough, unpalatable, or even dangerous (such as squirretail) for the large-game animals grazing in the valley."⁸⁷ Towle also notes that according to James Clyman's observations in the early 1840s, migratory flocks of geese passed the winter on these new grasses.⁸⁸

Another component in the management of animal habitats was the maintenance of edge environments. These edge zones were home to a variety of plant and animal species. The frequent firings created the mixed ecotones favored by the native white-tailed and black-tailed deer.⁸⁹ While the firing created a habitat conducive to deer, it was also used as a means to clear underbrush and thus, assisted with hunting deer. According to Towle, fire was significant in game management because it created different ecotones favored by game, which gave them access to both food and cover: "grove, gallery forest, and open prairies."⁹⁰

As reconstructed by Robert Boyd, the Kalapuyans' annual burning schedule corresponded to their subsistence migration patterns. Over the late spring and early summer, they were busy at wetland and lowland prairie sites, harvesting and processing camas and wapato. The Kalapuyans would not have engaged in any burning during this period. In July and August, they lit occasional fires in conjunction with gathering local foods sources on the dry prairies, such as grass seeds, sunflower seeds, hazelnuts and blackberries. A short-term result of these occasional fires would be to clear away unused plants with the long-term

⁸⁷ Boyd, "Strategies," 124.

⁸⁸ Towle, "Settlement," 19.

⁸⁹ Boyd, "Strategies," 119.

⁹⁰ Towle, "Settlement," 19.

result of stimulating future growth of these same plants. During the close of the summer, the Kalapuyans would use fire as a means for harvesting tarweed and insects on the high prairies. October was the month for burning the oak openings after the gathering of acorns. The final prairie fires were the late autumn events meant to drive large game for the communal hunt. With a stock of dried deer and elk meat, the Kalapuyans would return to their riverine villages to wait out the wet valley winters.⁹¹ While the Kalapuyans' complex subsistence round use and their use of fire for resource management and remained central components of their economy through the early 1800s, a third element, participation in the regional aboriginal exchange network, introduced them to broader continental changes occurring as a result of Euro-American expansion.

The Lower Columbia Region, 1790s to 1810

Since the Northern and Central Kalapuyans occupied the large upper portion of the Willamette Valley, the Columbia River's main tributary, their primary social and economic ties were to the region Yvonne Hadja has described as the Greater Lower Columbia.⁹² This part of the Northwest Coast included Chinookan, Salish, and Athapaskan communities on both sides of the Columbia River and its lower tributaries from the Dalles to the river's mouth, the Chinookan and Kalapuyan areas of the Willamette Valley, and the various coastal groups from the Quinault River in the north to the Alsea River in the south. While those groups living along the Columbia River tributaries and those located further away on the

⁹¹ Boyd, "Strategies," 127.

⁹² Yvonne Hadja, "Regional Social Organization in the Greater Lower Columbia, 1792-1830," (Ph.D. diss. University of Washington, 1984), 1-3. This designation generally corresponds to Robert Boyd's lower Columbia, which he identifies as a region in the lower Columbia River drainage with several ethnolinguistic groups that experienced a similar disease history over the first 100 years of Euro-American colonization. See Boyd, *The Coming*, 231.

coast represented more peripheral components of the larger regional economy, all of these communities were connected to some degree to the ancient Pacific-Plateau trade corridor along the great river.⁹³

In the 1700s, and perhaps earlier, the Chinookan peoples who occupied strategic fishing and navigational sites along the Columbia and the lower Willamette played a central role in the flow of goods between the Plateau, the lower Columbia, and more distant regions such as Vancouver Island. European goods arrived into the lower Columbia region during the eighteenth century via the aboriginal trade networks as Europeans and Americans expanded their exploratory, commercial, and colonizing activities in the Northwest Coast and the interior regions of North America.⁹⁴ The Chinook-proper, who lived on the north side of the Columbia River estuary, took a leading role in the maritime fur trade in the lower Columbia once it debuted in the 1790s. The maritime fur trade, which gave aboriginal groups greater access to European goods, essentially became integrated into existing regional exchange networks.

These interlocking exchange networks were closely tied to the local salmon-based cultures. Access to the large seasonal salmon runs on the Columbia and its tributaries allowed the coastal and riverine peoples to pursue a specialized subsistence round, one that relied on sophisticated fishing techniques and storage practices.⁹⁵ With the abundance of the

⁹³ Jerry R. Galm, "Prehistoric Trade and Exchange in the Interior Plateau of Northwestern North America," in *Prehistoric Exchange Systems in North America*, edited by Timothy G. Baugh and Jonathon E. Ericson (New York: Plenum Press, 1994), 275-305.

⁹⁴ Studies on European and American activities on the Northwest Coast include: Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992); Barry M. Gough, *The Northwest Coast: British Navigation, Trade and Discoveries to 1812* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992).

⁹⁵ Joseph Taylor, *Making Salmon: An Environmental History of the Northwest Coast Fisheries Crisis* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999); Michael Silverstein, "Chinookans of the Lower Columbia," in

salmon harvests, these groups—and especially the Chinookans—developed a range of harvesting, processing, and storage techniques for generating surpluses that supported both subsistence and prestige exchange economies. Yvonne Hajda concluded that in common with Northwest Coast peoples generally, the aboriginal peoples of the lower Columbia region recognized two spheres of exchange during the period of initial contact with Europeans (1790s-1830s): one involving food and specialized raw materials, and the other involving valuables such as slaves and dentalia. Within the context of Native-Native relations, items of one group were not exchanged for items in another group. However, with the onset of the fur trade, European goods were exchanged for both sets of items.⁹⁶

While the riverine peoples did exchange their surplus salmon for other foodstuffs harvested by the interior peoples, a primary focus of the regional trade was the acquisition of valuables. These valuables, in addition to property and resource-use rights and ceremonial privileges, were the regional marks of status and wealth.⁹⁷ Strong trading links were thus essential to the maintenance of the system, and for this reason the regional trade largely, though not exclusively, operated through kinship ties. While the peoples of the lower Columbia region lived in a village-centered world, they maintained marriage ties beyond their local communities. These ties widened a family's sphere of influence, giving its access to additional prestige goods and resource use rights. Such regional kinship ties, characteristic of chiefly and upper class families throughout the Pacific Northwest, were also useful in times of armed conflict. If a conflict could not be resolved by the exchange of goods, the

Handbook of North American Indians, vol. 7, *Northwest Coast*, edited by Wayne Suttles (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 533-546.

⁹⁶ Hajda, "Regional," 206-207.

⁹⁷ Hajda, "Regional," 206.

leaders of opposing sides might request assistance from both nearby and more distant kin relations.⁹⁸

When American maritime fur traders first arrived at the mouth of the Columbia and made contact with the Chinook-proper in early May 1792, the newcomers tapped into this long-standing, sophisticated trading system that linked the Chinook to peoples in the interior regions of Willamette Valley and the Plateau. The initial group of maritime traders, headed by Captain Robert Gray, visited the lower Columbia aboard the *Columbia Rediviva* on her second trading expedition from the port of Boston.⁹⁹ New England merchants had turned their attention to the Northwest Coast following the Revolutionary War (1775-1781) after learning of a lucrative trade of otter pelts in Canton, China by members of Captain James Cook's third expedition in 1779. Although Gray had several violent encounters with Natives on the Northwest Coast during his second expedition, this first contact with the Chinook went relatively smoothly. The *Columbia* remained in the river's estuary for eight days from May 12 through May 20, 1792, during which time the Americans pursued a brisk trade with the Chinook and mapped the local area. Upon leaving the river, which Gray named the "Columbia" in honor of his ship, fifth mate John Boit noted in his log that the Chinook "Indians are very numerous, and appear'd very civill (not even offering to steal) during our short stay we collected 150 Otter, 300 Beaver, and twice the Number of other land furs."¹⁰⁰

The expedition of British navigator George Vancouver soon followed in Gray's wake. After exploring the northern portions of the Northwest Coast, and meeting with Spanish

⁹⁸ Hajda, "Regional," 212-221.

⁹⁹ Although only one remnant of Robert Gray's official logs have survived, Frederic W. Howay completed a scholarly edition of the logs left by mates John Hoskins, Robert Haswell, and John Boit. See Frederic H. Howay, ed., *Voyages of the "Columbia" to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 and 1790-1793* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1941; rpt; Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1990).

¹⁰⁰ Howay, *Voyages*, 399.

officials at Nootka Sound, Vancouver ordered Lieutenant Broughton to explore the Columbia River in the fall of 1792. Vancouver himself proceeded to Monterey Bay for further consultations with the Spanish. Broughton, aboard the HMS *Chatham*, crossed the Columbia bar on October 2, 1792 and spent the next three weeks completing an extensive survey of the river's lower course.¹⁰¹ Upon the return of the Gray and Vancouver expeditions to their home ports, news of the "discovery" of the Columbia River soon spread and additional British and American trading expeditions began make yearly visits to the lower Columbia.

From 1792 through the spring of 1811, contact between Euro-Americans and Natives of the lower Columbia was concentrated in the Columbia River estuary. British and American traders conducted trades from canoes, aboard ships, and in the local villages, since the newcomers did not establish seasonal or semi-permanent outposts. By virtue of the Chinook's geographic location at the mouth of the Columbia, their riverine culture, and their strong motivation to increase their wealth through the prestige exchange economy, they became middlemen in the regional maritime fur trade.¹⁰² They maintained a high degree of control over the flow of European goods along the Pacific-Pacific corridor and became a powerful force in the region.¹⁰³ The Chinook's middlemen status was incumbent on their controlling access to the traders, and they proved quite tenacious in guarding their strategic position. The failure of the first Euro-American attempt to establish a permanent fur trade

¹⁰¹ The most authoritative account of Broughton's exploration of the Columbia can be found in George Vancouver, *Voyage of George Vancouver*, edited by W. Kaye Lamb, vol. 2 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1984), 747-770.

¹⁰² The role of aboriginal peoples as middlemen in the North American fur trade was first recognized by Canadian economist Harold Innis. A number of scholars have since expanded on his seminal work. See: Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, with a new introduction by Arthur J. Ray, rev. ed (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956; rpt, 1999); Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974; rpt, 1998); Arthur J. Ray and Donald B. Freeman, *Give us Good Measure: An Economic Analysis of Relations between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1764* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

¹⁰³ Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *The Chinook Indians: Traders of the Lower Columbia River* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976).

post in the lower Columbia was a testament to the Chinook's determination and ability to control trade relations between their interior Native partners and these newcomers.

Over the winter of 1809-1810, two Americans, brothers Jonathan and Nathan Winship, prepared an expedition in the Hawaiian Islands that would establish a permanent fur trade post in the Columbia River in the spring of 1810. On May 26, 1810, their ship, the *Albatross*, anchored three miles upriver from the Chinook territory and the expedition set about exploring the lower Columbia for a useful settlement site. The Winships finally settled on a location on June 4, and despite heavy rains over the next week, their party began to build a permanent post on the south bank of the Columbia near the old Oak Point. Within a few days the Winships decided to relocate the post onto higher ground a quarter of a mile upstream. However, at that point they encountered a large armed party of Chinook ostensibly on a mission to attack another local village. The Chinook quickly expressed their opposition to the establishment of a fur trade outside their territory and put increasing pressure on the Winship party. After several tense discussions and intimidating actions by the Chinook, the Winship decided to abandon the attempt to establish a permanent post, fearing that their small party of some twenty-five men (mostly Hawaiians) could not adequately defend themselves against an armed attack by the Chinook and their allies. The *Albatross* left the Columbia on July 19, 1810.¹⁰⁴

In the spring of 1811, another American trading vessel arrived in the Columbia, bringing some forty men to make a second attempt at a permanent fur trade outpost in the lower Columbia. These men, who were partners and employees of John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company, would prove more successful than the Winship brothers, at least for a

¹⁰⁴ Ruby and Brown, *The Chinook*, 119-124. See also William Dane Phelps, "Solid Men of Boston," in *Fur Traders from New England: The Boston Men in the North Pacific, 1787-1800*, edited by Briton C. Busch and Barry M. Gough (Spokane, WA: Arthur H. Company, 1997), 52-73.

time. They would establish a close trade relationship with the dominant Chinook, while also looking to expand trading links with groups farther inland. In their forays into the Willamette Valley, the Astorians would encounter the Kalapuyans, and in so doing, come into direct conflict with the Chinook over the structure of the overland fur trade—a trade involving the permanent presence of Euro-Americans rather than their occasional visits aboard sea-going vessels. With their complex hunter-gather economy, the Kalapuyans would themselves over the next decade maintain the upper hand and thereby challenge the fur traders' notion about the future of intercultural relations in the Willamette Valley.

CHAPTER TWO

“THEIR SOLE EMPLOYMENT IS DIGGING ROOTS, CAMMASS, WAPTOES”:

FUR TRAPPER-KALAPUYAN ENCOUNTERS, 1812-1822

Over the spring and summer of 1811, the Kalapuyans of Oregon's Willamette Valley received reports about a group of foreigners at the mouth of the Columbia River. Meeting resident Upper Chinookan groups at Willamette Falls during trading expeditions, the Kalapuyans learned of the efforts of the Astorians from the Pacific Fur Company (PFC) to erect their first establishment, Fort Astoria, on the south shore of the great river. News of the foreigners' activities had traveled along the indigenous exchange networks that connected the interior Willamette Valley to Chinook communities at the mouth of the Columbia River. Since the Chinook-proper, a Lower Chinookan people, were the long-time middlemen in the regional maritime fur trade that debuted in the 1790s, the Kalapuyans may not have anticipated direct relations with the landed newcomers. However, a year after the Astorians' arrival at the mouth of the Columbia, the Kalapuyans encountered the foreigners for the first time. These initial encounters began a process of social change that would ultimately have a dramatic, irrevocable impact on Kalapuyan society, and lead to the unopposed establishment of the first bi-cultural colonial settlement in the valley by 1830.

The fur traders whom the Kalapuyans met over the first decade, from 1812 to 1822, represented two North American enterprises, the Pacific Fur Company (1811-1813) and the North West Company (1813-1822). Although an American-owned company, the PFC's labor force resembled that of other prominent fur trade firms, notably the North West Company (NWC) and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). The PFC's managerial or officer class of partners and clerks included a small number of Americans and a majority of Canadian

residents, educated emigrants originally from Scotland and England. Many of the Canadian partners and clerks were also veterans of the Montreal-based fur trade. They supervised a multi-ethnic laboring class comprised of French Canadians originally from Lower Canada, Hawaiians recruited in the Hawaiian Islands, and a few Americans. The multi-ethnic character of the fur trade labor force, dominated by an Anglo-Celtic officer class, continued under the North West Company when it assumed control of fur trade operations in the Columbia River basin in the fall of 1813. A number of eastern Natives (Iroquois, Abenaki, Nipissing) and Métis (of French Canadian and Indian ancestry) also worked as hunters and trappers for the NWC in the Columbia region.¹

Our knowledge of the first decade of Native-newcomer relations in the Willamette Valley remains clouded due to a fragmentary source record. However, the surviving record reveals that as an interior valley primarily accessible by water and bordered by mountain ranges to both the east and west, the Willamette Valley proved a unique contact zone. Cultural misunderstandings between Kalapuyans and the newcomers led to frustration, sometimes conflict, and finally, to a measure of accommodation. The fur traders brought their cultural biases—as well as their previous experience east of the Rocky Mountains—to bear on their relations with the Kalapuyans. As the vanguard of an expanding market economy, the fur traders viewed the Pacific Northwest as a region rich in natural resources. The newcomers were unrestrained by any philosophical barriers to exploiting these resources since they did not perceive the indigenous population as retaining pre-existing property or

¹ NWC records for the Columbia region are scattered and fragmentary. H. Lloyd Keith is currently editing a volume of all the extant materials. The only attempt at a comprehensive study of the laboring class in the Columbia region can be found in Charles E. Simpson's extensive ethnography of the Snake Country trapping parties under the NWC and the HBC: "The Snake Country Freemen: British Free Trappers in Idaho," (MA thesis, University of Idaho, 1990).

use rights.² Familiar with the Indian groups of the Great Lakes and in the interior region of North America, who had had over 100 years of contact with Euro-Americans, the traders also expected that the Indians whom they encountered would willingly hunt fur-bearing animals in exchange for European goods.

When approached by the fur traders in the 1810s, the Kalapuyans of the Willamette Valley expressed little interest in trapping fur-bearing animals for trade. For the Kalapuyans, such an activity would direct precious resources away from their complex subsistence round. In fact, the Kalapuyans were initially primarily interested in obtaining foodstuffs, and only secondarily interested in European goods. The Willamette Valley Natives also demonstrated various forms of resistance in response to the fur traders' trading and hunting expeditions in the valley. Although the Kalapuyans had yet to acquire firearms, and therefore, relied on the bow and arrow, they did join forces with Upper Chinookans groups at Willamette Falls in an attempt to gain a measure of control over the developing fur trade economy. Thus, in this first decade, while tensions arose, occasionally leading to armed conflict, both groups were able to attain a degree of accommodation in their relations with one another. For their part, the fur traders had to adapt their operations by dispatching fur hunting brigades into the valley. The presence of the fur trapping parties would later have long-term consequences for the development of a colonial settlement in the Willamette Valley.

The Pacific Fur Company Enterprise

The story of the Pacific Fur Company expedition to the Columbia River country is rooted in imperial ambitions and mercantile capitalism. By the turn of the nineteenth century,

² Robert Bunting, *The Pacific Northwest Raincoast: Environment and Culture in an American Eden, 1778-1900* (Lawrence: Kansas University of Kansas Press, 1997), 24; Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press), 83.

the maritime sea otter trade along the Northwest Coast, which had debuted with third expedition of British explorer James Cook in 1779, was dominated by Americans sailing primarily from the port of Boston. During the same period that witnessed an expansion of the maritime fur trade, explorers from British North America made their way west from Montreal, seeking an expanded overland fur trade that would reach across the North American continent.³

A central figure in this vision of imperial conquest was the British-American explorer Peter Pond, who expressed the “fundamentals” of an “imperial geography” in the 1780s after his exploring expeditions to the Athabasca country.⁴ These fundamentals included water routes across the continent to the Pacific, fur trade posts along these routes, trade with China, and monetary support from the British government. The young Alexander Mackenzie, who accompanied Pond on his Athabasca trip, was greatly influenced by Pond’s continental vision. Mackenzie later built upon Pond’s explorations in his voyages to the Arctic Ocean in 1789 and to the Pacific in 1792-93.

While Pond’s vision and Mackenzie’s later voyages inspired the Montreal-based North West Company to expand its operations across the continent to the Pacific, they also fired the imagination of an American entrepreneur who dreamed of individual wealth and national expansion, German-American fur trade baron John Jacob Astor.⁵ Astor’s quest to build a continental fur trade company sprang from the much older struggle for imperial

³ Richard Somerset Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific Coast, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), xvii.

⁴ James P. Ronda, *Astoria and Empire* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990). 13.

⁵ For the most recent scholarly treatment of the Pacific Fur Company enterprise, see Ronda, *Astoria*. For Astor and his times, see John Denis Haeger, *John Jacob Astor: Business and Finance in the Early Republic* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991) and Kenneth W. Porter, *John Jacob Astor: Business Man*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931).

conquest in the North America, as well as the more recent eighteenth-century adventurers of maritime explorers and fur traders seeking passages across the continent to the Pacific.⁶

James Ronda makes a persuasive case that previous American historians writing on the Pacific Fur Company, influenced by nationalist sentiment, have overstated the connection between the Lewis and Clark expedition and Astor's enterprise. Astor's experiences in Montreal, which pre-dated the American expedition by more than ten years, were direct influences on his developing plans. Ronda describes the linkage between Lewis and Clark and Astor as "more subtle, something like a catalytic reaction" that crystallized thoughts Astor would have previously encountered in his discussions with the Montreal traders.⁷

Beginning in the late 1780s, Astor began making annual visits to Montreal to buy pelts. There he made contacts with the leading figures of the Montreal fur trade, including Joseph Frobisher and Alexander Henry the Elder, and learned of the exploits of Alexander McKenzie to reach the Pacific Ocean through present-day British Columbia. Influenced by the accomplishments of the British North Americans, Astor decided to establish an American fur trade enterprise that would operate on a global scale. Astor's company would establish a central depot at the mouth of the Columbia, and additional inland posts and coastal expeditions to gather the bulk of the furs. Astor would send an annual ship to the Columbia from New York around Cape Horn. This ship would bring supplies and trade goods, which would then be exchanged for furs to be traded in the China markets. The annual ship would return to the Atlantic seaboard with Asian goods for European and American markets. A string of forts across the trans-Mississippi West, serving as communication route between

⁶ Glyn Williams, *Voyages of Delusion: The Quest for the Northwest Passage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

⁷ Ronda, 24-25, 29-31.

New York and the Columbia, would be the final component in Astor's intercontinental enterprise.⁸

Given his commercial and social ties in Montreal, Astor initially sought a joint-venture with the North West Company in order to head-off future competition with the formidable institution. During his trip to Montreal in the summer of 1809, Astor proposed that the North West Company take a one-third share in his future enterprise to the Columbia and in return Astor would buy a half-share of the NWC subsidiary, the Michilimackinac Company.⁹ Negotiations with the North West Company dragged on for a year, from 1809 through 1810, before the Montreal partners finally decided to pursue their own plans to expand operations into the Columbia country despite the affirmative vote of the wintering partners at Fort William to accept Astor's offer.

A year prior to approaching the Montreal traders, Astor had begun making overtures to the administration of President Thomas Jefferson. Although Jefferson ultimately declined to provide either financial or military support to Astor's enterprise, Astor pushed forward and began laying plans for the establishment of the Pacific Fur Company in the spring of 1809.¹⁰ Astor hired Wilson Price Hunt, a St. Louis merchant, as the organizing partner, and signed partnerships with several former Northwesters in Montreal, including John Clarke, Duncan McDougall, Alexander McKay, Donald McKenzie, David Stuart, and Robert Stuart.

⁸Ronda, 39; D. W. Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain*, 2nd ed., (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 48.

⁹Ronda, 55.

¹⁰ Edgeley W. Todd produced a scholarly edition of Washington Irving's classic account of the Astorian enterprise. See Washington Irving, *Astoria, or Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains*, edited by Edgeley W. Todd (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964). For overviews of Irving's method and contribution as a historian, see Todd's introduction in that volume and Richard Dilworth Rust's introduction, Washington Irving, *Astoria, or Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains* (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1976; rpt; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), xxi-xxxiv. For discussions of the narrative conventions of Jacksonian era writing present in Irving's *Astoria*, see I.S. MacLaren, "Washington Irving's Problems with History and Romance in *Astoria*," *CRAS* 21:1 (Summer 1990): 1-14; and Alan Leander MacGregor, "'Lords of the Ascendant': Mercantile Biography and Irving's *Astoria*," *CRAS* 21:1 Summer 1990): 15-30.

Arrangements were made for ships, financing and supplies, and Hunt set about hiring clerks and voyageurs for the expedition.

By 1810 the Pacific Fur Company expedition was set to begin its journey to the Columbia River. Astor sent three groups to the Northwest Coast, one by land and two by sea. (see Appendix 1, Pacific Fur Company Personnel in Oregon, 1811-1814). The first contingent aboard the *Tonquin* left New York harbor on September 6, 1810 and arrived at the mouth of the Columbia on March 22, 1811.¹¹ After spending several weeks crossing the Columbia bar and searching for a post site, the four partners aboard the *Tonquin* (McKay, McDougall, and the Stuarts) settled on a site on the south shore of the estuary near present-day Smith point (then known to the Astorians by the British name, Point George), located in the territory of the Clatsop, a Lower Chinookan group. The Astorians embarked at the site on April 12, 1811, and the next day began construction of Fort Astoria.¹²

While the laborers and clerks built the fort, the partners set to work cementing trade relationships with the Lower Chinookans, the local Clatsop, and the Chinook-proper, who lived on the north shore, and with various Upper Chinookan groups living several miles farther upstream, including the Cathlamet and Wakicum.¹³ In keeping with the PFC's strategy of establishing trading posts farther inland, several parties of Astorians set out on exploratory trips along the Columbia River and its tributaries over the course of the next year.

The overland party under the command of Wilson Price Hunt and Donald McKenzie journeyed from Montreal to St. Louis over the summer of 1810, engaging additional

¹¹ Robert F. Jones, *Annals of Astoria: The Headquarters Log of the Pacific Fur Company on the Columbia River, 1811-1813* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 1-3.

¹² Jones, 4-10; Ronda, 197-201.

¹³ Jones, 12-13.

voyageurs at Michilimackinac. Delayed in St. Louis while seeking additional men, supplies and boats, the overland party did not leave the city until October 1810. After spending the winter of 1810-1811 near the mouth of the Nodaway River in present-day Andrew County, Missouri, the overland expedition began its long, troubled trek across the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains to the Columbia region. A party of sixty-four departed the Arikara villages in the Upper Missouri country in mid-July 1811. This next leg of the journey was arduous, beset by many hardships, including bad weather, hunger, illness, leadership quarrels between Hunt and McKenzie, ill-fated navigational decisions, and personal tragedy. Five members became separated or left the expedition, and another five were killed en route to Astoria. The remaining fifty-four overlanders, broken into smaller groups, finally reached Fort Astoria between January and February 1812.¹⁴

The third group of Astorians departed from New York aboard the *Beaver* on October 13, 1811, and arrived at Astoria on May 10, 1812. This party consisted of twenty-six individuals: partner John Clark, five clerks, fifteen artisans and laborers, and six French Canadian voyageurs.¹⁵ The *Beaver* brought much needed news, supplies and trade goods to the Astorians, who had not had contact with Astor since leaving New York and Montreal in 1810.

Astorians in the Willamette Valley, 1812-1813

¹⁴ Washington Irving provides an extended description of the overland party's travails in *Astoria*, 119-329. For a more succinct treatment, see Ronda, 116-195; Jones, 68.

¹⁵ Seton, 30.

Researchers have previously concluded that PFC partner Robert Stuart led the first Astorian party to reconnoiter the Willamette Valley in December 1811.¹⁶ This conclusion is based upon just one source, clerk Gabriel Franchère's *published* journal of the PFC enterprise. However, the recent publication of the Fort Astoria log and the journal of clerk Alfred Seton, both previously unpublished, provide compelling evidence that the first group of Euro-Americans to venture into the Willamette Valley above the falls was in fact Donald McKenzie's expedition in the spring of 1812. An in-depth discussion of this new evidence can be found in Appendix 2, The First Astorian to the Willamette Valley.

Donald McKenzie's party set out for the Willamette Valley on March 31, 1812 with clerk William Wallace Matthews, and six laborers in two canoes.¹⁷ After portaging Willamette Falls, the group spent over a month exploring the valley, ranging more than 100 miles south from the mouth of the Willamette River to its upper forks. This party was well armed to resist possible attacks from the Natives; however, no conflicts were recorded in the valley above the falls.¹⁸ The most serious concern recorded by the Astorian chroniclers was an unnamed illness that struck the crew and forced Mackenzie to turn back before exploring the headwaters of the Willamette River and the Upper Umpqua watershed.¹⁹ It should be noted here that McKenzie sometimes adopted a confrontational and retaliatory attitude in

¹⁶ Ronda, 238; See W. Kaye Lamb's footnote #1, page 96 in Gabriel Franchère, *Journal of a Voyage on the North West Coast of North America during the Years 1811, 1812, 1813, and 1814*, edited by W. Kaye Lamb, translated by Wessie Tipping Lamb (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1969), 96; Fred S. Perrine, "Early Days on the Willamette," *OHQ* 15:4 (December 1914), 303; H. H. Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast*, vol. 2, (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Co., 1884), 177.

¹⁷ Jones, 79; Franchère, 112.

¹⁸ Alexander Ross records a rather vague account of a "slight quarrel" between French Canadian Joseph Gervais and some Upper Chinookan villagers at the mouth of the Willamette. Gervais was reported to have beaten a Native man, for which his fellow villagers sought revenge. Donald McKenzie apparently used a ruse to escape a possible confrontation with the villagers. See Ross, *Adventures*, 231-233.

¹⁹ Philip Ashton Rollins, ed., *The Discovery of the Oregon Trail: Robert Stuart's Narratives of His Overland trip Eastward from Astorian 1812-13* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), 32. Fred S. Perrine concluded that Donald McKenzie stopped at the east fork of the Willamette Valley, now known as McKenzie River. See Perrine, "Early Days," 303.

dealing with perceived injustices from Native peoples along the Columbia River and in the Plateau region. It appears then, that if the Kalapuyans had adopted a similarly confrontational attitude in response to the arrival of the Euro-American strangers into the Willamette Valley, McKenzie likely would have met such a confrontation directly forcefully. Although L. J. Burpee celebrates Mackenzie's boldness in dealing with the Native peoples of the Columbia and the Plateau, the fur trader's actions can be alternatively interpreted as poor diplomacy based on bullying tactics.²⁰ Burpee's interpretation, dating from 1919, is thus more reflective of a celebratory, imperialist tradition of Canadian historiography.

In Robert Stuart's travel memoranda, he wrote that Mckenzie reported that the Kalapuyans' "behaviour to him was respectful and obliging in the extreme."²¹ William Wallace Matthews remembered that the McKenzie party was the first group of Euro-Americans that the Indians of the Willamette Valley had ever encountered. He describes the Kalapuyans as timid and friendly in their dealings with the Astorians. This may be due to the fact that the Kalapuyans had experience with outside groups making forays into the valley for the purpose of hunting the local game. Matthews mentioned that Kalapuyans told the Astorians about the "Shoeshoonees," a Native group on horseback from beyond the valley who would occasionally "extend their incursions into this part of the country," which would cause "the inhabitants to seek safety in the woods."²² Stuart also refers to the "Shonshonas," a variation on the term "Shonshone," which Lewis and Clark had employed six years before to describe the Natives of the Willamette Valley. Here "Shonshone" might refer to Northern Shoshone and Bannock bands from southern Idaho, or the Western Shoshone from

²⁰L. J. Burpee, "A Forgotten Adventure of the Fur Trade," *Queen's Quarterly* 26:4 (April-June 1919), 368-369.

²¹ Rollins, 33.

²²Jesse S. Douglas, ed. "Matthews' Adventures on the Columbia: A Pacific Fur Company Document." *OHQ* 40:2 (June 1939), 126.

northeastern Nevada. However, since the northern Paiute were the closest mounted Great Basin group, living east of the Cascade Mountains in present-day southeastern Oregon, they may also have ranged into the Willamette Valley in search of wild game.

The valley's landscape and its flora and fauna appear to have made a singular impression upon the Astorians. Since Stuart's words are the first recorded for the Euro-American newcomers, I quote the passage in full:

The country to the Falls resembles that on the main River, but from then upward, it is delightful beyond expression, the bottoms are composed of an excellent soil thinly covered with Cottonwood [black Walnut, Birch, Hazel] & Alder & White Oaks, Ash, and the adjoining Hills are gently undulating, with a sufficiency of Pines to give variety to the most beautiful Landscape in nature – the bottoms are inhabited by innumerable herds of Elk, and the Uplands are equally overstocked by Deer and Bear – Few or no Fish are found in its waters above, & the Salmon [& Sturgeon] ascend no farther than the foot of the Falls, this want is however well compensated for, by the incredible numbers of Beaver who inhabit its banks which exceeds (from all accounts) any thing yet discovered on [either side of] Continental America.²³

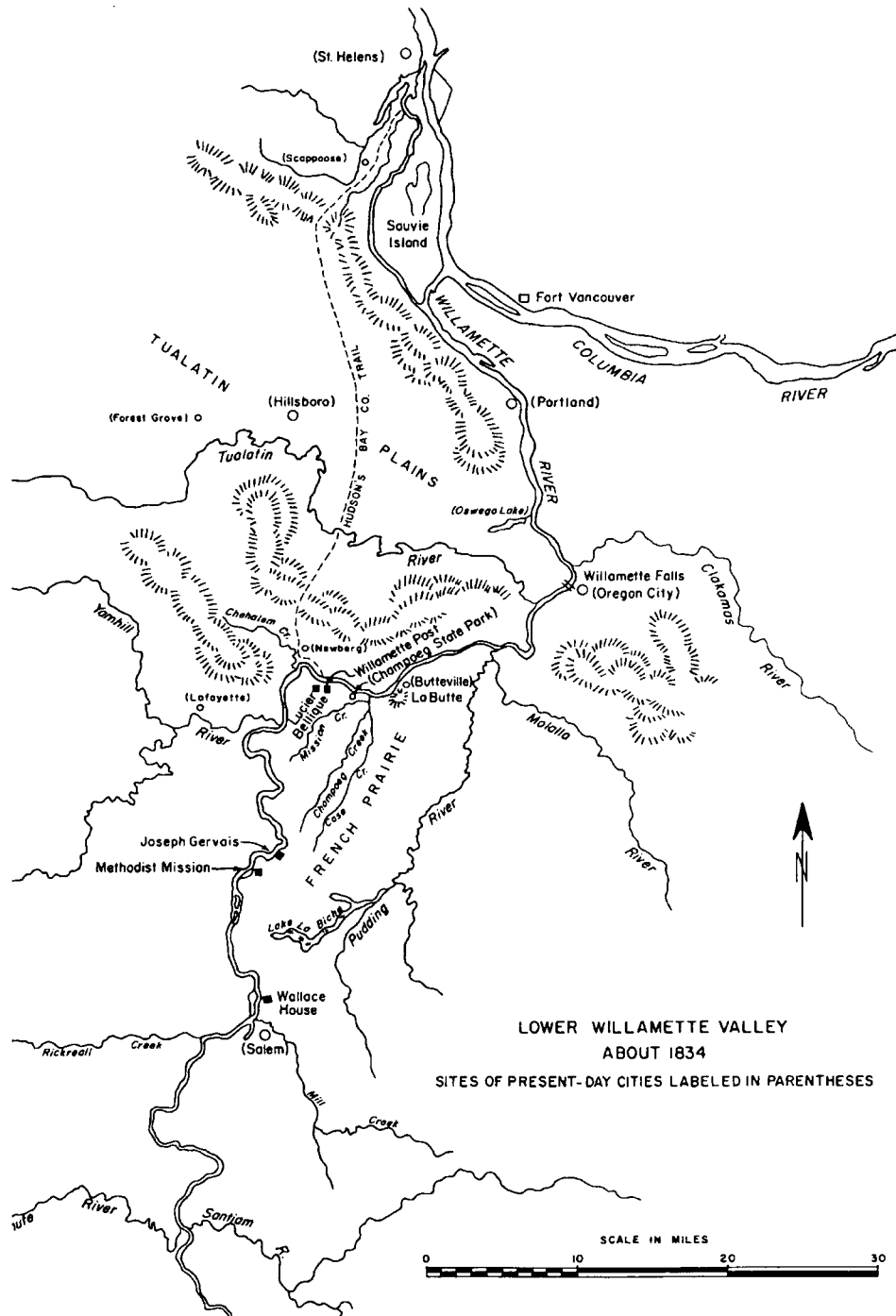
McKenzie's party returned to Astoria on May 11, 1812 with the beaver they had trapped. McKenzie gave a "favourable" report on the valley, noting that "game, beaver, and fish abound there."²⁴ Like the Cowlitz Valley, the Willamette Valley would prove a useful hunting ground for the Astorians, providing beaver pelts and needed food stores.

In the fall of 1812, the partners at Fort Astoria decided to send a larger group to winter in the Willamette Valley with the tasks of collecting furs and procuring needed venison, while also reducing the number of mouths to feed at Fort Astoria. On November 20, 1812, preparations began in earnest for the group's departure. Clerks William Wallace and

²³ Rollins, 32.

²⁴ Franchère, 116; "An account of events at Fort Astoria during more than one year (1811-1812)," in Rollins, 280. This account, published by John Jacob Astor in France in the review *Nouvelle Annales des Voyages* in 1821, was based on company documents and the journals of the Astorians, including that of Wilson Price Hunt. Hunt's diary was apparently lost after Washington Irving used it as a source for his *Astoria, or Anecdotes of an Enterprise beyond the Rocky Mountains* (1836). Phillip Rollins has included an English translation of the account in as Appendix A. The Fort Astoria logbook records a similar "satisfactory account" given by McKenzie on the resources of the Willamette Valley, see Jones, 89.

Map. 3 Modern Rendering of Willamette Valley, 1834



From Hussey, *Champoeg: Place of Transition*.

Reprinted with permission from the Oregon Historical Society Press.

This map, produced by the Oregon State Highway Commission in the 1960s, is a modern map based on historical sources.

John C. Halsey commanded the party that left Astoria in two canoes on November 24, 1812.²⁵ The group also included John Day, "two Indian Hunters [Ignace and Dorion] with their families, and twelve men."²⁶ On December 20, 1812, a company of Cathlamet Chinookans recently arrived at Fort Astoria to trade fresh salmon reported that the Astorians had safely portaged the falls and arrived at their final destination.²⁷

Upon their arrival in the mid Willamette Valley, the Astorians set to work constructing a house, later named Wallace House, on an upland prairie on the eastern bank, approximately fifty miles from the mouth of the Willamette River. Testimony given by Nathaniel J. Wyeth in 1832 and later historical research indicate that Wallace House was located near the territorial line between the Ahantchuyuk and Santiam Kalapuyans, on the southern boundary of French Prairie (at the north end of the present-day town of Salem).²⁸ During their winter and spring months spent in the Willamette Valley, the Astorians trapped beaver, hunted wild game, and traded with the Kalapuyans for additional foodstuffs. They may have ranged as far south as the Upper Umpqua watershed, home to the Yoncalla Kalapuyans and the Upper Umpqua. Alexander Ross suggests this when he remarks that the "finest hunting ground on the Walamette is toward the Imp-qua."²⁹

Back at Fort Astoria, partners Duncan McDougall and Donald Mackenzie determined that they needed to relieve pressure on the company's food stores at Astoria. Over the course of the winter, the partners sent several parties out to forage, and established rationing at Astoria. On January 31, 1813, the partners authorized "a treat" to be given to those headed

²⁵ Jones, 136-137. Franchère gives November 23 as the departure date, see Franchère, 116.

²⁶ Jones, 137.

²⁷ Jones, 140. The Cathlamet had received their information from some of their people who had recently returned from the Willamette Valley. They also erroneously reported that one of the Astorians had been killed by a "White Bear" (a grizzly).

²⁸ Franchère, 118; Perrine, 305-311; J. Neilson Barry, "Site of Wallace House, 1812-1814," *OHQ* 42:3 (September 1941): 206-207.

²⁹ Ross, 231.

for the Willamette, perhaps to raise morale amongst the men. The "effects of the [men's] frolic" was felt the next day. Two days later on February 2, 1813, a second party, which consisted of clerks John Reed, Alfred Seton, and Thomas McKay, two trappers, and thirteen men, departed for the Willamette Valley.³⁰

Although there is apparently no surviving account of the Astorians' initial residence in the Willamette Valley, the Astoria logbook does record a curious attempt by the Chinook headman, Comcomly, to influence the Astorians' intercourse with the Kalapuyans.³¹ Early in the forenoon on February 13, 1812, Comcomly crossed the Columbia River in a small canoe, bringing a few eulachon fish for trade. However, as PFC partner Duncan McDougall noted in the post journal, the real reason for his visit was to communicate "a most sorrowful account concerning Messr. Wallace, Halsey & party whom he says are all destroyed by the natives inhabiting that part of the country where they had settled themselves."³² According to Comcomly, he was simply repeating a story transmitted by the Upper Chinookan Cathlakamaps (or Cathlahcumpus), whose village was located at the southern end of Multnomah Channel near the channel's entry into the Willamette River.

The Kalapuyans in Comcomly's tale are particularly treacherous. They decide to rid themselves of the Astorians soon after the newcomers' arrival in the Willamette Valley, accomplishing their objective through duplicity. They appear friendly, offering the Astorians advice on where to search for the coveted beaver. Once the Astorians are isolated from each other at different trapping locations, the Kalapuyans then ambush the Astorians in small groups. Comcomly, "with much earnestness," assured those at Fort Astoria that his account

³⁰ Jones, 151.

³¹ Alfred Seton journal's only begins to record his experiences in the Willamette Valley in July 1813. He had abandoned his journal for an interval of fifteen months, from May 1812 to July 1813.

³² Jones, 155.

was true. He even emphasized his own sorrow at this sad tale, insisting that the news of the disaster, coupled with the news of a relative's recent death had "kept him crying for days."³³

Later that day, a Clatsop man, who had previously worked for the Astorians as an interpreter, visited Fort Astoria. He, however, presented a rather different version of the fate of the Wallace and Halsey party. On this man's recent trip down the Columbia, he had not heard that the Willamette Valley party had been harmed, but that some unnamed Natives had formulated plans to "cut them off."³⁴ The Clatsop man apparently did not want to contradict Comcomly, so he added that the Chinook headman's accounts "were undoubtedly true and everything would take place as he had mentioned."³⁵

Alarmed at possible violence against the Wallace and Halsey party, McDougall dispatched a messenger to clerk Gabriel Franchère and his fishing party encamped at Oak Point, near the Upper Chinookan village of Qániak, located on the south shore of the Columbia. McDougall ordered Franchère to visit the Cathlakamaps further upstream and ascertain the accuracy of Comcomly's information. If there was truth to Concomly's story, Franchère was to enlist the support of the headman Casino to send some of his villagers to warn the Reed and Seton party, which had set out for the Willamette Valley on February 2, 1813.³⁶ After contacting the Cathlakamaps headman Casino, Franchère sent word back to Fort Astoria that Comcomly's tale about violence in the Willamette Valley was unfounded, "only a fabrication of some of the Indians."³⁷ Franchère himself makes no reference to this

³³ Jones, 155.

³⁴ Jones, 155.

³⁵ Jones, 155.

³⁶ Jones, 156.

³⁷ Jones, 158.

incident in his narrative, noting that the reason for his trip upstream on February 13th was to procure sturgeon for Astoria.³⁸

On February 27, 1813, a fortnight after his previous visit, Comcomly returned to Fort Astoria with further news of the Willamette Valley expeditions. It seems that his original information had been incorrect, and so he related a second version of the Astorians' encounters with the Kalapuyans, this one replete with dramatic elements, including thievery, cross-cultural conflict, inter-tribal negotiations, and gift-giving. I quote the passage at length to give a flavor of Comcomly's storytelling as filtered through Duncan McDougall:

It so happened at the establishment of the party that all hands were sent out to bring in meat of Elk and Deer (of which they had killed a great number) leaving only two S.[andwich] Islanders in charge of the store. During their absence the natives near at hand, in considerable numbers (whom he denominated Calapoyas) visited the place and finding only those two to guard it, rob'd and took away all the principal goods, as Blankets, Cloths, etc., etc., without offering any violence to the 2 S. Islanders, who probably being overpowered in numbers made no resistance. On the return of Wallace & party he, with most of his number repaired immediately to the lodges of the Indians in order to secure the goods, who, instead of offering to return them, were all assembled with Bows & arrows ready for an assault. On discovering this movement, the whites proceeded instantly amongst them, seized some and broke their bows or cut the strings, wick [sic] brought on a general scuffle. Wallace's party it appeared had taken the precaution to load their Muskets with Powder only, and on perceiving the extremity to which they were reduced fired among the Indians which instantly frightened & dispersed them, and greater part of the goods were obtained. Ka-es-no, the Chief of the Cathlakamaps, hearing of what had taken place repaired immediately to the Calapoya, harangued them, pointed out the great impropriety of such conduct & the consequences that would follow, told them in what manner himself & other chiefs on the river treated the whites & the goods effects arising from it, and exhorted them without delay to return the remaining articles stolen. After hearing him, they followed his counsel, the things were all brought, and him (Kaesno) charged as mediator to return them & make up the breach. For which services Wallace had rewarded him with 2 fathoms Blue Cloth, 2 Wool Hats, and two Blankets. This would appear had been performed by Kaesno & the news reached Comcomly, since Mr. Franchère was up to his village.³⁹

In response to this latest report from Comcomly, on March 1, 1813 McDougall sent three men to recontact Gabriel Franchère at Oak Point (Qániak). They were to instruct him to

³⁸ Franchère, 118.

³⁹ Jones, 160.

make a second inquiry amongst the Cathlakamaps about the veracity of Comcomly's stories, and if necessary, to ask the headman Casino to send a party for some written word from William Wallace.⁴⁰ Franchère arrived back at Fort Astoria on March 8th. He had visited the Cathlakamaps the previous week and reported that the "story last received from Comcomly proves wholly without foundation." In fact, Casino knew nothing about the story. Rather than hold Comcomly responsible for the fabrication, McDougall attributed the deception to "some artful Indians," who wished to disrupt the close relations between the Euro-Americans and the Chinooks.⁴¹

On March 18, 1813 John Reed and Alfred Seton and the other members of their party returned to Astoria from Wallace House. They confirmed that the stories about conflict with the Kalapuyans were quite untrue. In fact,

They live upon very amicable terms with the natives, who visit them daily & trade roots (their only article of trade) for meat. Indeed, they seem so far from having a wish to pillage their goods that they seemed to look with more desire upon the contents of the provision store than that of the goods, were the Bales still remain in the same state as when they took them in.⁴²

The fictitious Kalapuyans in Comcomly's story are ignorant, duplicitous, violent, and above all, desirous of European trade goods and technology. In contrast, the documented encounters between the Kalapuyans and the Astorians during the winter of 1812-13 indicate that the Kalapuyans remained quite comfortable with their own technology and products, exhibiting a limited interest in European trade goods. This suggests that thirty years of indirect contact following the rise of the maritime fur trade did not appear to have greatly impacted the Kalapuyans. In addition, since they were hunter-gatherers and the Astorians met them during

⁴⁰ Jones, 161.

⁴¹ Jones, 162.

⁴² Jones, 165.

the long winter months, which would be the season the Kalapuyans would most likely face hunger, it is not surprising that their main interest was securing additional foodstuffs.

In light of the fictitious nature of Comcomly's tales and the discrepancy between his depiction of the Kalapuyans and the Astorians' experiences in the Willamette Valley, what explains Comcomly's ruse? Perhaps it is best to read Comcomly's words as a warning to the Astorians. Since the late eighteenth century, Lower Chinookans at the mouth of the Columbia River, and in particular, Comcomly and his people, the Chinook-proper, had played a prominent role as middlemen in the maritime fur trade along the Columbia River. Utilizing the aboriginal trade networks that extended inland to the Plateau region, Comcomly and the Chinook, had increased their wealth, power, and prestige in the Columbia country. The Astorians' strategy of establishing inland posts to trade directly with Native groups was therefore a threat to Comcomly's economic and social position.

The logbook at Fort Astoria details Comcomly's initial responses to this shift from a maritime to an overland fur trade, and his ongoing efforts to retain control of the lucrative trade along the Columbia River corridor. For example, on August 23, 1811, four months after the Astorians' arrival in the Columbia, Duncan McDougall noted that a party of Chehalis, a southwestern Coast Salish people who lived northeast of the Columbia estuary, visited Fort Astoria. When asked why they did not regularly travel to the fort to trade furs, the Chehalis replied that they had been "cautioned by the Chinooks, against coming, as we were very inveterate against their Nation, for their conduct to former Visetors [sic] they did not wish to put themselves in our power." McDougall assured the Chehalis that this was "an egregious falsehood imposed upon them by the Chinooks, merely to monopolize the Trade."⁴³

⁴³ Jones, 44.

In response to the Astorians' threat to trump Comcomly's control of trade networks to the Willamette Valley, Comcomly sought to play upon the Astorians' fears of being attacked by poorly-known Natives. His tales are in fact more reflective of Euro-American encounters with Upper Chinookan groups in the Columbia River corridor from the Dalles to the Cascades.⁴⁴ Beginning with the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1805-06, and continuing with the Pacific Fur Company, relations between the newcomers and the Natives peoples along this stretch of the river were often fraught with tension, violence, and "thievery."⁴⁵ The basis for this mutual misunderstanding was the Euro-Americans' unfamiliarity with the riverine Indians' customs of gift-exchange, tribute, and established kinship ties that afforded distant and neighboring groups access rights to the Columbia River corridor.

For the Upper Chinookans along the river from the Cascades and the Dalles, these traditions were not only important social and cultural practices, they were also essential to their economy by providing them with goods, services, marriage partners, and slaves via the great trade that flowed to the lower Columbia from the Plateau, and vice versa. Like the Lower Chinookans at the river's mouth, the Upper Chinookans exploited their geographic position to their advantage. However, the Euro-Americans—first the Lewis and Clark expedition and the later Astorians—understood waterways as open transportation routes in keeping with customary Western European legal principles. They did not recognize local Native notion of territorial rights, and the need to exchange gifts or establish kinship ties in order to have access rights through a group's territory, especially when that territory included

⁴⁴ For a rendering of Upper Chinookan villages and ethnic affiliations of this part of the Columbia River, see David H. French and Katherine S. French, "Wasco, Wishram, and Cascades," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 12, *Plateau*, edited by Deward E. Walker (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 362-363.

⁴⁵ Alexander Henry the Younger, *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger*, edited by Barry H. Gough, vol. 2 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1992); James Rhonda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984; rpt; 2002), 163-213; David Thompson, *David Thompson's Narrative, 1784-1812*, edited by Richard Glover (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1962).

an important waterway.⁴⁶ Here it is important to note that the Euro-Americans' inability to recognize the tribute, or toll, expected by the Upper Chinookans at the Cascades and the Dalles was also a result of the Euro-Americans' historical experience east of the Rocky Mountains. In the Canadian and Midwestern watersheds, fur traders did not regularly encounter Native groups that exacted tributes for river traffic through their territories.⁴⁷

In the second, modified tale, Comcomly portrayed the Kalapuyans as perhaps slightly less violent, but still quite ignorant of how to cultivate the proper relations with "the whites." As a result, the Cathlakamaps headman Casino journeyed to the upper Willamette Valley to instruct the Kalapuyans on proper fur trade etiquette, and arrange a peace between the Natives and newcomers. In both cases, Comcomly employed storytelling to educate the Astorians on the need to cultivate trade relations using the established aboriginal trade and kinship links. If not, the Astorians would run the risk of conflicts with the less savvy Natives of the Willamette Valley, much like the fur traders had encountered in the Columbia River corridor. This interpretation of Comcomly's ruse is in keeping with the lower Columbian cultural norms and geopolitics of the early nineteenth century; as well with Cicely's own character as a shrewd political leader ever vigilant about safeguarding his own interests and those of his people.⁴⁸

Ultimately, Cicely's diplomatic ruse did not prevent the Astorians from establishing direct contact with interior Native groups. This was a result of the fur traders' determination to implement the logistical strategy long practiced by French colonial *coureurs de bois* and

⁴⁶ John Phillip Reid offers a case study of the differing legal traditions of the Euro-Americans and the Oregon Country Indian peoples, see "Restraint of Vengeance: Retaliation-in-Kind and the Use of Indian Law in the Old Oregon Country," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 95:1 (Spring 1994): 48-92. Reid offers additional examples of the cross-cultural miscommunication that resulted in conflictual, often violent relations between the Chinookans of the Columbia River in *Patterns of Vengeance: Crosscultural Homicide in the North American Fur Trade* (Pasadena, CA: Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society, 1999).

⁴⁷ Reid, *Patterns*, 154.

⁴⁸ J. F. Santee, "Comcomly and the Chinooks," *OHQ* 33:3 (September 1932), 271.

Montreal-based fur traders which entailed collecting furs at interior posts and then transporting those pelts to a central depot (here Fort Astoria) using a brigade system. However, as the episode demonstrates, the Astorians operated within the constraints of an aboriginal geopolitical system. While local leaders such as Comcomly sought to adapt to changes in the developing economic system, the Astorians continued to rely on Natives for trade, labor, and information. Clearly outnumbered in the Columbia Country, the fur traders remained in a vulnerable position, as evidenced by McDougall's alarm over the possibility of Native aggression contained in Comcomly's stories.⁴⁹ The geography of the Willamette River at the falls was such that the local Native groups had the potential to disrupt the Euro-Americans' activities in the valley as had their Upper Chinookan relations in the Columbia River corridor.

Indeed Comcomly's tales might be viewed as a prelude of eventual tensions between Euro-Americans and Natives over resources and access rights in the Willamette Valley. During the early 1810s, the Astorians continued to trap, hunt, and trade in the valley, viewing the region "as a vast commons, a spacious arena free and open to newcomers, irrespective of the presence and cultural worlds of natives people"⁵⁰ Although there is one recorded violent incident between Euro-Americans and the Kalapuyans of Willamette Valley in mid December, 1813—with the fur trappers in question retreating rather than returning fire—the various Kalapuyan groups of the Willamette Valley and their neighbors downstream do not

⁴⁹ For a larger discussion of the fur traders' vulnerability in the Columbia region during this early period, see Mathias David Bergman, "Crosscultural Interactions, Interdependencies, and Insecurities in the Lower Columbia River Valley Frontier, 1810-1855," (MA thesis, Washington State University, 2000), 32-86.

⁵⁰ William G. Robbins, "Introduction," to Ross, *Adventures*, xiii.

appear to have prevented the Euro-Americans from trapping in the valley for the first several years of their presence in the region.⁵¹

Upon their return to Astoria in March 1813, John Reed and Alfred Seton reported that the parties sent to the Willamette Valley to forage for their own food did quite well there because of the availability of wild game. The experienced hunters in their group were able to provide a continual supply of meat for all the men. Reed and Seton also confirmed the presence of beaver, but indicated that the trappers were having difficulty capturing the animals due to the "frequent rising & falling of the River, which overflows its banks almost with every shower."⁵²

On June 2, 1813, William Wallace and John Halsey returned with their party to Fort Astoria.⁵³ The party consisted of twenty-six people, including laborers, hunters, and their families. They spent over seven months in the Willamette Valley and returned with nineteen bales of dried meat and seventeen packs of beaver pelts (roughly 45 pelts per pack). The PFC inventory for the trapping expedition records this as 621 beaver skins, seven land otter pelts, and 154 beaver skins from the freemen Alexander Carson and Pierre Dulaunay.⁵⁴ William Wallace reported that he had led exploring parties to the southern tip of the Willamette Valley, nearly to the source of the river. Beaver were abundant throughout the valley, but he noted nothing of additional importance about the physical geography of the valley.

⁵¹Seton, 135.

⁵²Jones, 165.

⁵³Jones, 186. Franchère places their return to Astoria at the end of May, Franchère, 119. The Pacific Fur Company Inventory for McKay's [Willamette River] lists the return as June 1, 1813, see Porter, *John Jacob Astor*, 531.

⁵⁴Jones, 186; Porter, *John Jacob Astor*, 531. Alexander Carson and Pierre Duluanay had joined the overland Pacific Fur Company expedition in the Upper Missouri Country around May 11, 1811. They left the company in September 1811 and thereafter contracted as free trappers. See Kenneth Wiggins Porter, "Roll of Overland Astorians, 1819-1812," *OHQ* 43:2 (June 1933): 101-112.

The attitudes of the PFC's officer class toward the Kalapuyans are most clearly articulated in the reports of clerk William Wallace and the narrative of Alexander Ross. Although Ross demonstrates a more complex viewpoint, both men perceived the Kalapuyans through the lens of Euro-American cultural values. As hunter-gatherer society practicing a complex subsistence economy, the valley Natives appeared less advanced, less productive, and less wealthy than the mounted hunters of the Plateau and Plains.⁵⁵ William Wallace expressed views more negative than those his colleagues Halsey and Seton, referring to the Indians of the Willamette Valley as a "set of poverty-strick beings, totally ignorant of hunting Furs and scarce capable of procuring their own subsistence."⁵⁶ Clearly, the Kalapuyans' disinterest in trapping beaver was a source of frustration for the Astorians.

In his memoirs written during the 1840s, Alexander Ross devotes a short passage on the first encounters between the Astorians and the Kalapuyans of the Willamette Valley, classifying them as the "great nation" of the "Col-lap-poh-yea-ass," which likely alludes to the size of their population in the 1810s. Like Wallace, Ross saw the Kalapuyans as terribly poor in a land exceedingly rich in natural and animal resources. He describes them as an "indolent and sluggish race."⁵⁷ Ross relates their apparent lack of productivity to their "minimal" needs. The Kalapuyans were ostensibly able to meet their subsistence needs with little exertion, so in Ross' eyes, their society produced little of value. What they do accomplish Ross attributes to leadership of local headmen.⁵⁸ Ross, like other fur trappers, expressed annoyance at the Kalapuyans' behavior in response to the Astorian hunting parties. Rather than leave the Astorians to their prey, the Natives immediately responded to the sound

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 119-126.

⁵⁶ Jones, 186.

⁵⁷ Ross, *Adventures*, 230.

⁵⁸ Ross misidentifies the Cathlakamaps headman Casino as a Kalapuyan leader. Ross, *Adventures*, 230.

of gunfire, following the “sound like a swarm of bees, and feast and gormandize on the offal of the game, like so many vultures round a dead carcass.”⁵⁹ At this point in their relations with the Kalapuyans, the fur traders did not weigh the impact of their hunting and trapping on the Indians’ local resources.⁶⁰ While hunting would deplete the Kalapuyans’ wild game resources, beaver trapping would greatly alter the local ecosystem by affecting surface water.

Alfred Seton, like the other Astorians who wrote about the Willamette Valley, was impressed by both the physical landscape, and the natural resources available. In describing the Willamette Valley as a prime location for Euro-American settlement, Seton noted that the Kalapuyans were “peaceable,” which would make the area all the more appealing.⁶¹ He believed that the Willamette Valley was an ideal place for American settlement, given the open prairies, the wild games, and the proximity of the river for transport and travel.⁶² This was the notion echoed by Alexander Ross when he wrote that the “Willamitte quarter has always been considered by the whites as the garden of the Columbia, particularly in an agricultural view, and certain animals of the chace.”⁶³

During the mid-summer months of 1813, the activities of the Astorians quickened in anticipation of sending an overland party eastward to update Astor in New York. As a result, several trading parties were sent out to various Native trade marts to gather the needed food stores for the overland party’s journey, this in addition to keeping a supply of food and furs flowing into Astoria. Several additional groups were dispatched throughout the summer on short forays to the Willamette Valley. By mid-summer, Duncan McDougall began to consider selling the Pacific Fur Company to the North West Company. On July 1, 1813, he

⁵⁹ Ross, *Adventures*, 230.

⁶⁰ Jones, 186, footnote #71.

⁶¹ Seton, 122.

⁶² Seton, 121-122.

⁶³ Ross, *Adventures*, 228.

sent another party back to the Willamette Valley "to spend the season hunting & await the arrival of Mr. [Donald] McKenzie in a few weeks."⁶⁴ The party included Alfred Seton, nine engagés, three hunters, and a youth named Guillaume [William] Perrault.

On July 1, 1813 Alfred Seton and William Wallace set out again with another hunting party to the Willamette. They passed a month of intense hunting to gather stocks for the winter, from July 5 to August 4, on which date Seton and four others returned to Astoria with 33 bales of dried meat.⁶⁵ On August 10, 1813, Seton returned to Wallace house. From July 6 through July 16, 1813, a small party from Astoria spent time in the Willamette "trading for provisions."⁶⁶ This group included clerks Thomas McKay and John Halsey. They may have gone only as far as the Willamette Falls, for when they returned, they brought back dried salmon, some fresh salmon, and a few elk skins.⁶⁷ By September 15, 1813, Seton and his party were back at Fort Astoria. On October 10, 1813 the group of Astorians set off up the Columbia, but along the way they met a large contingent of Northwesters and they, along with the Northwesters, returned to Astoria to determine the fate of the Pacific Fur Company.

The North West Company on the Columbia

The North West Company was the most prominent successor to the French fur trade developed during the French colonial regime. This system relied on the St. Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, and a chain of fur trade posts extending westward into the Canadian Shield. Following the defeat of the French in 1760, and the separation of North America into British and American spheres of influence after the Revolutionary War (1776-1781), British-

⁶⁴ Jones, 198.

⁶⁵ Seton, 116.

⁶⁶ Jones, 200.

⁶⁷ Jones, 202.

American and Anglo-Celtic traders and merchants came to dominate the fur trade flowing through Montreal. Several competing merchants and traders joined forces to found the North West Company (NWC) in 1783. At the time the company was a straightforward partnership with sixteen shares. Not a chartered institution, it is best described as a "common-law company," a type of business customary in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.⁶⁸

Over the course of the next several decades the NWC underwent several structural changes, including the coming and goings of partners, increases in the number of shares, and a remarkable geographic expansion. The NWC continued to face competition from its main rival, the Hudson Bay's Company, as well as threats from smaller splinter enterprises such as XY Company and American companies and traders operating in the Great Lakes, and Upper Missouri Country. Many of the well-known Canadian explorers and cartographers from this period were connected with the NWC, including Simon Fraser and David Thompson.

With the reunion of the XY Company with the North West Company in 1804, the company partners turned their attention with renewed vigor to extending the fur trade beyond the Rocky Mountains.⁶⁹ The Northwesters also sought a water route from the North American interior to the Pacific Ocean, which would allow access to fur markets in China, and thereby reduce the high operating costs associated with the NWC's long supply lines to Montreal.⁷⁰ Although Simon Fraser's three-year expedition (1805-1807) through present-day British Columbia proved that the Fraser River was not navigable to the Pacific, he did succeed in expanding the company's chain of forts west of the Rockies. In 1806 David

⁶⁸ Gordon Charles Davidson, *The North West Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1918; rpt; New York: Russell and Russell, 1967), 13; W. Stewart Wallace, ed., *Documents Relating to the Northwest Company* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), 4-12.

⁶⁹ After 1802, the XY was officially known as "Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Company." See Russell Anthony Pendergast, "The XY Company, 1798-1804," (Ph.D diss., University of Ottawa, 1957), 37.

⁷⁰ H. Lloyd Keith, *North of Athabasca: Slave Lake and Mackenzie River Documents of the North West Company, 1800-1821* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2001), 10.

Thompson set out to continue expanding the fur trade westward and reconnoitered a water route via the Columbia to the coast. Over the next five years, Thompson mapped the Columbia River, founded additional fur trade posts in the region, and located overland two passes (Howe and Athabasca) across the Rockies.⁷¹ The explorer and a crew of eight men subsequently arrived at Fort Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia on July 15, 1811. There Thompson informed McDougall about a prior decision by the NWC wintering partners at Fort William to support Astor's initial offer of a joint venture by the PFC and the NWC. However, Thompson's information was outdated, as the Montreal-based owners had decided instead to aggressively compete with the PFC in the Columbia River basin.⁷²

By the summer of 1812 preparations were underway for additional expeditions to the lower Columbia region. London representatives of the NWC in communication with British officials argued that if the PFC proceeded unopposed on the Columbia River, the American company, and thus the American state, would control trade along the great river of the west. While John Jacob Astor failed to secure assistance for his Columbian enterprise due to British naval superiority and a blockade of American ports, the Northwesters were able to garner some support from the British government. Here a crucial element was the outbreak of war between the U.S. and Britain in June 1812, which convinced the British government to send the frigate *H.M.S. Phoebe* to accompany the NWC ship the *Isaac Todd* on its voyage to the Columbia River. The two vessels departed Portsmouth, England on March 25, 1813. This maritime expedition was beset with problems while en route; however, the *H.M.S. Racoon* did arrive at Fort Astorian in place of the *Phoebe* on November 30, 1813. The *Isaac Todd*

⁷¹ Ronda, 23.

⁷² Ronda, 59-64; Jones, 33.

finally reached the Columbia on April 23, 1814, thirteen months after her original departure.⁷³

While the *Isaac Todd* took longer than expected to reach the Columbia River, news of her voyage preceded her. In mid January 1813, Donald McKenzie and his party arrived at Fort Astoria from their post on the Clearwater River with word of the *Isaac Todd* and the outbreak of hostilities between the United States and Great Britain. Mackenzie had learned of these developments a few weeks earlier while visiting John Clarke's party stationed at Fort Spokane. The news originally came from Northwester John George McTavish, who met the Astorians at Fort Spokane in late December 1812. By the early spring of 1813, it appears both McDougall and Mackenzie believed the PFC enterprise should be abandoned. The partners' concerns increased with the arrival of the group of eighteen Northwesters headed by McTavish, Joseph Laroque, and Michel Bourdon at Astoria on April 11, 1813.⁷⁴

The military backing of the British government, coupled with Astor's inability to resupply Astoria and the strong presence of the Northwesters, effectively isolated the PFC and led to the Astorians' decision to sell their company to the NWC partners in 1813. The four PFC partners present at Astoria in the summer of 1812, Duncan McDougall, Donald Mackenzie, John Clarke, and David Stuart, agreed to dissolve the company on July 1, 1813. On Oct. 16, 1813, all the surviving partners, including Wilson Price Hunt, now returned to Astoria, signed the agreement with the NWC representatives, thereby selling the PFC and its assets to the Canadian company. All the employees were released from their contracts and given the option to enlist with the NWC. The remaining Astorians left the Columbia with

⁷³ Barry Gough, "The 1813 Expedition to Astoria." *The Beaver* 304:2 (Autumn 1973): 44-51.

⁷⁴ Ronda, 264-278; Jones, 172-173.

either Wilson Price Hunt aboard the *Pedlar* in March 1814, or with the NWC brigade, which departed for the East in April 1814.⁷⁵

The North West Company in the Willamette Valley, 1814-1822

Several groups of fur traders spent the winter of 1813-1814 in the Willamette Valley. These groups included former Astorians awaiting passage home, NWC personnel, and free trappers working on contract for the NWC. Among those who elected to trap for the NWC in the Willamette Valley were Joseph St. Amant, Étienne Lucier, François Martial, Jacques Harteau, John Day, Moses Flanagan, Micajah Baker, Richard Milligan, Alexander Carson, and William Cannon. These free trappers departed for the Willamette in two parties on October 17, and October 19, 1813.⁷⁶

The first group of Northwesters to pass the winter in the Willamette Valley, headed by clerk William Henry, arrived by mid-November. Although Alfred Seton declined to engage with the NWC, he decided to join William Henry's party to the Willamette Valley as he did not wish to spend the winter in the company of Duncan McDougall at Astoria. According to Seton, the group had no fixed abode for the first few months, moving about the valley camping at various locations.⁷⁷ In mid-November, William Henry sent word to the partners at Fort George that there was "something bad in agitation among the Natives" of the Willamette Valley. However, since there was a communication problem between the Northwesters and the unnamed Kalapuyans, presumably because one or both groups did not speak Chinook Jargon (the *lingua franca* of the Northwest fur trade), William Henry was unable to determine the exact problem. In response, the North West partners, including the

⁷⁵ Jones, 222; Ronda, *Astoria*, 277-301; T.C. Elliot, "Sale of Astoria, 1813," *OHQ* 33:1 (March 1932): 45-50.

⁷⁶ Jones, 222.

⁷⁷ Seton, 129-132.

recently arrived Alexander Henry the Younger (William's uncle) and Alexander Stewart, dispatched clerk William Wallace and ten men as reinforcements to William Henry's party.⁷⁸

On November 29, 1813, William Henry's party established themselves near the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyan village of Champoeg, on the east bank of the Willamette River. The group included William Henry's Indian wife and child, and twenty-nine men "composed of divers [sic] nations & languages": six Hawaiians, four Iroquois, one Mississauga, one Nippising, sixteen French Canadians, and one American, Alfred Seton. The next day, the party began erecting a post, designated "Fort Calipuyaw" (Fort Kalapuya) in Seton's journal. A little over a week later Seton noted that William Henry was busy "trading some roots with the Calipuyaws along side of me, for Beads, who not thinking the quantity s[u]fficient, are loudly asking for [more]."⁷⁹

The first recorded armed conflict between the fur traders and a Kalapuyan group occurred soon afterward, in mid-December 1813. A group of trappers, presumably free trappers, got into a melee with some unnamed Kalapuyans further upriver on the Willamette. They arrived at Fort Kalapuya on December 19th and reported that a group of Indians had fired their arrows at a smaller party of three men, though none of the trappers was harmed. Rather than return fire and "laying the Indians dead at their feet," the trappers hastily retreated in their canoes downriver, "which when the Natives saw, they justly concluded the White Men were afraid of them."⁸⁰

As recounted by Alfred Seton, the trappers presented themselves as victims of Kalapuyan aggression. Unfortunately, the full text of the introductory sentence for this passage is not available due to damage in the original manuscript. The first portion of

⁷⁸ Henry, 611.

⁷⁹ Seton, 134.

⁸⁰ Seton, 135.

the sentence suggests that trappers believed that the unnamed Kalapuyans had treated the trappers improperly: "the reason of the h[urry]ing down was on acct. of the Indians, who [had] behaved to them . . . [text damaged]." The trappers ostensibly hurried away, avoiding a confrontation because, as a party of three, they were greatly outnumbered. Clearly though, the trappers had considered returning fire and would have regarded the killing of their attackers as a justifiable course of action. Their flight response was one directed by prudence rather than any ethical or diplomatic concerns.

On December 25, 1813 clerk Thomas McKay, freeman Registe Bélair, and a third man arrived at Astoria from the Willamette Valley bearing letters from William Henry. William Henry's reports about the Kalapuyans may explain some of the tension between the two parties. Alexander Henry, paraphrasing his nephew's letter, wrote:

Intelligence from that quarter is [that] beaver are numerous, but the Natives, who are also very numerous, will not hunt them; their sole employment is digging Roots, Cammass, Waptoes & c. and stealing the Beavers that are caught in traps when opportunity offers.⁸¹

Additionally, William Henry relayed his annoyance at the Kalapuyans' "theft" of deer killed by the Northwesters, the Indians having been attracted to the sound of the newcomers' guns. He also reported that the Natives "are exceedingly fond of Meat and will barter everything they have for it. They prefer it to any of our Goods."⁸²

The tensions between the two groups flowed from differing cultural perceptions about resource ownership and use rights. Like the Astorians before him, William Henry viewed the Willamette Valley as unclaimed territory free for the taking. He neither recognized the Kalapuyans' access rights over the wild game resources in their territories nor that the "theft"

⁸¹ Henry, 628-629.

⁸² Henry, 629.

of deer carcasses may have been a stratagem employed by the Kalapuyans to force the foreigners to respect those territorial rights. The Willamette Valley Natives would have perceived the fur traders as interlopers because the newcomers had not established kin relations with the Kalapuyans, the customary means for gaining resource use rights in a territory.

The Northwesters took Kalapuyan cultural values and territorial claims lightly due to the Euro-Americans' sense of ethnic and military superiority. Clearly, they did not feel it *necessary* to ally themselves through marriage to the Kalapuyans, as had Duncan McDougall with the family of Chinook headman Comcomly.⁸³ This may have been the result of the fur traders' low opinion of the Kalapuyans in general, and the view that the Willamette Valley was more of a provisioning area than a zone rich in beaver. Additionally, unlike the Kalapuyans, whose labor input in the form of a managed ecosystem was not readily apparent to the Euro-Americans, the fur traders associated property and resource rights with the production of marketable commodities such as furs.

After a month's work on Fort Kalapuya at Champoege, a small group of Northwesters moved into the post on December 29, 1813. The establishment, a log cabin with mud covering the crevices between the logs, had two rooms, a chimney, and windows covered by deer skins. William Henry and his family had the larger room and William Wallace and Alfred Seton the smaller one. The other laborers, hunters, and freemen continued to camp and trap throughout the valley. In January 1814, a group of Upper Chinookans from the lower Willamette brought news that two ships had arrived at the mouth of the Columbia.

⁸³ Jones, 203. See also, David Peterson del Mar's discussion of intermarriage between fur traders and Lower Chinookans in the early contact period: "Intermarriage and Agency: A Chinookan Case Study," *Ethnohistory* 42:1 (Winter 1995): 2-7.

They subsequently recounted a story of armed conflict between the vessels, prompting discussions about the possibility of a battle between an American and a British ship.⁸⁴

This discussion gave rise to some furious talk by the French Canadians. Seton quotes the French Canadians as saying that if the Americans had killed some of their compatriots, they were prepared to kill some Americans: “Si les Bostonés ont tué mon Frère, ma conscience de Bon Dieu, J’entuerai d’autres.” However, when pressed by William Henry about their attitude toward Seton, whom the French Canadians referred to as “la tête blanche” (the white-haired one), they replied that they would “not silence him” (lui nous ne le tairons pas).⁸⁵ Seton and the others later learned that the Chinookans’ tale was quite embellished. There was only one ship, the *Racoon*, whose captain had taken possession of Astoria, renaming it Fort George. The purported maritime battle was in fact an accident that occurred when some of the men on the *Racoon* were practicing firing and accidentally lit gunpowder, killing eight men and injuring nineteen.⁸⁶

This minor episode reveals the ethnic tensions that existed, as well the role of personal relationships in shaping relations between the different national groups within the regional fur trade. The outbreak of hostilities between the United States and Great Britain weighed on the minds of all the fur traders, Americans, French Canadians, and Scottish Canadians alike. Rumors of conflict in the Columbia River were quickly interpreted by the French Canadians as evidence of American aggression. And although the French Canadians were not averse to responding in kind to such aggression, they were not prepared to go so far as to take retribution on one of the resident Americans whom they knew personally, Alfred Seton. The French Canadians’ attitude was motivated by a sense of ethnic solidarity rather

⁸⁴ Seton, 140.

⁸⁵ Seton, 141.

⁸⁶ Seton, 143.

support for the British Crown, yet even this ethnic solidarity might be tempered by a personal connection. Despite the current tensions resulting from the War of 1812, the French Canadians reached across the cultural divide.

In mid-January 1814, a NWC hunter, known as the Grand Nippissing (possibly Joseph Mochomau), encountered a group of horsemen from the Plateau region approximately four miles from Fort Kalapuya. Although the Plateau group is not clearly identified in the text, there are several indications that the horsemen may have been Northwest Sahaptins, possibly Klickitat, a group which dwelt in the Columbia River Valley between the White Salmon and Klickitat rivers.⁸⁷ There are two version of the Grand Nippissing's encounter, one from Alfred Seton and one from Alexander Henry.⁸⁸

The Nippissing hunter was alone when he spied the horsemen, who would have been distinguishable from the Kalapuyans, given that the Kalapuyans owned few if any horses at this time. In Seton's version the encounter is very dramatic, with the Indians dressed in full war regalia and paint, riding hard toward the hunter; Henry's account is terser. Seeing the mounted Natives, the hunter took refuge in a wooded thicket, his gun pointed at the party of Natives. There was a tense moment before an elderly man, possibly a headman, came forward and communicated with the Nippissing hunter using signs. The old man explained that Euro-Americans' hunting in the Willamette Valley was having a negative impact. The horsemen were hungry from not having caught any deer or elk because the "White Men

⁸⁷ The two passages from Alexander Henry's journal suggest that the horsemen were a Northwest Sahaptin group such as the Klickitat, Kittitas, Yakama, or Taitnapam. The first reads: "These people I am left to suppose are of the tribe called Scie to gas [camas eaters]. They dwell to the westward of the Shaehaptins [Sahaptian] or Nez Perce Indians are very numerous (Henry, 663). The second reads: "They say they are of the *Walla Walla* Shat as la and Halth-oy-pum natives" (Henry, 672.). "Xwalwaipam" is the indigenous name for the Klickitats and historical source point to a movement of the Klickitat into the Willamette Valley during the early days of the nineteenth century. I thank Andrew Fisher for his assistance with the identification of the Northwest Sahaptin names. He notes that Euro-Americans would often group all Sahaptins together as "Walla Walla." The Sahaptian language family encompasses the Nez Perce and the Northwest Sahaptin languages.

⁸⁸ Seton, 144-145; Henry, 663.

hunting with guns . . . scared them away.”⁸⁹ They added that they were having difficulty killing the animals with bows and arrows. Such complaints are instructive, for they point to another impact of the fur traders’ activities in the Willamette Valley. The newcomers’ use of guns disrupted traditional hunting practices by scaring the animals, which also explains fur trader accounts of Natives following gun fire and helping themselves to the dead animals, prey of which they had been deprived by the introduction of firearms.⁹⁰

The Plateau Indians who cornered the Nipissing hunter insisted that the outsiders must to leave the valley, or else the horsemen would drive them away. In response, the Nipissing hunter threatened the Natives, stating that there were additional white men nearby who would avenge any harm that might befall him. However, the hunter consented not to hunt in that location any longer if they would go and leave him unmolested, which they agreed to do. Seton’s version has the old man waiting with the hunter until the rest of the party had left, whereas Henry’s version states that the group simply departed after an agreement was reached.

This tense encounter between the Grand Nipissing and the Northwest Sahaptins indicates that by the winter of 1813-14 the extended presence of the Northwesters in the Willamette Valley was beginning to have a noticeable impact on the availability of wild game resources. The fur traders disregarded local protocols about resource use, and they came armed with a significant technological advantage in the quest for wild game. In contrast to the Natives’ use of traditional lithic hunting technologies, the Northwesters were able to collect more game over a wider area, an approach that further decreased the availability of animals by scaring them away. This instance of direct resistance to the Northwesters’

⁸⁹ Seton, 144.

⁹⁰ For a comparative view, see Arthur J. Ray, *The Indians in the Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974; rpt; 1998), 75.

activities parallels the Kalapuyans' response of "stealing" the carcasses of animals hunted by the fur traders. The response of the Sahaptins, however, was complex. In late January 1813, after Alexander Henry had made his own visit to the Willamette Valley, the same Northwest Sahaptins visited Fort Kalapuya and asked the Northwesters to establish a post farther inland nearer their own territory.⁹¹ This suggests that the Natives wanted more direct access to European goods, firearms being one a trade item that would put them in a stronger position vis-à-vis their neighbors. The disruptions from the fur trade may have forced the Native to adopt more aggressive attitudes towards their neighbors in order to expand into new territories and thus recoup previous losses resulting from regional economic changes. After several years of armed conflict between Indians and fur traders in the central Columbia region, the NWC established Fort Nez Percés (later Fort Walla Walla) in 1818.⁹²

Of all the documentary sources for the NWC period in the Willamette Valley (1813-1822), the journal of Alexander Henry the Younger provides the most detailed information on the attitudes of Euro-Americans towards the Kalapuyans, the dynamics of intercultural relations, and Kalapuyan attitudes towards the fur trappers. Alexander Henry, with William Wallace Matthews, led a party to the Willamette Valley, which departed Fort George on January 22, 1814, and arrived on January 23th. They passed three days in the vicinity of Fort Kalapuya (later known as Willamette Post) before departing on January 27th. On their way to the upper Willamette, Alexander Henry's party had their first recorded encounter with a group of Yamhill Kalapuyans.

After portaging the falls, Henry's party met the Yamhill on the upper bank; they were on their way to trade camas with the local Clowewalla Upper Chinookans. In contrast to the

⁹¹ Henry, 672.

⁹² Theodore Stern, *Chiefs and Chief Traders: Indian Relations at Fort Nez Percés, 1818-1855* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1993), 3-11.

Clowewalla, whom Henry described "tolerably disposed towards the Whites," the fur trader develops an instant dislike for the Yamhill, characterizing them as "the most miserable and rascally looking tribe I have seen on this side of the mountains."⁹³ Henry's poor opinion of the Yamhill stemmed from his own physical aversion to their appearance and comportment. Although Henry was an experienced trader and close observer of Indian lifeways, his own fastidious, self-possessed character often led him to criticize both Natives and lower-class laborers who did not meet his high standards of personal hygiene, social decorum, or self-control.⁹⁴ Four of the seven Yamhill whom Henry met "had some defect in his [sic] eyes" and they were scantily clad only in deer skins robes, with "a small round bonnet of wattap [wapato] on their heads, with a sharp point on the top about three inches high."⁹⁵

In his later comments about the Kalapuyans, Henry describes them as "a wandering race, who have neither horses nor homes, and live in the open air in fine weather and under the shelter of large spreading pines and cedars during foul weather."⁹⁶ Henry compares the Kalapuyans to the Plateau peoples, and he finds the Kalapuyans wanting. The Willamette Valley Natives own few horses; they are "too wretchedly poor to have anything."⁹⁷ In comparison, the Plateau peoples live better, since they have horses and are "well provided with everything necessary for a Savage life."⁹⁸ Henry is impressed with not only the animal husbandry and technology of the Plateau peoples, both also with their appearance, for he refers to them as "well dressed in leather shirts and leggings garnished with porcupine quills."⁹⁹

⁹³ Henry, 658.

⁹⁴ Barry Gough, "Introduction," to Henry, vol. 1, lxvi-lxvii.

⁹⁵ Henry, 658.

⁹⁶ Henry, 659.

⁹⁷ Henry, 663.

⁹⁸ Henry, 663.

⁹⁹ Henry, 663.

Henry's feelings of repugnance towards the Yamhill in particular, and the Kalapuyans in general, is emblematic of the attitudes of the fur trade officers and reflects the high value western Europeans, especially those from the British Isles, placed on horse cultures. As Elizabeth Vibert has demonstrated with regard to fur trader-Native relations in the Plateau region, the English-Scots officers held to distinctive notions about Euro-American superiority and social organization that colored the ways in which they perceived the various Native groups. When the officers recorded their encounters with Indians of the Plateau, they portrayed the regional mounted buffalo hunters as industrious and commendable, a departure from the long-standing archetype in both colonial and fur trade literature that depicted Indians as lazy, weak, and unproductive.¹⁰⁰ In contrast to the mounted Plateau groups that Henry held in some regard, his perception of the Kalapuyans corresponded to the stereotypical view that hunter-gathers who range over a wide area are not industrious. It is this view that later led Henry to misunderstand the attitudes and actions of Willamette Valley Natives.

The first meeting between the Yamhill and Henry's party was in fact not cordial. After speaking with three Clowewalla men who had brought provisions to trade with the Northwesters, one of the Yamhill women "set up a lamentable yell in crying and bawling," and the rest quickly took up their loads and departed. Henry reports that the Yamhill men "eyed" the Northwester "narrowly" after speaking with the Clowewalla. Henry did not know the reason for the Yamhill's reactions, but he surmised that it may have been linked to the death of an old Clowewalla chief, or perhaps the news of the deaths of the several Columbia River Chinookans killed by a party of Northwesters a few days earlier. Henry and his party,

¹⁰⁰ Vibert, *Traders' Tales*; Elizabeth Vibert, "Real Men Hunt Buffalo: Masculinity, Race, and Class in British Fur Traders' Narratives," *Gender and History* 8:1 (April 1996): 4-21.

worried about trouble, quickly departed without incident.¹⁰¹ Later, on his return trip to Fort George, Henry received some secondhand information from the Clowewalla indicating a growing distrust of the foreigners on the part of the Yamhill. While stopped at Willamette Falls on his return trip to Fort George on January 26, 1814, Henry noted that the "Yam he las, it seems had told the Indians here of their intention in sending our people from the River." When the Clowewalla asked the Northwesters if this were true, if they intended to vacate the Willamette Valley, Henry's group told them that they would not be leaving the valley in the face of this threat.¹⁰²

Alexander Henry's encounters with the Yamhill in January of 1814 might be viewed as an echo of Comcomly's stories of the Kalapuyans recounted to Duncan McDougall some two years before. However, here it is not the Yamill Kalapuyans who are ignorant of the proper protocols for relating to the fur traders (as Comcomly had suggested), but rather Henry who lacks clear insight into the attitudes of the Yamhill. They may well have been leery of Henry and his party because of recent fur trader-Chinookan violence on the Columbia River, worried that the foreigners had come to cause similar problems in the Willamette Valley. The Yamhill's talk of forcing the Northwesters from the valley may have also stemmed from concerns about losing control over their territories and resources.

Once established at the NWC Willamette Valley post, Henry set about establishing trade relations with the local Kalapuyans. Like fur traders before him, he looked upon his experiences in the valley with some disappointment. Henry reckoned the Kalapuyans did not know the value of trade goods, not recognizing that they might be as shrewd traders as their Chinookan relatives in the Columbia. In his journal he noted his frustration with a headman

¹⁰¹ Henry, 658.

¹⁰² Henry, 664.

who was amenable to Henry's offer to buy the man's horse. However, after Henry learned the headman's price of ten blankets, which Henry saw as exorbitant, he withdrew his offer. He also remarked that the Kalapuyans "have no idea of the value of our goods," and seem to care little about anything further than a few blue beads."¹⁰³ Yet, he later wrote that the Kalapuyans preferred deer flesh to any other item.¹⁰⁴ Henry's negative reaction—that is, blaming the Natives for their disinterest in trading—stemmed from the fact he did not come prepared for the local trade.

He was annoyed that the Kalapuyans could not be persuaded to hunt beaver, which were abundant throughout the Willamette Valley: "small lakes and ponds we found swarming with beaver still they will not attempt to kill them."¹⁰⁵ The Kalapuyans were uninterested in trapping beaver because such an activity neither fit into their complex subsistence round (as outlined in Chapter One), nor meshed with their long-standing exchange practices within the lower Columbia region. Since the Kalapuyans did not have a passion to acquire European goods in this early contact period, aside from blue beads, they had no motivation to trap beaver.

Trade between the Northwesters and the Kalapuyans remained a modest affair in 1814. Henry noted that the Kalapuyans usually came in small trading parties of two or three families to Fort Kalapuya (Willamette Post). Henry's journal contains no reports of Kalapuyan headmen with the same stature as the Chinookan leaders Comcomly and Casino. In their relations with the Kalapuyans, the Northwesters conducted trade outside the small post. Given the size of the outpost, this may have been a logistical necessity, or, alternatively, it may have been a response to safety concerns. Indeed, Henry reported that on January 25,

¹⁰³ Henry, 662.

¹⁰⁴ Henry, 661.

¹⁰⁵ Henry, 662.

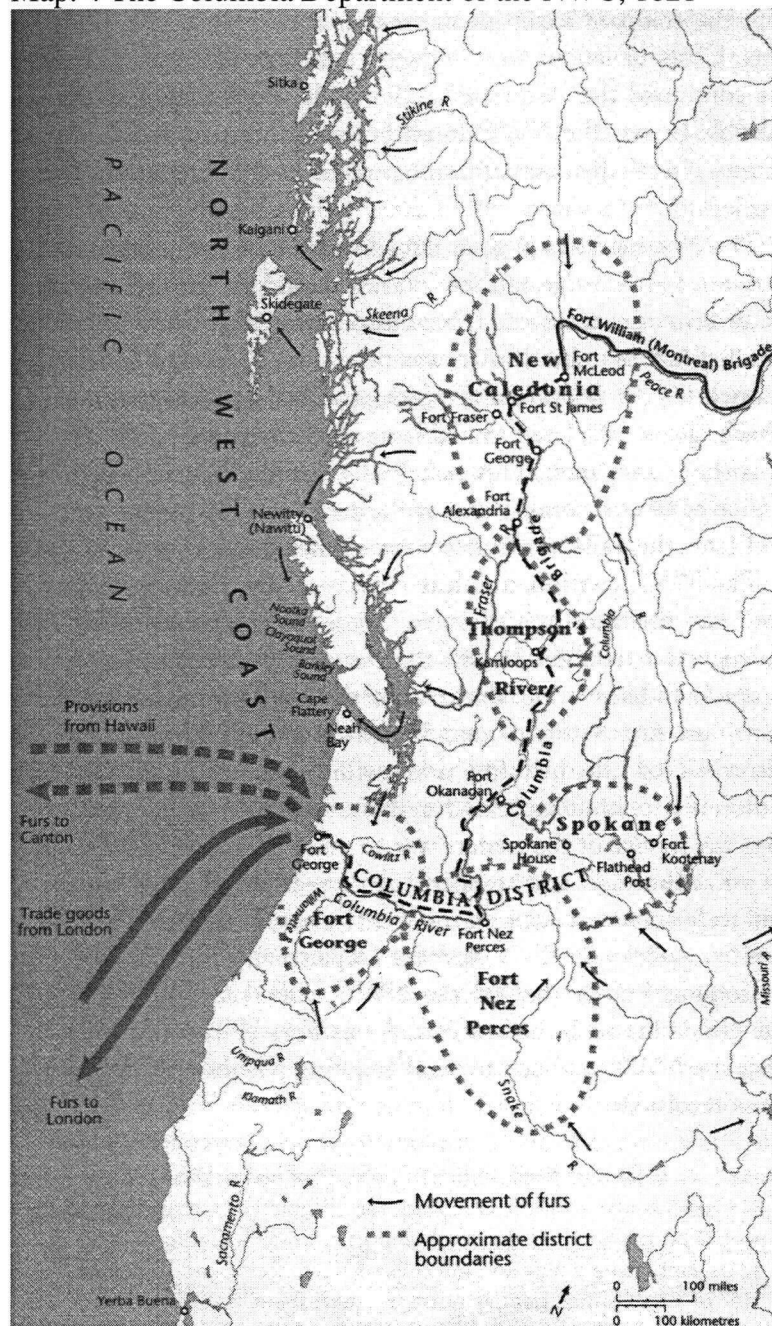
1814, three freemen formerly of the Pacific Fur Company, likely Milligan, Flanagan, and Baker, returned to the Willamette post and reported adversely on the behavior of the Kalapuyans in the valley: a group of Kalapuyans had wanted to "steal" the freemen's property. However, their fear of the Euro-Americans' guns, led them to "act in a more clandestine manner and prevents them using open violence to pillage."¹⁰⁶ Thus, while the fur traders may have held a technological advantage thanks to their firearms, they remained outnumbered by several thousand Kalapuyans within the inland valley, and were a day's journey from reinforcement at the main post at Fort George (formerly Fort Astoria).

After Alexander Henry's party returned to Fort George, a group headed by clerks William Wallace and Thomas McKay, which included a number of laborers and freemen, remained in the Willamette Valley to continue trapping. When the party of Wallace and Thomas McKay finally returned to Fort George on March 25, 1814, they reported a shift in the attitude of the Kalapuyans. Henry noted that Willamette Valley Indians seemed "much more reconciled" to the presence of the Northwesters. They expressed regret at the fur traders' departure and asked them to return again the Willamette Valley. A local Ahantchuyuk headman, possibly from a village near the Champoege area, agreed to take the Willamette Post under his charge, including the four horses and two hogs left there. This headman apparently wished to maintain positive relations with the Northwesters, as Henry writes he was "well inclined toward" the Northwesters.¹⁰⁷ In addition, a few days before the departure of the Wallace and McKay party, a group of thirty Yamhill visited the Willamette Post to trade a large quantity of baked camas. They also urged the Northwesters to return to the Willamette Valley.

¹⁰⁶ Henry, 662-663.

¹⁰⁷ Henry, 704.

Map. 4 The Columbia Department of the NWC, 1821



From Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*.

Reprinted with permission from the University of British Columbia Press.

This map is a modern map depicting historical information.

Owing to a lack of contemporary sources, we do not have a clear picture of the developing relations between the Kalapuyans and the fur traders immediately following these reports of this shift in the Yamhill's attitude in the spring of 1814. Tragically, Alexander Henry's journal for the Columbia region ends in May 1814, following his death from drowning at the mouth of the Columbia. The only other extant documentary sources that shed some light on fur trader-Kalapuyan relations in the Willamette for the remainder of the NWC period (1814-1822) include the narrative of clerk Alexander Ross, *Fur Hunters of the Far West*, originally published in 1855, and to a lesser extent, the memoranda book of James Keith, the NWC partner in charge of Fort George.¹⁰⁸ The Ross narratives are problematic sources, due to their late publication date, the dictates of Victorian travel literature, and the fur trader's own personal prejudices. However, when combined with other sources on the region, Ross' account of violent confrontations at Willamette Falls in 1816-1817 appears plausible, if less dramatic than he would have his readers believe.

Ross spent most of his years on the Columbia in the interior; however, from the summer of 1816 through fall of 1817, he served as assistant to James Keith at Fort George.¹⁰⁹ For this period, Ross recounts a series of problems with the Natives of the Willamette Valley. Although he does not clearly identify the Indian group, it appears that the Clowewalla Upper Chinookans at Willamette Falls, possibly in alliance with some Kalapuyan groups, attempted to block the Northwesters' access to the valley. The tension ostensibly began with a group of

¹⁰⁸ Memoranda Book of James Keith (1811-1821), James Keith Papers, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, A-676, A-2; Alexander Ross, *Fur Hunters of the Far West*, edited by Kenneth A. Spaulding (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956). The 1956 Spaulding edition of *Fur Hunters* is based on an original manuscript in the Beinecke Library, Yale University. The succeeding footnotes refer to this edition. In 1924 Milo Quaife published a re-edited version of the first edition (1855): Alexander Ross, *Fur Hunters of the Far West*, edited by Milo Milton Quaife (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1924).

¹⁰⁹ Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 56-81; Frits Pannekoek, "Alexander Ross," in *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume VII, 1851-1860*, edited by Frances G. Halpenny and Jean Hamelin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 849-852.

ten men who set out to trap beaver in the Willamette Valley at the same time that Donald McKenzie's brigade left for the interior posts in early October 1816.¹¹⁰

The NWC party bound for the Willamette subsequently encountered Native resistance "on their way up to the place." This short phrase suggests that the encounter took place in the lower Willamette River below the falls, since they party would have to portage the falls to arrive to reach the upper Willamette Valley, their intended destination. In keeping with Chinookan customs within the lower Columbia region, these Natives warned the outsiders that they would not be allowed to hunt in the valley without immediately paying a tribute. Since the Clowewalla controlled access to the falls, and thus the hunting grounds of the Willamette, this is another possible clue to their identity. The only evidence that the Kalapuyans might have been party to these events is a comment by Ross, who wrote that the Kalapuyans of the Willamette Valley "were always considered by the whites as a quiet and inoffensive nation, dull and unassuming in their behavior, but, when once roused, not deficient in courage."¹¹¹

According to Ross, the North West party was neither prepared nor willing to pay a tribute—a kind of river access user fee—to the Indians. Instead, the fur trappers took the warning as a bluff rather than as a serious threat, which was a miscalculation on their part. The following morning, the Northwesters found themselves facing Natives armed with bows and arrows on both sides of the Willamette River. They again made the mistake of thinking the Natives were only trying to scare them, and so they paddled down the middle of the river. However, they soon faced a "shower of arrows," one of which wounded a Northwester. The party reversed course and returned fire, killing one of the Natives. The group thereupon

¹¹⁰ Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 72.

¹¹¹ Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 77.

returned to Fort George without further incident, and "the project of hunting in the Wallamitte was relinquished for some time."¹¹²

The next attempt to send a trapping party to the Willamette Valley occurred some time later, during the winter of 1816-17. A larger group of twenty-five men under a clerk "was sent to pacify the natives, and to endeavor to penetrate the hunting ground."¹¹³ Upon their arrival at the place of the first violent encounter, the Northwesters learned that they had killed a Native headman and that the Indians demanded a blood payment for the death. The Northwesters gave the Indians merchandise in compensation and proceeded on their way upriver, confident their problems with the Natives had been solved. However, the Northwesters soon quarreled with a group of Natives, possibly the same group as before. They responded by firing upon the Indians, killing three. That night the Northwesters camp was infiltrated by the Natives and a fight ensued between the two groups. The Indians seriously injured one Northwester before the fur trader beat a speedy retreat under the cover of darkness. Ross concludes that "by the disaster of this trip, every avenue was for the present shut up against our hunters in the Wallamitte."¹¹⁴

Quantitative data from James Keith's memoranda book indicate that this event did adversely affect trade. It suggests that there was a drop off in trapping returns for the Willamette Valley for Outfit 1816 (1816-1817), though it did not affect the overall returns for Fort George district or the larger Columbia region (see Tables 2 and 3 below).

¹¹² Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 72-73.

¹¹³ Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 73.

¹¹⁴ Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 73.

Table 2. Abstract & Comparative Statement of Indian Trade and Trapper Hunts at Fort George

Outfit	Apparent Indian Trade	Trappers Hunts	[Totals]
1814	1741	578	2319
1815	2599	1800	4217
1816	3096	897	4240
1817	2595	2295	4864
1818	2527	1507	4002
1819	3163	2556	6022
1820	3337	2933	6500

Source: Memoranda Book of James Keith, 60.

Table 3. NWC Returns for Columbia Region, 1814-1821

Outfit	Interior	Fort George	Totals
1814	4192	2319	6511
1815	5285	4217	9502
1816	5665	4240	9905
1817	6672	4864	11536
1818	8668	4002	12670
1819	9940	6022 + 158	16120
1820	7808	6500	14308
1821	11772	5593	17364

Note: Outfit 1821 returns included 669 from 1819 and 1820 Snake Parties, brought out in 1821.

Source: Memoranda Book of James Keith, 30, 60-61

For Outfit 1816, the NWC were able to make up of the difference by acquiring more pelts through trade with the local Native groups. However, there was a loss of some 900 furs as compared with the year before. Thus, while Ross may have overstated the impact of the conflict in the Willamette Valley, it was significant. According to Ross, James Keith was determined to find a solution to the Willamette Valley problem. Keith, who would have

wanted to maintain access to the valley, while also smoothing relations with the valley's indigenous population, decided upon negotiation rather than a punitive approach.¹¹⁵

Alexander Ross placed himself and Peter Skene Ogden at the head of a team that traveled to the Willamette to negotiate with the Natives in the winter of 1816-1817. Here Ross clearly errs because Ogden did not arrive in the Columbia region until 1818 (most likely with the fall brigade).¹¹⁶ Ross was himself stationed at Fort Thompson in 1817, and later assisted Donald McKenzie to establish Fort Nez Percés in 1818.¹¹⁷ According to Ross, the 1816-17 mission to the Willamette Valley was outfitted "sufficiently strong to guard against a miscarriage and give weight to our measures."¹¹⁸ He described it as a "half-diplomatic, half-military embassy" that included forty-five men. At this point in the narrative, Ross finally mentions that the location for the parlay was Willamette Falls, where the Natives had gathered to prevent the ascent of the NWC hunters into the Willamette Valley. The party encamped on the rocky west bank of the Willamette River at the falls.

On his first attempt to speak with the Natives, Ross was rebuffed. Instead, the Indians "continued to sing their war songs and danced their war dance."¹¹⁹ Two days passed as the Northwesters waited patiently to open negotiations. On the third, a group of headmen and warriors from the Clowewalla village on the east bank of the river crossed over and gathered themselves at distance from the Northwesters. Ross went to meet the group with a flag in his

¹¹⁵ Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 74.

¹¹⁶ Glyndwr Williams, "Peter Skene Ogden," in *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume VII, 1851-1860*, edited by Frances G. Halpenny and Jean Hamelin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 732-736; T. C. Elliot, "Peter Skene Ogden, Fur Trader," *OHQ* 11:3 (September 1910), 239. A letter from Joseph F. Laroque to J.G. McTavish indicates that Ogden was in charge of Spokane House in the fall of 1818: HBCA, F.3/2, folio 190. I would like to thank H. Lloyd Keith for bringing these sources to my attention. For discussion of the NWC's Columbia brigade system, see James R. Gibson, *The Lifeline of the Oregon Country: The Fraser-Columbia Brigade System, 1811-47* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 7-11.

¹¹⁷ Williams, "Ross," 850.

¹¹⁸ Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 74.

¹¹⁹ Ross, *Fur Hunters* 74.

hand. As he was gaining on the group, the Natives began a "loud and clamorous scene of mourning," and the headmen and warriors formed "a ring, squatted down, and concealing their faces with their garments, remained silent and motionless" for a half an hour.¹²⁰ The first time Ross offered the "principale chief" a peace pipe he refused. However, later after asking what the Northwesters wanted, Ross explained that they wanted peace and he again offered the peace pipe. Ross gave the man the flag as a token of friendship. Ross then set down to smoke the pipe with the headmen gathered there.

For several hours, several headmen gave speeches, detailing their grievances against the fur traders, their demand for redress, and their determination to prevent the Northwesters from going to the Willamette Valley. After the speeches, the negotiations moved to the Northwesters' camp, where Ross stated their case, "opposing the Indians' determination to prevent us from ascending the Wallamitte."¹²¹ Ross attempted to refute the headmen's objection, pointing out that the Natives were the aggressors because they had attacked first. However, this principle of a "first aggressor" was not consistent with the Chinookans' (or Kalapuyans') territorial claims. Rather the Northwesters were the aggressors because they had entered Chinookan (Kalapuyan) territory without paying tribute or acknowledging the Native's territorial rights. The Natives would not recognize the Northwesters' principles of unlawful aggression and of the land as unclaimed territory, and insisted instead that the Northwesters' recognize Native principles on Native land. Ross finally conceded the Northwesters' error in judgment and agreed to pay a compensation for the dead according to

¹²⁰ Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 75.

¹²¹ Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 76.

the Native custom if the Indians would compromise on other points, especially their wish to permanently deny the Northwesters access to the Willamette Valley.¹²²

After discussions amongst themselves, the headmen agreed to an oral treaty with the Northwesters. According to Ross—the lone source for these events—this agreement recognized that the Willamette River would remain open and that the Euro-Americans would be allowed to move freely to and from the Willamette Valley. In the case of misunderstanding or conflict between the Natives and the fur traders, each party would seek redress for their grievances through the proper channels, whether that be with the partners at Fort George or the appropriate village headmen.

In the 1817 treaty negotiations at Willamette Falls, the assembled local Native groups retained the upper hand due to their superior numbers and an advantageous geographic location. The Northwesters were forced to negotiate with the Indians on their terms because the fur traders could neither circumvent the Willamette Falls at that time, nor mount a large enough demographic presence to force Native concessions (see Appendix 3, NWC Personnel Data for the Columbia Region, 1814-1820). It is more than likely that a regional aboriginal alliance was required for this successful show of force. Since the Native people of the Lower Columbia region lived in villages of no more than several score, the Clowewalla Upper Chinookans at Willamette Falls would have needed the support of some Northern and Central Kalapuyan groups from above the falls as well as the Clackamas Chinookans from a few miles downriver. Given this alliance, which would have been strongest during the spring and fall salmon fishing seasons, the assembled groups effectively dictated the form and content of the negotiations, even forcing Ross to wait before beginning the parlay. By eventually re-opening the Willamette River to the Northwesters, the allied Native groups

¹²² Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 76.

signaled the importance of trade relations with the newcomers. However, the Natives demonstrated a determination to dictate the terms of those continued relations. The probable alliance between the Upper Chinookans and the Kalapuyans in the Willamette Valley demonstrates how long-standing kinships ties and regional geopolitics might be used as effective tools against the first wave of landed Euro-American colonizers in the Lower Columbia country.

In his conclusion to the passage on the peace negotiations, Ross wrote that "truth compels us to acknowledge that the Indians faithfully and zealously observed their part of their treaty for many years afterwards."¹²³ In this sense, Ross humanizes the Willamette Valley peoples to some degree. Indeed, his tale of the 1817 treaty ends on a positive note, with both Native and newcomers gaining their objectives while successfully reaching across the cultural divide. And in keeping with Ross' own personality and the dictates of Victoria travel literature, he portrays himself as the ultimate hero of the affair, noting that partner James Keith remarked to him, "Your success removes my anxiety; and is calculated not only to restore peace in the Wallamitte, but throughout the whole neighbouring tribes."¹²⁴

Although there were some continuing violent confrontations with Natives on the Columbia and in the interior, the Northwesters and the Willamette Valley Natives (the lower Upper Chinookan peoples and the North and Central Kalapuyans) appear to have reached a measure of co-existence following this oral treaty of 1817. For the next four years, North West Company trappers and affiliated freemen continued to hunt in the Willamette Valley on a seasonal basis. In a letter to Wilson Price Hunt, dated April 20, 1821, NWC agent Donald Mackenzie reported that "some of the former [Pacific Fur Company] hands are in the country

¹²³ Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 76.

¹²⁴ Ross, *Fur Hunters*, 77.

still. For instance [Joseph] St. Amand—[Alexander] Carson—[William] Cannon [Étienne] Lucier & [Joseph] Gervais are trapping in the river Walamet as usual.”¹²⁵

Two elements often present in Native-newcomer relations during the fur trade era curiously made no appearance in the documentary record on the Willamette during tenures of the Pacific Fur Company and the North West Company: episodes of infectious disease epidemics or intimate relations between Native women and Euro-American men. The French Canadian voyageurs who later settled the territory of the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans concluded alliances with women from other Native groups, most notably the Clatsop and Chinook. The arrival of non-native diseases into the Willamette River was not reported until well into the Hudson’s Bay tenure in the Columbia Country. Both events—the arrival of acute infectious disease, and the establishment of a French-Canadian-Indian colonial settlement—would bring incredible social changes to Willamette Valley, further transforming the Kalapuyans’ world.

¹²⁵ Elliot, T.C., ed. “Letter of Donald Mackenzie to Wilson Price Hunt” [April 20, 1821] *OHQ* 43:1 (March 1942), 12. Donald Mackenzie wrote the letter from Fort Nez Percés. The original is located in the Hunt Family Papers at the St. Louis Historical Society archives, St. Louis, Missouri.

CHAPTER THREE

“NOTHING BUT DECISIVE MEASURES WILL EVER MAKE THEM
LEAVE THEIR FAVORITE COUNTRY”:

AGRARIAN SETTLEMENT AND THE INTERMITTENT FEVER, 1823-1833

In summer of 1825, Agathe Kalapuya Dupati was born to Marguerite, a Kalapuyan woman, and the French-Algonquin free trapper Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay dit Dupati, a former North West Company voyageur.¹ The family of Marguerite and Jean Baptiste continued to grow and within five years they were living permanently in the territory of the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans with Dupati's other wife, Catherine Chehalis, and their daughter, Marie Lisette.² The presence and persistence of Jean Baptiste Dupati's growing families mirrored changing historical realities in that portion of the Willamette Valley that would later become known as French Prairie. In the decade from 1823 to 1833, two historic developments—agrarian settlement and the importance of malarial disease—began to transform the territory of the Ahantchuyuk.

¹ The parents of Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay dit Dupati (ca. 1793-1853) were identified as “Jean Baptiste Depati and an infidel woman of Temiscaming” (thus Algonquin). See *Catholic Church Records of Pacific Northwest-Saint Paul*, vol. 1 (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1979), vol. 1, 86, hereafter *CCRPNW-SP*. Agathe Kalapuya [Dupati] was baptized at the temporary Catholic Mission in the Willamette Valley on January 21, 1839 at the age of 13.5 years. Her brother John (Jonathon) Dupati, age three, was baptized seven days later on January 28, 1839. See Harriet Munnick, “Annotations,” *CCRPNW-SP*, A-29, *CCRPNW-Vancouver*, vol. 1 (St. Paul, OR: French Prairie Press, 1972), vol. 1, 26, hereafter *CCRPNW-V*. There is no baptismal record for their sister Françoise; however, Harriet Munnick provides a short biographical sketch collected from Françoise's descendants in the 1970s, see *CCRPNW-SP*, A-28. As for the identity of the children's Kalapuyan mother, there is one clue suggesting that her given French name was Marguerite. On August 8, 1847 Jean Baptiste Dupati (I), age 17, was baptized in the French Prairie parish of Saint Louis. His mother is listed as Marguerite, Indian. He would have been born in 1830, the period when Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay and his Kalapuyan wife were together. See *CCRPNW-Saint Louis*, vol. 1 (Portland: Binford and Mort, 1982), 3, hereafter *CCRPNW-SL*. There is much variation in the secondary surname for this family (Dupati, Dupatti, Depati, Depaté). I have used one of the more prominent names indicated by the research of Harriet Munnick.

² See *CCRPNW-V*, vol. 1, 25. Marie Lisette Dupati was 16 when she was baptized and married in January 1839. Her mother Catherine Chehalis was then deceased.

In the first decade of fur trader–Kalapuyan encounters, the Natives and newcomers manage to reach an accommodation over the traders' presence in the Willamette Valley. During the ensuing decade, parties of fur traders continued to hunt, trap, and trade throughout the valley. A growing attachment to the Willamette Valley, with its rich resource base, moderate climate, and natural beauty, motivated a small group of former fur trade laborers to establish an agrarian settlement by the late 1820s. Several factors contributed to the laborers' successful colonization efforts in the valley. Most importantly, the settlers had economic and social ties with the local Kalapuyans, developed over the preceding years. Secondly, although the majority of the early settlers did not have direct family connections to the local Kalapuyans, most had married women from the lower Columbia region, which did provide some secondary kin ties. Thirdly, despite the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) policies in place designed to prevent retired servants from settling in the region, HBC Chief Factor John McLoughlin was able to reach a mutually agreeable arrangement with the Willamette settlers. He would extend them credit and supplies, and they would repay their accounts with the wheat grown on their farms.

Finally, and most tragically, just as the fur trapper families were beginning to re-settle the territory of the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans (French Prairie), "intermittent fever" (malaria), a disease previously unknown on the Northwest Coast, struck the Willamette Valley. Spread by the local anopheles mosquito, subsequent annual epidemics decimated the Kalapuyans, who suffered an estimated 92% population decrease from 1830 through 1841. The historical record demonstrates that the French-Indian settler families were not the cause of this scourge, yet they were its chief beneficiaries. Although there is no direct evidence on how the early Willamette settlers fared in the malaria epidemics, it is reasonable to conclude that they

obtained medicine to treat the disease from HBC officials at Fort Vancouver. Thus, while the Kalapuyan population began a steady decline in the early 1830s, the number and size of the settler families slowly increased. With this demographic shift, a bi-cultural French-Indian colony began to develop. The majority of the settler families were headed by French Canadian men originally from Lower Canada, and by Native women from the lower Columbia and Plateau regions.

The Hudson's Bay Company in the Oregon Country

Following a protracted and sometimes bitter, trade war, the Montreal-based North West Company and the London-based Hudson's Bay Company merged into one venture in 1821. With the signing of the poll deed, the HBC essentially took over NWC operations and the new company gained a monopoly over the fur trade in British North America, including the disputed Oregon Country west of the Rocky Mountains.³ The British mercantile enterprise became the de facto colonial administrator in the vast region after Spain relinquished her claims north of the 42nd parallel (1819), and Russia agreed to 54°40' as the southern boundary of her North American colony (1824). Although the Convention of 1818 recognized a joint British-American occupancy policy for the Oregon Country, the American presence in the region was negligible until the late 1830s.

When the HBC inherited NWC operations in the Oregon Country, it gained two rather distinct regions. The northern New Caledonia district, present-day north-central British Columbia, was rich in high quality furs and its proximity to northern supply routes made it

³ The standard sources for the HBC and its West Coast operations include John S. Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957); Paul Chrisler Phillips, *The Fur Trade*, vol. 2 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961); Richard Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997); E. E. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, vol. 3, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961).

accessible through the York Factory express system. The Columbia district to the south produced lower quality furs, and provisioning the region by sea entailed higher costs because of the need to add ships to the company's maritime fleet.⁴ In addition, the Oregon Country remained a disputed region between the United States and Great Britain.⁵ After the HBC directors in London considered abandoning the Columbia, North American field Governor George Simpson convinced the directors to retain the southern district as buffer zone against American trappers venturing into the Columbia region from the Missouri and Platte River watersheds. HBC officials supported the decision to retain the Columbia region for several additional reasons: to ensure the presence of British ships in the north Pacific, contain the Russian presence in Alaska, challenge American maritime traders along the coast, and develop supplemental products for markets in the Pacific.⁶

In order to harmonize the consolidation of the old NWC operations in the Oregon Country, Governor George Simpson made two voyages to the region during the 1820s (1824-25 and 1828-29). As a result of these visits, Simpson instituted a series of structural changes to HBC operations on the Pacific Slope. Accompanied on the first voyage by the new Chief Factor, John McLoughlin, Simpson ordered the construction of a new regional headquarters on the lower Columbia River. Fort Vancouver, approximately 100 miles upriver from Fort George on the north bank of the Columbia, was located in the territory of the Upper Chinookans who are today known collectively as the Multnomah. This new locale would ensure the HBC an outpost on the Northwest coast in the event the area south of the Columbia River came under American control. Simpson also pushed for the expansion of the

⁴ Mackie, 35.

⁵ Frederick Merk, *The Oregon Question: Essays in Anglo-American Diplomacy & Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 30-45.

⁶ Mackie, 38-39.

fur trade into previously undeveloped corners of New Caledonia and southern regions of British North America bordering the United States.⁷

After his 1824-25 visit, Simpson determined that the Snake Country, encompassing part of the Plateau and Great Basin, should be trapped out as soon as possible. The major reason was to stymie the advance of American trappers into the Pacific Northwest.⁸ In developing the Snake Country expeditions, the HBC built on the earlier fur trapping brigades to the interior organized by the NWC since 1817. The various HBC fur trapping parties that spread across the southern regions of the Oregon Country during the 1820s and 1830s fulfilled Simpson's original mission while also affecting additional changes to the region. The Snake, Umpqua, and Southern trapping parties simultaneously served an exploratory function—thereby increasing Euro-Americans' geographic knowledge—developed trade and transportation routes, and brought additional Native groups into contact with the fur trappers, including exposure to previously known diseases.⁹

These fur trapping brigades were perhaps the most physically and psychologically taxing undertakings of the HBC in the Columbia Department.¹⁰ Headed by chief traders such as Peter Skene Ogden, Alexander McLeod, and John Work, and assisted by higher-ranking

⁷ Mackie, 44-45.

⁸ Dorothy O. Johansen, introduction to *Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Country Journal, 1826-27*, edited by K.G. Davies, assisted by A. M. Johnson (London: Hudson's Bay Records Society, 1961), xv. For a detailed discussion, see Jennifer Ott, "'Ruining the Rivers in the Snake County: The Hudson's Bay Company Fur Desert Policy,'" *OHQ* 104:2 (Summer 2003): 166-195.

⁹ The standard sources detailing the activities of the various HBC trapping expeditions include the series of Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Country Journals published by the Hudson's Bay Company Record Society; John Work, *The Snake Expedition of 1830-1831: John Work's Field Journal*, edited by Francis D. Haines (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971); Alice Bay Maloney, ed. *Fur Brigade to the Bonaventura: John Work's California Expedition, 1832-1833 for the Hudson's Bay Company* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1945); Doyce B. Nunis, ed., *The Hudson's Bay Company's First Fur Brigade to the Sacramento Valley: Alexander McLeod's 1829 Hunt* (Fair Oaks, CA: Sacramento Book Collectors Club, 1968).

¹⁰ The most comprehensive ethnography of the Snake Country parties is Charles E. Simpson's "The Snake Country Freeman: British Fur Trappers in Idaho," (MA thesis, University of Idaho, 1990). John Phillip Reid examines legal issues, specially the legal behaviorism of the freemen, in *Contested Empire: Peter Skene Ogden and the Snake River Expeditions* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002).

laborers such as Michel Laframboise and Thomas McKay, the parties were comprised of company servants, free trappers, and their families. These parties were quite ethnically diverse. The ethnic backgrounds of the 145 documented freemen who were employed by the NWC and the HBC for the Snake Country expeditions between 1818-1845 were approximately as follows: 40% were French Canadians, 25% Iroquois, 17% Métis, 8% Western Indians, 5% Eastern Indians, and 4% Americans.¹¹

Peter Skene Ogden, a highly competitive, sometimes ruthless trader, led the HBC's Snake Party from 1824 through 1830. During his tenure Ogden explored several regions unknown to Euro-Americans, including southern Oregon, northern California and northern Utah.¹² Beginning in 1826, Alexander Roderick McLeod, John Work, Michel Laframboise, and Thomas McKay led various exploratory trapping parties first to the Oregon coast and the Umpqua region of southern Oregon, and later to California's Sacramento River Valley, then known as the Bonaventura. The coastal, Umpqua, and Southern (or Bonaventura) Parties would regularly pass through the Willamette Valley on their way south.¹³

Fur Trappers and The Hudson's Bay Company in the Willamette Valley

During the tenure of the NWC in the Oregon Country, the Willamette Valley was a customary zone for trapping, provisioning, and trading. Thus, during the first ten years of the fur traders' presence in the valley, the Kalapuyans became accustomed to hunters, trappers, and traders moving about their territories. After 1824, in addition to the continued trapping activities of the Astorians and Northwesters, who then became known as the "Willamette

¹¹ Simpson, 203.

¹² Johansen, xix.

¹³ W. Kaye Lamb presents a general overview of the expansion of the HBC fur trapping operations during the 1820s and early 1830s in his introduction to *The Letters of John McLoughlin: 1st Series, 1825-38*, lx-cxiii. Richard Mackie presents the more detailed analysis in *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 44-122.

freemen,” the Kalapuyans witnessed the increased presence of HBC expeditions passing through the valley on their way to and southern Oregon and northern California. Following the expansionist efforts of the HBC in the Oregon Country, the Ahantchuyuk village site at Champoege, known by the fur traders as “Sandy Encampment” and *Campement de sable*, served as one of the staging areas for the expeditions to the coast, the Umpqua region, and California.¹⁴ The HBC expeditions would often include both mounted and canoe parties that traveled from Fort Vancouver to Willamette Falls or Champoege. For the journey southward, the groups would then obtain additional horses at either site from local Indians or resident freemen. When not traveling with the fur brigades or trapping in other parts of the Willamette Valley, the freemen and their families would often camp in and around the territory of the Ahantchuyuk.¹⁵ For example, in mid-May 1826, Willamette freeman Étienne Lucier, then living on a semi-permanent basis with his family near Champoege, sold a total of twelve horses to Alexander McLeod and his coastal survey party who were encamped at the old NWC post (Fort Kalapuya/Willamette Post).¹⁶

Although the historical record on Kalapuyan-Euro-American relations is fragmentary from 1823 through 1833—the period marking the arrival of the HBC and the initial onset of the intermittent fever—anecdotal evidence from the journals and memoirs of fur trappers,

¹⁴ Horace S. Lyman, ed., “Reminiscences of Louis Labonte [II]” *OHQ* 1:2 (June 1900), 175.

¹⁵ Willard Rees, “Annual Address, [1879]” *TOPA* 7 (1880), 23-25; T.C. Elliott, ed., “The Peter Skene Ogden Journals,” *OHQ* 10:4 (December 1909), 364; Alexander R. McLeod, “Journal of a Trapping Expedition along the Coast South of the Columbia River,” in Davies, *Snake Country Journals, 1826-1827*, 143-150.

¹⁶ McLeod, “Journal,” 147-146. In his journal, McLeod refers to this as the “Old Fort,” and “McKay’s Fort.” Given the location of McLeod party at this time, this is clearly the old NWC post, as the party was encamped near Étienne Lucier, about a day’s canoe travel from Willamette Falls. “McKay’s Fort” was also an early name for the HBC’s later Fort Umpqua located on the Umpqua River. See J. Neilson Barry, “Early Oregon Country Forts,” *OHQ* 44:2 (June 1945): 109-110. John A. Hussey provides a short sketch of Étienne Lucier’s whereabouts in *Champoege: Place of Transition, A Disputed History* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society/Oregon State Highway Commission, 1967), 47-48.

travelers and later settlers suggest that these relations were relatively peaceful.¹⁷ In contrast to several other regions in the Columbia Department, there are no recorded conflicts between the Kalapuyan groups and HBC personnel, free trappers, or the occasional American trapping party.¹⁸ This suggests that the 1817 treaty reached between the NWC and the Indians at Willamette Falls continued to regulate relations between the fur trappers and the Kalapuyans and Upper Chinookans of the Willamette Valley. The working relationship appears to have been based on several factors: the longstanding nature of intercultural relations in the Willamette Valley, a willingness on the part of the Kalapuyans to trade with the foreigners and adapt to changing regional dynamics, and kinship relations between the freemen and the Native people of the lower Columbia region

The notations found in the journals of fur traders Alexander McLeod, Peter Skene Ogden, and the botanist David Douglas indicate that relations between Euro-Americans and the Willamette Valley Kalapuyans and the Yoncalla Kalapuyans of the Umpqua watershed were of an economic and a humanitarian nature. The various Kalapuyan bands would regularly trade foodstuffs and occasionally animal pelts for European goods when the outsiders passed through a group's territory. Here it is important to note that the Kalapuyans declined to barter with the fur trappers if they felt the exchanges were not to their advantage. Both the fur traders and botanist David Douglas complained about the Kalapuyans' efforts to control the parameters of trade in the Willamette Valley. For example, when David Douglas

¹⁷ For example, see the memoirs of William Rees and Louis Labonte [II]; Ogden's Snake Country journals; the journals of Alexander McLeod and John Work; David Douglas, *The Oregon Journals of David Douglas*, edited by David Lavender, 2 vols. (Ashland: The Oregon Book Society, 1972); and David Douglas, *Journal Kept by David Douglas During his Travels in North America. 1823-1827*, (London: Royal Horticultural Society, 1914; rpt; New York: Antiquarian Press, 1959);

¹⁸ For an example of Native-fur trader armed conflict during this period, see Francis Ermatinger's account of the HBC expedition against the Clallum of Puget Sound: Francis Ermatinger, *Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, 1818-1853*, edited by Lois Halliday McDonald (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Co, 1980), 96-117.

attempted to purchase the animal skin garment of a Kalapuyan child, he ultimately decided against the trade because "too great a value" was placed on the garment by the child's parent(s).¹⁹ The Willamette Valley Kalapuyans also occasionally worked as guides and canoe men on HBC brigades descending and ascending the Willamette River. In exchange for their labor, the Kalapuyans often received foodstuffs.²⁰ Thus, the Kalapuyans actively engaged in economic relations with the fur trappers on their own terms. As noted previously, their motivation engaging in this economic intercourse appears to have been a desire to supplement their traditional technology and economic activities.²¹

The Kalapuyans also occasionally provided food and shelter to the foreigners and lent them canoes when the outsiders' horses were lost, lame, or worn out from travel. On a trip to the Upper Umpqua watershed in October 1826, David Douglas slipped and fell down a ravine while trying to capture an elk. Injured in the chest, he wrote:

I find now, 5 p.m., a severe pain in my chest. Six Indians of the Calapooie tribe assisted me to my camp, and as it would be very imprudent to undertake any journey as I am, I resolved to return to the camp and asked them to saddle my horse and place the things on it, which they readily did. It gave me more pleasure than I can well describe to think I had wherewith for them to eat, and after expressing my gratitude in the best way I could, one came to lead the horse while I crept along by the help of a stick and my gun.²²

The hospitality and humanitarian assistance David Douglas received from the various Kalapuyan groups in the Willamette Valley is consistent throughout the journal of his travels in the region during the mid-1820s.

Kinship was the final component that structured intercultural relations in the Willamette Valley in the years prior to agrarian settlement. For the fur trappers, marriage ties

¹⁹ Douglas, *Oregon Journals*, vol. 1, 68.

²⁰ See Douglas, *Journal*, 237.

²¹ The anecdotal information on Kalapuyan labor under the HBC reflects the general regional trends outlined by Richard Mackie in his chapter on Native labor in the Columbia District. See Mackie, 282-310.

²² Douglas, *Journal*, 226.

with regional Native women not only provided access to sexual partners, but also cemented the very social and economic ties needed to ensure the success of the fur trappers' livelihood. For regional Indian families, marriage ties were a political institution, providing access to European goods, thereby enhancing a family's social rank and economic position.²³ These alliances could also provide Indian women with a new means to realize personal ambitions distinct from those of their male relatives.²⁴

It is important to note that aside from the relationship between Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay and Marguerite, his Kalapuyan wife, there is no documentary evidence for direct marriage alliance between the Kalapuyans of the Willamette Valley and the Willamette settlers. The kin relations were thus of a secondary or tertiary nature. Data compiled from the Catholic Church records in the late 1830s demonstrate that seven of the original male settlers developed long-term relationships with women from the lower Columbia region (see Tables 4 and 5). These other female settlers were either Chinookan (Chinook, Clackamas) or Coast Salish (Chehalis). Of particular note is the prevalence of the daughters of Coboway, a Clatsop headman. Both Yiamust and Kilakotah married French Canadians and were settled in

²³ The history of intermarriage between Euro-American fur traders and Native women, and the role of Native women in the fur trade, is evident in the growing literature on the subject. The major works for Canada and the U.S. include: Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); Jacqueline Peterson, "The People in Between: Indian-White Marriage and the Genesis of a Métis Society in the Great Lakes," (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1980); Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985); Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounters in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Tanis C. Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980). Mary C. Wright presents the first detailed regional study on women in the Pacific Northwest in "The Circle Broken: Gender, Family, and Difference in the Pacific Northwest, 1811-1850," (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, 1996). For a recent reassessment of the literature see, Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Partial Truths: A Closer Look at Fur Trade Marriage," in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, edited by Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens, and R.C. Macleod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001), 59-80.

²⁴ David Peterson del Mar, "Intermarriage and Agency: A Chinookan Case Study," *Ethnohistory* 42:1 (Winter 1995): 1-30.

the Willamette Valley by the early 1830s. Yiamust was the second wife of Joseph Gervais, and Kilakotah the wife of Louis Labonté, Sr.

Table 4. Willamette Valley Settlers, 1830-1834

<u>Freeman Established</u>	<u>Home Parish</u>	<u>Wife</u>	<u>Wife's Ethnicity</u>	<u>Date</u>
J.B. Desportes McKay	[Temiscaming,LC]?	1) Marguerite 2) Marie	Kalapuyan Chehalis	1831
Joseph Gervais	Maskinongé, LC	Yiamust	Clatsop	1832
Etienne Lucier	St. Edouard, LC	Josette	[Nouette]?	1832
Joseph Delard	Sorel, LC	Lisette	Shushuwap	1832
J.B. Perrault	St. Antoine, LC	Angèle	Chehalis	1832
Louis Labonté I	Laprairie, LC	Kilakotah	Clatsop	1832?
Amable Arquette	St. Laurent, LC	Marguerite	Chinook	1833
Pierre Bellique	L'Asumption, LC	Geneviève	Métis	1833
Pierre Depot	St. Roch, LC	Marguerite	Clackamas	1833
André Picard	St. Thomas, LC	Marie	Okanagan	1833?

Notes: LC=Lower Canada (Quebec). Yiamust and Kilahotah were sisters, the daughters of Clatsop headman Coboway.

Sources: *CCRPNW-SP*; *CCPNW-V*; Lyman, "Labonte;" McKay, *St. Paul*; Slacum's Report (1837).

Table 5. Willamette Valley Settler Data, 1830-1833

Male settlers from Lower Canada	9/10
Other: French-Algonquin	1/10
Female settlers from Lower Columbia	7/11
Female settlers from Plateau	2/11
Other: 1 Métis and 1 unknown	2/11
Male settlers originally with PFC	3/10
Male settlers originally with NWC	4/10
Male settlers originally with HBC	3/10
Average age of male settlers in 1830	40 yrs

Note: J.B. Desportes McKay had at least two wives in 1830.

Sources: See Table 4.

Although there is no direct information about the role of these women in history of Kalapuyan-fur trappers relations in the Willamette Valley, the role of women in Chinookan society and the personal history of another Coboway daughter, Celiast, suggest that the actions of the male settlers' Natives wives must not be discounted. While Chinookan women usually did not serve as community leaders per se, they did play an important role in trade relations, both within the aboriginal context and the fur trade. For example, Celiast Coboway, who was originally married to French Canadian laborer Basil Poirer, eventually left her husband in the early 1830s while living at Fort Vancouver. She then entered a life-long relationship with a more socially desirable man, Solomon Smith. Smith, who was then teaching school at Fort Vancouver, had come West with the fur trade expedition of New Englander Nathaniel Wyeth in 1832. By 1834, the couple was living with Celiast's sister, Yiamust, and brother-in-law Joseph Gervais in French Prairie.²⁵

David Peterson del Mar's case study of Celiast's personal history demonstrates that despite the problems and social changes brought on by the fur trade and later Euro-American settlement, this Clatsop woman clearly sought to control the direction of her own life, and ensure the welfare of herself and her family. Her example suggests that while we do not have evidence of the role of Native women in the early settlement of the Willamette Valley, we ought to infer a degree of agency to this group of women. It would benefit these women to maintain positive social and economic relations with the Kalapuyans when their French-Indian families lived seasonally in the Willamette Valley during the 1820s, and when they began established a permanent agrarian settlement about 1830. These women would have been fluent in the regional trade language, Chinook Jargon, and would have drawn on any existing extended kin relations as well as their own knowledge of regional trading practices

²⁵ Peterson del Mar, 1-12.

to ensure stable relations with the Kalapuyans. From this perspective, they would have played a role as cultural mediators, negotiating exchanges between the Kalapuyans and other regional groups, including their own direct relatives in the Lower Columbia River basin.²⁶

Agrarian Settlement in Ahantchuyuk Territory

The Willamette freemen, the independent trappers and hunters who contracted with the Hudson's Bay Company after 1822 were primarily French Canadians, their numbers supplemented by a small number of Americans, French-Indian mixed-bloods, and francophone Iroquois. Most had originally come to the Oregon Country as voyageurs and hunters with either the PFC or the NWC. Some trapped independently of the HBC, while others joined the various annual trapping and exploring expeditions, including the Snake Party, the Umpqua Country Party and the Southern (or Bonaventura) Party. When not moving about the Willamette Valley and the other parts of the Oregon Country, these free trappers and hunters were often seasonal inhabitants of the mid Willamette Valley, especially the Ahantchuyuk's territory (French Prairie).²⁷

Born during the period from the late 1770s through the 1790s, these freemen pursued the physically demanding life of the fur trapper for fifteen to twenty years by the late 1820s. Together with their wives and children who shared the trapping life, it appears that the men began to consider retiring from the grueling schedule of migrating around western Oregon and seasonally camping in the Willamette Valley. Facing the possibility of leaving the fur

²⁶ For documented historical cases in the lower Columbia during the early colonial period, see Mary Wright, 50-101.

²⁷ On July 16, 1826, Peter Skene Ogden and his Snake Expedition spent the night near the encampment of an unnamed Willamette freemen, who lent the party his canoe. Elliott, "Ogden Journals," 364. See also Willard Rees' account of the winter of 1821-22 when the Lucier and Gervais families were encamped on the Ahantchuyuk (Honsuchachac) River, now the Pudding River. Rees, 23.

trade, the men and their families had several options for the future. They might return to the fur trappers' place of origin, be it French Canada, Red River or the Iroquois settlements in Lower Canada. They might also join their wives' native communities in the western regions. The interethnic families could also choose to live permanently near one of the fur trade posts. And finally, there was the option of establishing an agrarian settlement in the Oregon Country.²⁸

Contemporary documents and the memoirs of two later inhabitants identify the "Willamette freemen" as the first non-Kalapuyans to initiate an agrarian settlement in the territory of the Ahantchuyuk, later known as French Prairie. The memoirs of Louis Labonté II, son of Astorian Louis Labonté and the Clatsop woman Kilakotah, suggest that the long-time freemen, especially the Astorians, had formed a bond of camaraderie that may have played a role in their decision to settle in French Prairie.²⁹ Although the historical record has long overlooked the role of the freemen's Indian wives in the decision-making process, there is incidental evidence to suggest that some of the women wanted to settle permanently in the Willamette Valley. In 1838, HBC clerk Francis Ermatinger wrote his brother Edward that Josette Legacé, the métis wife of Chief Trader John Work, wished to settle with her husband and children in the Willamette Valley.³⁰

It is best to view the fur trappers' and their spouses' motives for settling in the Willamette Valley as a set of complex reasons grounded in historical experience, as well as culture and environment.³¹ For the bi-cultural French-Indian couples, the territory of the

²⁸ John McLoughlin, "Copy of a Document Found among the Private Papers of John McLoughlin." *TOPA* 8 (1880): 48-49.

²⁹ Labonté, 173.

³⁰ Ermatinger, 203.

³¹ W. L. Morton, "The Significance of Site in the Settlement of the American and Canadian Wests," *Agricultural History* 25 (1951): 97. For a study of the later Anglo-American settlement of the Willamette Valley, see Peter G. Boag, *Environment and Experience: Settlement Culture in Nineteenth-Century Oregon*

Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans would have been particularly attractive for several reasons. At the northern limit of Ahantchuyuk territory, the Champoeg site was a long-time transportation link, providing water access to the Willamette River and Fort Vancouver as well as the upper Willamette Valley. In addition, the French-Indian families would have recognized the value of the natural resources of the area. Like other parts of the Willamette Valley that had been managed and utilized by the Kalapuyans for millennia, this territory contained the various environments of wetlands, dry upland prairies, wet lowland prairies, forested bottomland and oak openings. The open prairie land was ideal for cultivation and grazing, as it demanded less labor in clearing than forested sites, while the other areas—bottomland forests, oak openings, wetlands, wet lowland prairies, and forest foothills—provided useful plants and roots such as wapato, camas, and berries; wild game and fowl, and wood for construction and fuel. An additional attraction for the prospective settlers was the mild climate, a contrast to the regions farther north in British North America, as well as the arid Plateau east of the Cascades.

In selecting Ahantchuyuk territory for settlement, the French-Indian families chose an environment that was highly desirable in terms of the regional subsistence practices of the Native women *and* the agrarian culture of the French Canadians. Nine of the ten original Willamette Valley male settlers were natives of Lower Canada. As such, theirs was a society with deep roots in the agrarian peasant cultures of Western Europe. The French Canadians comprising the largest group of fur trader laborers during the height of the North American fur trade (1770s-1840s) hailed from agricultural communities in the St. Lawrence Valley. Those French Canadians who eventually settled in the Willamette Valley resembled the

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Robert Bunting, *The Pacific Raincoast: Environment and Culture in American Eden, 1778-1900* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997).

typical new recruit of this period. When they entered the fur trade in the early the nineteenth century, they were young man in their teens or early twenties, mostly likely from land-owning peasant families.³² At the time, Lower Canada was a pre-capitalist agrarian society, and although the peasants, or *habitants*, labored under a seigneurial system that supported a landed gentry, the habitants formed an independent class that pursued self-sufficiency based on husbandry and subsistence agriculture. Indeed, the ancestors of the French Canadian voyageurs who re-settled the Willamette Valley were the descendants of French colonists who had themselves colonized and transformed the landscapes of the St. Lawrence Valley, including clearing the land of large forest tracks. The Willamette settlers' *habitant* culture led them to value open prairie lands that would also provide sufficient timber, water, and river frontage.³³ When the French Canadian settlers established farms in Ahantchuyuk territory, they claimed long rectangular riverfront (or streamfront) lots similar to the *longlots* common in Lower Canada and in other North American regions colonized by francophones, such as the Mississippi Valley, Texas, and the Red River colony in Manitoba.³⁴

From an economic standpoint, by establishing farming operations in the Willamette Valley, the Willamette freemen chose an option in keeping with older traditions in Lower Canada. Allan Greer's research on Lower Richelieu Valley from 1740 to 1840 demonstrates that the region's peasant families relied on both credit mechanisms and wage labor in the fur

³² Allan Greer, *Peasant, Lord and Merchant: Rural Society in Three Quebec Parishes, 1740-1840* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 177-193.

³³ Colin M. Coates, *The Metamorphoses of Landscape and Community in Early Quebec* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2000), 32-54; Louise Dechêne, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth-Century Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 127-196; Allan Greer, *The People of New France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 27-42.

³⁴ Carl J. Ekberg, *French Roots in the Illinois Country: The Mississippi Frontier in Colonial Times* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 5-30, 104-110; Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 114-117; Harlow Ziner Head, "The Oregon Donation Land Claims and Their Patterns," (Ph.D diss., University of Oregon, 1971), 138-160.

trade to support their farming economy.³⁵ Thus, by using any savings they had accumulated with the HBC, and by drawing on credit account with the company's store at Fort Vancouver, the settlers were able to replicate to some degree the social and economic institutions they had known in Lower Canada. Retiring to a farm after years in the fur trade was a choice that would not have been unusual at the time. The uncommon element was the men's decision to set-up farming operations over a day's journey from the nearest fur trade post, Fort Vancouver, and in a locality which even then HBC officials feared might eventually come under American control.

Chief Trader Alexander McLeod's comments about the Willamette freemen, recorded in September 1828, provide some of the best evidence of the French-Indian families' motivations for settling permanently in the upper Willamette Valley. At the time, McLeod expressed his frustration that the freemen were loathe to join his expedition to the Umpqua country in southern Oregon.³⁶ He described several reasons for their reluctance to leave the Willamette Valley. First, the Umpqua expedition was less of an economic incentive because the freemen had strong ties with the Kalapuyans, "the Indians from whom they have obtained Furs." Second, McLeod claimed the freemen lacked an entrepreneurial spirit, implying that they are usually satisfied with the few material possessions they owned. And finally, McLeod remarked on the freemen's attachment to the Willamette Valley, observing that "nothing short of decisive measures will ever make them leave their favorite country (Wullamette) should they for instance be disposed to remain."³⁷ Another reason for the freemen's reluctance to leave the Willamette Valley was their emotional attachment to their families. During his 1824-25 trip to the Columbia Department, George Simpson talked to the freemen

³⁵ Greer, *Peasant*, 20-47; 177-193.

³⁶ Alexander McLeod to John McLoughlin, September 18, 1828 in Nunis, 12.

³⁷ McLeod to McLoughlin in Nunis, 12.

about joining the HBC expeditions to the Umpqua River, noting that “they are rather shy on account of their families and the hostile character of the Natives.”³⁸ The freemen’s fears for the safety of their families was a response to the generally more conflictual relations in the Umpqua River region.³⁹

It is clear in Alexander McLeod’s comments that the French-Indian families shared a set of socio-cultural values that differed significantly from those of the HBC’s Anglo-Celtic officer class. The views of the HBC officers, reflected in a later memoir by Chief Factor John McLoughlin, held out an either/or future for the French-Indian families: either the bi-cultural children were to be raised as Indians or as whites. McLoughlin felt that “half-breeds” raised as Indians would prove “a thorn in the side of the whites.”⁴⁰ As he remembered his words some twenty years later, McLoughlin urged the fur trappers to settle in the Willamette Valley, believing that the establishment of a colony geographically separated from the families’ Indian relatives would not only ensure that the children would be “brought to cultivate the ground and imbued with the feelings and sympathies of the whites,” but that “their mothers would serve as hostages for the good behavior of their relatives in the interior.”⁴¹ John McLoughlin’s perspective combined colonial ambitions for assimilation with practical concerns about ensuring stable Native-Euro-American relations.

John McLoughlin’s version of events, penned sometime in the early 1850s, departs from McLeod’s 1828 characterizations of the freemen. McLeod observed that the freemen were quite attached to the Willamette Valley and preferred to remain there whenever possible. However, McLoughlin later wrote that “many of the Canadians objected to go to

³⁸ Simpson, *Fur Trade*, 124.

³⁹ Nathan Douthit, *Uncertain Encounters: Indians and Whites at Peace and War in Southern Oregon, 1820-1860* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2002), 10.

⁴⁰ McLoughlin, “Copy,” 49-50.

⁴¹ McLoughlin, “Copy,” 49-50.

the Willamette, because it was to become American territory,” the reason for their concern being whether they would “not have the same advantages as American citizens.”⁴² McLoughlin goes on to convince the Canadians that the Willamette Valley was “the best and only place adapted to form a settlement” due to the fertility of the soil and the access to the Waterways and the American government would treat them properly if they were honest men.⁴³ Given the historical evidence and the historical realities of the 1820s, McLoughlin’s later recollections constituted a case of historical revisionism, one that would appeal to the eventual victors in the struggle for control of Oregon, the Americans. Perhaps a more likely scenario is that the French-Indian families were intent on settling in the Willamette Valley because of the benefits the area offered them. Although they may have felt no strong loyalty to the British crown and the HBC, which treated them as second-class citizens, they remained concerned about their legal rights and the legality of land claims once the international border question was finally settled. Indeed, the French Canadians expressed concern about the legality of their land claims to New England entrepreneur Nathaniel Wyeth in 1833 and to William A. Slacum, who visited the Oregon Country at the request of the American government in 1836. As British subjects, the Canadians were worried that the U.S. would not honor their pre-emptive claims.⁴⁴

In addition to their concerns about the larger geopolitical situation, the French-Indian couples had two more immediate concerns with regard to their desire to reside permanently in the Willamette Valley: gaining the approval of the local Kalapuyans on whose land they wished to settle, and the support of John McLoughlin, head of the HBC, from whom they

⁴² McLoughlin, “Copy,” 49-50.

⁴³ McLoughlin, “Copy,” 49-50.

⁴⁴ Nathaniel Wyeth, *The Correspondence and Journals of Captain Nathaniel J. Wyeth*, edited by Frederick G. Young (Eugene: University Press, 1899; rpt; Arno Press, 1973), 92; William A. Slacum, “Slacum’s Report on Oregon, 1836-37, *OHQ* 13:2 (June 1912), 197-198.

would need credit, supplies, and most importantly, livestock. Here the fur trappers had to negotiate with both the aboriginal inhabitants and the local Euro-American colonial power in order to find their own place in the region.

Although the freemen had camped seasonally in the Willamette Valley for more than fifteen years by the mid 1820s, it appears that year-round occupation of the land based on agriculture and husbandry began only between 1828 and 1830. When Étienne Lucier, Joseph Gervais, Louis Labonté, and Jean-Baptiste Desportes McKay dit Dupati, decided to establish farms in the Willamette Valley in the late 1820s, they chose the territory of the Ahantchuyuk.⁴⁵ Since these three men and their families likely settled permanently in this area prior to the intermittent fever epidemic of 1831, they likely obtained the approval of the Ahantchuyuk.⁴⁶ Prior to the epidemic, the Ahantchuyuk numbered approximately 500 people, and would therefore were sufficiently numerous to prevent unwanted intrusions into their lands.⁴⁷ Given this historical reality, what motivated this group of Kalapuyans to allow this handful of early French-Indian families to settle in their territory? Unfortunately, it is not possible to answer this question with any degree of certainty because there is no direct evidence from the limited, existing Kalapuyan sources. However, that such permission was probably given can be deduced from an examination of Kalapuyan and regional aboriginal cultural logic and from known historical realities of the time.

From a Kalapuyan perspective, permitting these few families to settle in the Ahantchuyuk territory was seen as a way to further incorporate the newcomers into

⁴⁵ Lyman, "Labonte," 173-175; J.A. Hussey presents the most detailed treatment to date of the earliest non-Kalapuyans inhabitants of French Prairie, see Hussey, *Champoeg*, 43-61.

⁴⁶ Louis Labonté initially settled across the river in the territory of the Yamhill Kalapuyans.

⁴⁷ This approximate number is a conservative estimate based on Robert Boyd's pre-1830s population tables. In 1805 the Central Kalapuyans numbered about 6,000. In dividing this 1805 figure between the ten known Central subdivisions, one researches a total of about 600 per Central Kalapuyan group. The late 1820s estimate for the entire Kalapuyan population (Northern, Central, Southern) was 8,780, which indicates a slightly smaller total population from the 9,200 total of 1805. See Boyd, *The Coming*, 325.

aboriginal systems of trade and kinship, ties that had developed with the newcomers over the previous fifteen years. This practice was in keeping with pre-contact patterns of social, economic, and kinship relations in the Columbia River region. In fact, as already noted, maintaining social and economic ties through interethnic families was common practice within the larger North American fur trade. Within the Columbia District, fur trader officers and laborers regularly intermarried with aboriginal groups living near fur trade posts such as Fort George, Fort Langley, Fort Nez Percés, Fort Vancouver, and Cowlitz Prairie.⁴⁸

The memoirs of Louis Labonté II (1818-1911), a French-Clatsop individual who lived with his family at the Gervais farm near the Ahantchuyuk village of Chemaway from 1831 to 1834, provide the only recorded first-hand account of the relations between the French-Indian families and the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans in the early 1830s. His memoirs speak of lively social relations between the indigenous people and the newcomers. Labonté recalled that the children living in the upper Willamette Valley, both Kalapuyan and French-Indian, played together. One of the local youths' favorite sports was diving off a bluff at Champoege.⁴⁹ Although the French-Indian families and the Kalapuyans probably communicated largely in Chinook Jargon, Labonté provides evidence that the young children of the fur trapper families did learn some Central Kalapuyan words and phrases from their Kalapuyan playmates. Labonté also recalled hunting deer alongside the Kalapuyans, who would don the head of a deer and skillfully act the part of a young buck in order to gain

⁴⁸ Mathias D. Bergmann, "Cross-Cultural Interactions, Interdependencies, and Insecurities on the Lower Columbia River Valley, 1810-1855" (M.A. thesis, Washington State University, 2000); Morag MacLachlan, *The Fort Langley Journals* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998); Brett Rushforth, "'The Great Spirit was Grieved': Religion and Environment among the Cowlitz Indians," *PNQ* 93:4 (Fall 2002), 190-191; Theodore Stern, *Chiefs and Chief Traders: Indians Relations at Fort Nez Percés, 1818-1855* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1993).

⁴⁹ Lyman, "Labonte," 175.

closer proximity to their prey. While the Kalapuyans employed bow and arrow in the hunt, the “young Labonte always used a gun at this sport.”⁵⁰

The French-Indian families also appear to have been privileged to attend weddings of the Ahantchuyuk. Labonté’s memoirs describe in detail the wedding ceremony of the local Kalapuyans, including the exchange of gifts that solemnized the marriage between two families, and between two tribal groups, if the newlyweds were from highborn members of different tribes.⁵¹ Labonté also recalled the impact of nearly twenty years of trade with the Euro-American fur traders. While wedding gifts included traditional items such as slaves, dentalia shells, and tobacco, they also gave goods of European manufacture such as blankets, guns, kettles, powder, and knives.⁵²

From Louis Labonté II’s memoirs, the only recorded source from the French-Indian French Prairie community covering the initial settlement period, we have a glimpse of intercultural relations between the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans and the newcomers. It is clear that the two groups continued to trade as they had over the previous two decades. The Ahantchuyuk welcomed the French-Indians to some of their community celebrations, and they allowed their children to play together. Since the fur trapper’s wives were Native women from the Lower Columbia region, it is likely that the contacts between the two groups included more than trade and neighborliness. Although there is no historical record of the fur trappers’ Indian wives working with the local Kalapuyans, it is plausible that they engaged in some cooperative seasonal harvesting and food production with the Ahantchuyuk women.

In the Willamette freemen’s initial efforts to negotiate the support of John McLoughlin and the HBC for their project to settle in the Willamette Valley, they at first

⁵⁰ Lyman, “Labonte,” 172.

⁵¹ Lyman, “Labonte,” 175-176.

⁵² Lyman, “Labonte,” 176.

faced opposition. In 1828 two fur trappers approached McLoughlin asking for his support in their desire to establish farms in the Willamette Valley. One of the two was Étienne Lucier and the other was either Joseph Gervais or Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay. That year McLoughlin refused to support the men's project.⁵³ McLoughlin's refusal was due to the policy of the HBC, which discouraged settlement in the country and required employees who signed contracts to return to their place of engagement. It was also likely based on his concern that a French-Indian settlement in the Willamette might develop independently of the HBC, since the region south of the Columbia would presumably become American territory when the international boundary was finally determined.

Accordingly, that first year in 1828, McLoughlin refused to give Étienne Lucier the needed implements to establish a farm, though he did grant Lucier and his family passage to Canada on the overland express.⁵⁴ However, the party the Luciers joined was unable to cross the Rocky Mountains and so they returned to Fort Vancouver. McLoughlin subsequently sent Lucier and his family to join the Southern Party. McLoughlin had earlier sent out the other free trappers with the Southern Party under the command of Chief Trader Alexander McLeod. At the time, McLoughlin wrote that he hoped "we would find a place Where we could Employ our Willamette freemen so as to remove them from a place where they were anxious to begin to farm."⁵⁵ One fur trapper, the former Astorian Louis Labonté in fact returned to Canada and received his papers of official discharge. He made his way back to

⁵³ John McLoughlin, *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver, 1st Series*, edited by R.R. Rich, (London: Hudson's Bay Company Record Society, 1941), 172-173.

⁵⁴ McLoughlin, *Letters, 1st Series*, 172-173.

⁵⁵ McLoughlin, *Letters, 1st Series*, 172-173.

Oregon in 1830 and thereupon brought his family to stay with Joseph Gervais and his family near Chemaway in 1831.⁵⁶

By the fall of 1829, it appears that John McLoughlin changed his mind about opposing the free trappers' desire to settle in the Willamette Valley. His letter to the HBC Governor and Committee in 1836 indicates that the main reason for his abandoning was strategic. In 1827 and 1829-30 the *Owhyhee*, a Boston ship captained by John Dominis, plied the waters of the North Pacific coast, including the Columbia River. Dominis indicated that he would return in 1831 for additional trade with the Natives. McLoughlin thereupon became worried that if the HBC did not accommodate the wishes of the Willamette freemen, they would trade their furs with the Americans.⁵⁷ Since the strategy of the HBC was to protect its monopoly in North America, McLoughlin was determined to prevent American competitors from "getting a footing in the country."⁵⁸ McLoughlin then drew up an arrangement that provided the freemen with the supplies they needed, and ensure the colony's reliance on the HBC.⁵⁹

McLoughlin agreed to support the freemen's settlement by keeping them on the books as free trappers. He loaned each family seed, farm implements, foodstuffs, and necessary household furniture on credit, the balance to be paid when the wheat crop came

⁵⁶ Lyman, "Labonte," 171.

⁵⁷ McLoughlin, *Letters, 1st Series*, 171-173.

⁵⁸ McLoughlin, *Letters, 1st Series*, 173.

⁵⁹ In the memoir McLoughlin likely penned in the early 1850s, he presented a different account of the Willamette Valley settlement than the one he presented to HBC officials in the 1830s. In the memoir, McLoughlin stated that Étienne Lucier approached him in 1828. In this version Lucier consulted with McLoughlin about future prospects for Oregon becoming a "settled country" based on agriculture. McLoughlin told Lucier that wherever wheat grew, a "farming colony" would develop. McLoughlin agreed to advance Lucier seed and wheat for his family, to be repaid on the crop from his future farm, and farming implements at 50 percent of prime cost. In this version, Lucier considered the matter, but changes his mind because "there was too remote a prospect of this becoming a civilized country" and "there were no clergymen in the country." Lucier then requested passage for his family back to Lower Canada, which McLoughlin afforded him. McLoughlin, "Copy," 48.

in.⁶⁰ He also loaned two cows to each male settler. In his memoirs, McLoughlin presented this policy as a conservative one that provided an equal footing to all settlers, because it gave both the poor and wealthier settlers access to cattle.⁶¹ However, McLoughlin's actions must also be viewed in light of his commitment to the HBC's economic monopoly in the Columbia region. McLoughlin's policy was been partially, if not completely, a method for preventing the Willamette settlers from becoming too economically independent of the HBC by developing an alternative livestock market. McLoughlin apparently offered a double outfit to those willing to settle north of the Columbia River in Cowlitz valley, but the "beauty and fertility" of the Willamette Valley motivated most to settle there.⁶²

In his memoir dating from the 1850s, McLoughlin presents himself as a venerable paterfamilias directing the settlement plans of French Canadian, French-Indian, and Iroquois trappers, who needed guidance. In his eyes, to prevent the fur trappers from abandoning their farming settlement at "the least difficulty," McLoughlin required that the men have fifty pounds sterling to supply their families with clothing and implements before he would allow them to settle. McLoughlin reasoned that given their investment, the men would have to persevere despite the difficulties. McLoughlin's credited this policy with the success of the settlement.⁶³ Here McLoughlin demonstrates a view held by many officers and educated observers of the day—that the French Canadian, French-Indians and Native trappers lacked the industry and work ethic that was required to make them successful yeoman farmers. This is an interesting take on the settlement, for only the free trappers would likely have

⁶⁰ McLoughlin, "Copy," 51-52; Horace S. Lyman, ed. "Reminiscences of F.X. Matthieu." *OHQ* 1:1 (March 1900), 89.

⁶¹ John McLoughlin cited in S.A. Clarke, *Pioneer Days of Oregon History*, vol. 1 (Portland: J.K. Gill Co., 1905), 220-221.

⁶² Lyman, "Matthieu," 89.

⁶³ McLoughlin cited in Clarke, 220.

accumulated any savings. HBC laborers earned between 17 and 19 pounds annually, which afforded them little opportunity to save money.⁶⁴

Louis Labonté II identified Étienne Lucier and Joseph Gervais as the first free trappers to initiate settlement in the Willamette Valley, with Gervais as the first and Lucier the second.⁶⁵ According to Labonté, the former Astorians from Wilson Price Hunt's party formed the original nucleus of French Prairie settlement, "and thus Oregon." He also identified Joseph Gervais, Étienne Lucier, Louis Labonté I, William Cannon Alexander Carson, and Jean Baptiste Dubreuil as the main group of former Astorians turned settlers.⁶⁶ Curiously, Labonté omitted any reference to Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay, who may have been the first permanent settler. In fact, McLoughlin also disregarded Desportes McKay in his official and personal accounts of the Willamette Valley settlement. These omissions may have been the result of a desire to expunge a less than "respectable" character from the official history. Not only was Desportes McKay a "halfbreed" of French-Algonquin descent, but throughout the 1820s and 1830s, he had at least two Indian wives. Recognizing this mixed-blood polygamist as a founding father of the Willamette Valley settlement may well have proved too controversial for McLoughlin in the 1850s and for Horace Lyman, the American journalist who interviewed Louis Labonté II in the 1890s.

In his interview with Labonté, Lyman raised the question as to whether the freemen's employment with an American company led them to be more independent— more inclined to look to their own fortunes in contrast to HBC laborers. Lyman's suggestion that an

⁶⁴ Philip Goldring, *Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-1900*, 3 vols. (Ottawa: Canada Parks Service, 1979); William R. Swagerty and Dick A. Wilson, "Faithful Service under Difference Flags: A Socioeconomic Profile of the Columbia District, Hudson's Bay Company and the Upper Missouri Outfit, American Fur Company, 1825-1835, in *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991*, edited by Jennifer S.H. Brown, W.J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994): 243-267.

⁶⁵ Lyman, "Labonté," 172.

⁶⁶ Lyman, "Labonté," 173.

American spirit of independence influenced the free trappers appears somewhat farfetched given the limited two-year tenure of the Pacific Fur Company. It seems more likely that the freemen's shared *history* in the lower Columbia region created bonds between the men. Indeed, Louis Labonté, Sr. and Joseph Gervais were in fact brothers-in-law, related to each other through their wives, Kilakotah and Yiamust. Labonté II recalled that the Willamette freemen "formed a little company of comrades and became the first group of independent Oregon people."⁶⁷

Historical sources dating from the 1830s and 1840s indicate that the families of Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay, Étienne Lucier, and Pierre Bellique took up claims fronting the Willamette River in the Champoege area.⁶⁸ In March 1833, John Ball, an American who had come west with Nathaniel Wyeth's first expedition, arrived to try his hand at farming. That summer, he was joined by John Sinclair, another member of the Wyeth party.⁶⁹ Ball built a modest establishment, remaining in the Champoege though September 1833. His letters and journal, later published by his daughters, provide some details on the small French-Indian settlement at Champoege. Ball specifically mentions Desportes McKay, whom he noted had at least two, maybe three wives, and a total of seven children. Ball also reported the presence of "five or six slaves and two or three hired Indians, besides cats and dogs without number."⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Lyman, "Labonte," 173.

⁶⁸ Slacum, 175-224; John Ball, *Born to Wander: Autobiography of John Ball*, Compiled by Kate Ball Powers, Flora Ball Hopkins, and Lucy Ball, Annotated and with a new introduction by Gary Burbridge (1925; rpt; Grand Rapids Historical Society, 1994); Genealogical Form of Portland, Oregon, *Genealogical Material in Oregon Provisional Land Claims: Abstracted From Applications, Vol. 1-VIII, 1845-1849* (Portland: Genealogical Forum of Portland, Oregon, 1982), 11, 41. In October 1833, John Work referred to Jean Baptiste Perrault as "Peran." See Maloney, 82-83. See also Hussey, 47-66; J. Neilson Barry, *The French Canadian Pioneers of the Willamette Valley* (Portland: The Catholic Sentinel, 1933; J. Neilson Barry, "Astorians Who Settled in Oregon," *WHQ* 24 (1933): 221-231, 282-301; Harriet D. Munnick, "The Prairie That Slacum Saw," *MCH* 9 (1965-1968): 25-32; Oswald West, "Oregon's First White Settlers in French Prairie," *OHQ* 43:3 (September 1942): 198-209.

⁶⁹ Ball, *Born*, 61-63; M. M. Quaife, ed., "Letters of John Ball, 1832-1833," *MCHR* 4:5 (March 1919): 450-468.

⁷⁰ John Ball, "Across the Continent Seventy Years Ago," edited by Kate N. B. Powers, *OHQ* 3:2 (June 1902): 103.

In his letters and journal, Ball remarked on the valley's unique environment, noting the vitality of both indigenous plants, and introduced crops such as peas, barley, and winter wheat. Hogs, horses, and cattle also thrived, deer and elk were plentiful, and the settlers could easily obtain salmon at Willamette Falls. However, despite Ball's high hopes, his months in the Willamette Valley were disappointing on the whole. With the onset of the intermittent fever (malaria) in the summer months, both Ball and Sinclair were incapacitated for days at a time. Most vexing to Ball was the state of the little colony itself. As a New Englander and a graduate of Dartmouth College, Ball found his interactions with the French-Indian families and the local Indians tiresome and irritating. He could not abide the "intrusion of those I did not wish," nor the lifeways of the French Canadians "who adopted, in many ways, the customs of the natives." Ultimately, Ball became lonely and bored in the Willamette settlement for lack of educated, sophisticated neighbors. "Completely discouraged," John Ball and John Sinclair left the farm at Champoege on September 20, 1833 and returned to the United States by boat.⁷¹

Meanwhile, Amable Arquette and his wife Marguerite Chinook located their farm a few miles to the southeast of Champoege, outside present-day Butteville. Jean Baptiste Perrault and his wife Angèle Chehalis moved to the west side of the Willamette River near the confluence of the Yamhill River. Joseph Gervais and Yiamust Clatsop staked a claim at "Chemaway, a point on the back of the Willamette River about two and half miles south from Fairfield."⁷² Following Louis Labonté's retirement from the HBC in 1828, he returned to Lower Canada as per the requirements of his contract, and then rejoined his family in the Columbia region. Labonté, Kilakotah Clatsop and their children first lived with Joseph

⁷¹ Ball, "Across," 103-105.

⁷² Lyman, "Labonte," 172.

Gervais and Kilakotah's sister, Yiamust, for several years in the early 1830s. In 1834 Labonté moved the family to Thomas McKay's farm on Scappoose Plains (Scappoose, Oregon) near the lower Willamette's Multnomah Channel. After two years as foreman for McKay, the Labonté family finally settled on a riverfront site on the west side of the upper Willamette River, located across the Yamhill River from the Perrault homestead.⁷³

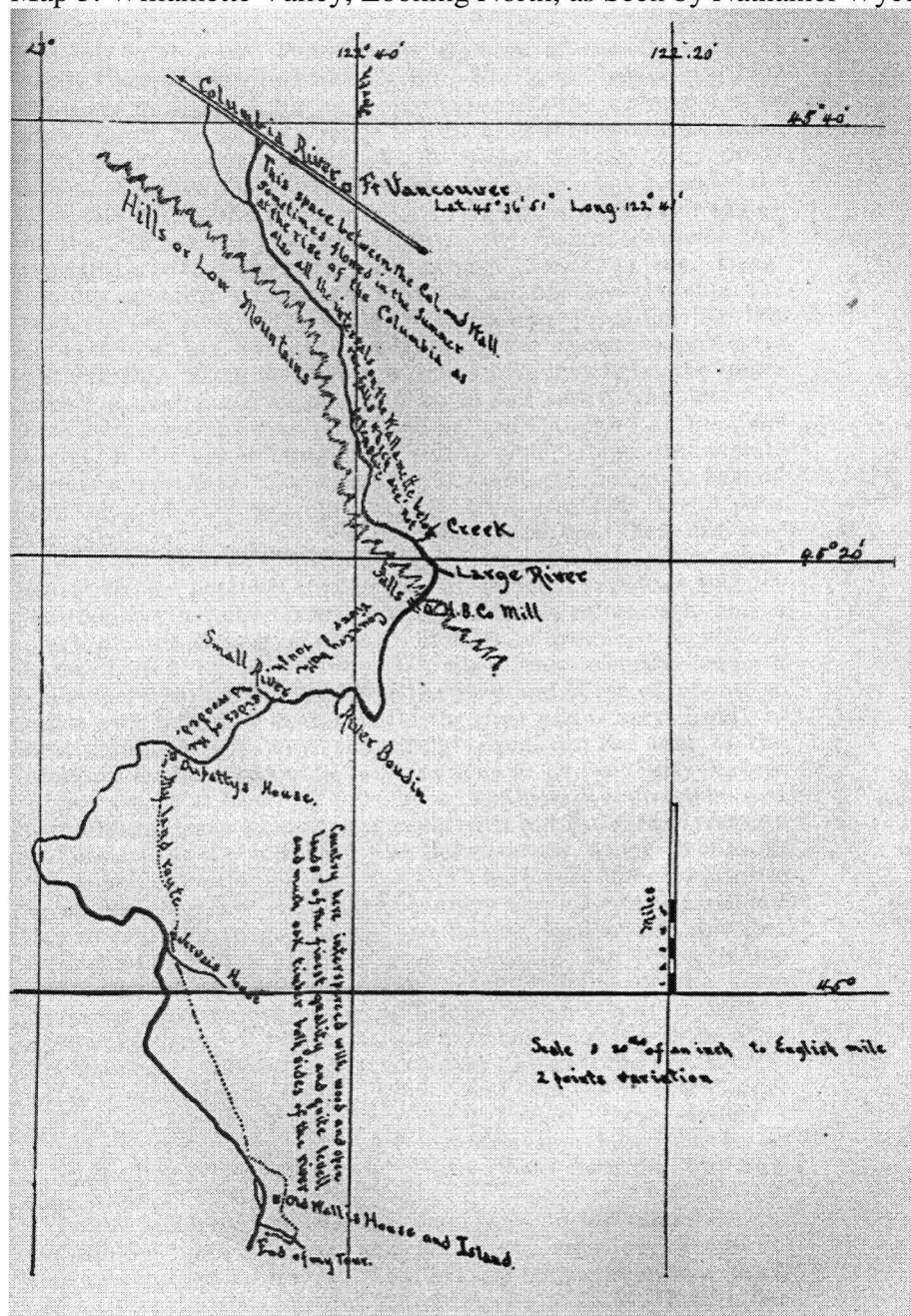
In this early period the French-Indian economy relied on a combination of Lower Canadian agricultural and husbandry practices, fur trapping, hunting, trading, and the productive work of Native women engaged in traditional subsistence activities. The process of agrarian settlement by the freemen and their families hastened a process that began with the introduction of horses to the Willamette Valley in the 1810s. These French-Indian families introduced livestock, cropping, deforestation, and an agricultural system that began a major transformation of the landscape.⁷⁴ John Ball's comments about the settlers adopting local Native customs also indicates, albeit indirectly, the role of the French Canadians' Indian wives in influencing early French Prairie society. In addition to their productive work, the women drew on their native cultures to shape the settlement's trade relations, material culture, and social life. Louis Labonté II's familiarity with Chinook Jargon demonstrates that the women also taught their children to speak this region's *lingua franca*.⁷⁵ John Ball's observations about the Desportes McKay household suggest that at least one of the settler families, if not more, adopted the regional practices of relying on Indian slave labor.

⁷³ Lyman, "Labonte," 173-177; Barry, "Astorians," 283.

⁷⁴ Johanessen et al, "The Vegetation of the Willamette Valley," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 61:2 (June 1971), 286. Ratcliff, James L. "What Happened to the Kalapuya?: A Study of the Depletion of Their Economic Base." *The Indian Historian* 6:3 (Summer 1973), 30-31.

⁷⁵ Oral testimony given by François "Frank" Jette (1880-1982), the author's great-grandfather, in the late 1970s suggests that Chinook Jargon was a native tongue of the second and third generations born to French-Indian settlers in French Prairie. See Harvey McKay, *St. Paul, Oregon, 1830-1890* (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1980), 133.

Map 5. Willamette Valley, Looking North, as Seen by Nathaniel Wyeth, 1830s



From Wyeth, *The Correspondence and Journals of Nathaniel Wyeth* (1899).

The Intermittent Fever and Its Aftermath

In July 1831, the intermittent fever first descended upon the Kalapuyans of the Willamette Valley. The disease had made its initial appearance in the lower Columbia region one year earlier in July 1830. Also known as "*la fièvre tremblante*," to the French Canadians and "fever and ague" to the Americans, the disease had been seen in other parts of North America following European colonization, but it was then new to the Pacific Northwest.⁷⁶ The intermittent fever spread throughout the lower Columbia and lower Willamette regions over the summer and fall of 1830. Winter halted its progress, but it reappeared again in the summer of 1831, this time reaching the Willamette Valley about Willamette Falls. By 1833 the fever had spread as far south as California's Sacramento Valley, likely transmitted by the HBC trapping brigades.

The first three years of the epidemic, from 1830 through 1833, were probably the most deadly, with the disease becoming endemic to the western Oregon and western Washington thereafter. Robert Boyd, who completed the most comprehensive study to date on the intermittent fever epidemics of the 1830s, stated that these attacks "probably constitute the single most important epidemiological event in the recorded history of what would eventually become the state of Oregon."⁷⁷ Although the Lower Columbia had experienced disease outbreaks on various scales, including both pre-contact and post-contact episodes (venereal disease and smallpox being the most prominent), the intermittent fever marked a turning point for the region's indigenous peoples.

⁷⁶ Frederick L. Dunn, "Malaria," in *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease*, edited by Kenneth F. Kiple (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 860.

⁷⁷ Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Disease and Population Decline among Northwest Indians, 1774-1874* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 84.

Earlier studies speculated about the identity of the intermittent fever, though researchers now agree that the epidemiological characteristic of the intermittent fever point convincingly to malaria.⁷⁸ Both the geographic extension and the seasonal nature of the disease are consistent with the disease. The intermittent fever appeared during the warmer months and dissipated during the winter. It was most virulent in the Lower Columbia and Willamette Valleys, which correspond to the territory of the only known malarial vector in the Pacific Northwest, *Anopheles freenorni*. This mosquito species breeds in faster moving water and is rarely found in dry climates. Finally, the use of quinine, made from the bark the cinchona tree—used by the HBC to combat intermittent fever—was the preferred form of treatment for malaria in the nineteenth century.⁷⁹

The evocative names “intermittent fever,” *fièvre tremblante*, and “fever and ague,” aptly describe the symptoms of malaria, which include fever, chills, periods of shaking or trembling, soreness and pain in the limbs, and an overall feeling of bodily weakness.⁸⁰ Another important characteristic of the disease was a tendency for it to reappear in convalescent victims. John Townsend, an American doctor present at Fort Vancouver in 1834, provided a clinical observation of the disease, noting it attacked liver function in the early stages, which he viewed as a primary reasons for the high mortality rates.⁸¹

⁷⁸ S. F. Cook, “The Epidemic of 1830-1833 in California and Oregon,” *University of California Publications in American Archeology and Ethnology* 43:3 (May 1955): 303-326; Herbert C. Taylor and Lester L. Hoaglin, “The ‘Intermittent Fever’ Epidemic of the 1830s on the Lower Columbia River,” *Ethnohistory* 9:1 (Winter 1962): 160-178; Boyd, *The Coming*, 84.

⁷⁹ MacFarlane Burnet and David O. White, *Natural History of Infectious Disease 4th ed.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972): 232-236; Jacques M. May, “The Ecology of Malaria,” in *Studies in Disease Ecology*, edited by Jacques L. May (New York: Hafner Publishing, 1961): 161-171; Cook, 307-308; Boyd, *The Coming*, 107; Dunn, 855-858.

⁸⁰ Boyd, *The Coming*, 100.

⁸¹ John Kirk Townsend, *Narrative of a Journey Across the Rocky Mountains to the Columbia River*, new introduction and annotation by George A. Jobanek (Philadelphia: H. Perkins, 1839; rpt; Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1999), 128.

When the intermittent fever struck Fort Vancouver in the fall of 1830, conditions became severe very quickly. In a memoir published in the 1850s, Chief Trader Peter Skene Ogden recalled that after his absence from Fort Vancouver during the summer of 1830 he returned in the fall to find the fort community stricken with the disease. According to Ogden eighty-one of eighty-two employees at the fort fell ill with the disease within twenty days of its first appearance.⁸² On October 11, 1830, John McLoughlin wrote HBC officials that all of the Fort Vancouver personnel were on the convalescent list.⁸³

Even when company employees survived the disease they “remained subject to the influence of this pestilential fever.”⁸⁴ Compounding the physically debilitating nature of the intermittent fever, the enormity of the outbreak left those who were healthy or recovering overwhelmed with nursing the scores who were ill. Despite these difficulties, Ogden attributed the low death rate at the fort to the presence of Western physicians and medicine and the “wise measures” instituted by McLoughlin at the Fort Vancouver.⁸⁵ Fortunately, the annual supply ship from London arrived in the fall of 1830 and replenished the fort’s supply of quinine. By 1833, McLoughlin developed an additional remedy made from the root of the local Pacific Dogwood, which he employed when supplies of quinine ran out, though this apparently only relieved the symptoms of the fever.⁸⁶

⁸² Peter Skene Ogden, *Traits of American Indian Life* (San Francisco: Grabhorn Press, 1933; rpt; Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1998), 100.

⁸³ McLoughlin, *Letters, 1st Series*, 88.

⁸⁴ Ogden, *Traits*, 100.

⁸⁵ Ogden, *Traits*, 100.

⁸⁶ Boyd, *The Coming*, 107; William Fraser Tolmie, *Journal of William Fraser Tolmie*, edited by Howard R. Mitchell and Janet R. Mitchell (Vancouver, BC: Mitchell Press, 1963), 171, 175. Donald Culross Peattie, *A Natural History of Western Trees* (New York: Bonanza Book, 1953), 653-655. In 1833, Tolmie misidentified this plant, which McLoughlin called “Devil’s Wood,” as *Cornus florida*, a dogwood indigenous to the eastern seaboard. It was in fact a regional variety correctly identified by Thomas Nuttall in 1834 and now referred to as *Cornus nuttallii*, or Pacific Dogwood.

The intermittent fever struck the Native populations of the lower Columbia River region with equal force, yet they were not as fortunate as the inhabitants of Fort Vancouver. On October 11, 1830, Chief Factor John McLoughlin wrote to HBC officials that the intermittent fever, "for the first time since the trade of this Department was Established, has appeared at this place and carried off three fourths of the Indn (sic) population in our vicinity."⁸⁷ According to Robert Boyd, the first outbreak of intermittent fever extended upriver to the Dalles and downriver to the mouth of the Columbia. It struck the Lower and Upper Chinookans populations of the lower Columbia and the lower Willamette. It likely also attacked the Athapascan-speaking isolate Clatskanie on the southern bank of the Columbia and the villages of the Coast Salish Cowlitz, located up the Cowlitz River on the northern bank of the Columbia.⁸⁸

Although the intermittent fever attacked both Indian and Euro-American communities, the death toll amongst the indigenous populations was so much higher due to a combined set of factors. Foremost amongst these was the dynamics of what epidemiologist classify as virgin soil epidemics. Such epidemics are disease episodes that strike a particular population for the very first time. The lack of previous exposure leaves the stricken population without the necessary acquired or inherited immunological defenses against the invader.⁸⁹ This particular episode in the Pacific Northwest was part of the larger "disease frontier" of virgin soil epidemics that accompanied European and Euro-American expansion in the western hemisphere.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ McLoughlin, *Letters, 1st Series*, 88.

⁸⁸ Boyd, *The Coming*, 86-92; Cook, 305; Taylor and Hoaglin, 160.

⁸⁹ Alfred Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Series, 33:2 (April 1976), 289; Boyd, *The Coming*, 17-18.

⁹⁰ Henry F. Dobyns, *Their Numbers Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972); William H. McNeil,

An equally important factor in the high Indian mortality rate was the lack of cultural and medical defenses against previously unknown diseases. Such was the case for the Natives of the Lower Columbia and the Willamette Valley in the 1830s.⁹¹ Writings by contemporary observers indicate that the Native people did not have the medical knowledge to fight and treat the disease and followed practices that increased mortality.⁹² The most significant counterproductive healthcare response of the Lower Columbia and Willamette Valley Indians was their recourse to the traditional sweat bath and subsequent plunge into cold water. In the Northwest, Native people engaged in sweat bathing to relieve the symptoms of aches, and pain. As contemporary records attest, this traditional practice in fact increased deaths amongst the Native population because it induced a febrile state, a state that was deadly for individuals suffering from malaria.⁹³

Peter Skene Ogden wrote that the local Indians did not heed the advice of HBC officials and continued the practice of jumping into cold water to relieve their distress. However, there is a second element to this story: the practices of HBC officials at Fort Vancouver to drive off suffering local Native people because the HBC staff was overworked and overburdened by the enormity of the intermittent fever epidemic.⁹⁴ The scale of the initial intermittent fever was such that HBC officials focused their energies on caring for company employees and their families. When the fort population was restored to health, John McLoughlin sent HBC men out to assess the situation in the local Native villages.

Plagues and Peoples (New York: Anchor Book, 1976; rpt; 1998); Ann F. Ramenofsky, *Vectors of Death: The Archaeology of European Contact* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

⁹¹ Boyd, *The Coming*, 18-20.

⁹² Carl Landerholm, ed. and trans., *Notices and Voyages of the Famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1956) 18.

⁹³ Boyd, *The Coming*, 108.

⁹⁴ Boyd, *The Coming*, 109.

Given the inability of the HBC deal with the scale of the intermittent fever in the aboriginal populations and the absence of effective medical countermeasures, entire households and villages were stricken with the disease.⁹⁵ Following the first onset of the fever, the responses of populations unfamiliar with this illness increased the death toll. Without quarantine, panic and flight likely spread the intermittent fever from its initial incubation site. Additional villages would die as a result of being abandoned, of fatalism, and a concomitant cessation of subsistence activities and nursing care.⁹⁶ In the case of the infants and young children, in addition to the attack on their immune system, the young died from lack of food from nursing mothers, whose ability to produce milk failed when they became ill.⁹⁷ As it was, whole villages were depopulated, with only small remnant populations surviving the epidemic. Chinook headman Comcomly succumbed to the disease, as did many members belonging to the family of Casino, the Cathlakamaps headman.

Chief Factor McLoughlin took the extraordinary measure of ordering interpreter Michel Laframboise to burn an empty village on the western shore of Sauvie Island.⁹⁸ In an account recorded in 1840, French Canadian Catholic missionary Francis Norbert Blanchet noted that knowledge of the horrors of the epidemic was still known some ten years later. He recorded that the mortality in the villages of the Columbia River was so high that the survivors were unable to bury the bodies. As a result, the Natives burned these abandoned villages in the hope of preventing further spread of the disease.⁹⁹ According to Peter Skene

⁹⁵ Crosby, "Virgin Soil," 296.

⁹⁶ Crosby, "Virgin Soil," 297. For two examples of Native responses to introduced infectious disease and incidents of social breakdown, see: Robert J. Wolfe, "Alaska's Great Sickness, 1900: An Epidemics of Measles and Influenza in A Virgin Soil Population," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 126: 2 (1982): 91-121; and Daniel T. Reff, *Disease and Depopulation, and Culture Change in Northwestern New Spain, 1518-1764* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991).

⁹⁷ Crosby, "Virgin Soil," 294.

⁹⁸ Boyd, *The Coming*, 86-87.

⁹⁹ Landerholm, *Notices*, 18.

Ogden, the epidemic began to abate at Fort Vancouver in November 1830 and on January 28, 1831, McLoughlin wrote that "the fever has disappeared at this place."¹⁰⁰

As regards the origin and introduction of the intermittent fever (malaria) into the Lower Columbia country, the Indians firmly believed that an American ship, the *Owyhee*, captained by John Dominis introduced the disease before leaving the area in July 1830.¹⁰¹ Robert Boyd, having reviewed the historical evidence, has developed a credible scenario that supports the view that the *Owyhee* played a role in the introduction of the intermittent fever into the region. The Boston ship was anchored at St. Helens on the Multnomah Channel from August 4, 1829 to July 21, 1830. In the ship's log, there was a notation that crew member Mr. Jones spent several months at Fort Vancouver recovering from an unidentified illness.¹⁰² Most likely, Mr. Jones or another carrier suffering from a chronic case of malaria was bitten by local anopheline mosquitoes, which in turn infected the local human population. The mosquitoes were breeding in the swampy area around Sauvie Island in the late summer. Since Upper Chinookan women would have been gathering wapato bulbs in the waters off the Island, they were also susceptible to being bitten. The disease quickly spread to a virgin population that had no genetic or acquired immunity to it.¹⁰³

Boyd also provided a likely scenario as to how the disease spread to other populations in succeeding years. Those who did not perish in the first episode retreated to the higher elevations and forested areas away from the lowland villages sites. The survivors sought refuge with kin relations in villages that were spared from the disease. However, the disease

¹⁰⁰ Ogden, *Traits*, 103; John McLoughlin, *Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin Written at Fort Vancouver 1829-1832*, edited by Burt Brown Barker (Portland: Binfords & Mort/Oregon Historical Society, 1948), 181.

¹⁰¹ Two contemporary sources are George B. Roberts, "Recollections," BAN, P-A 83, 38; and Francis A. Lemont, whose recollections were edited by Francis Fuller Victor in "Flotsam and Jetsam of the Pacific- the *Owyhee*, the *Sultana*, and the *May Dacre*," *OHQ* 2:1 (March 1901): 39. See also Boyd, *The Coming*, 109-112.

¹⁰² Boyd, *The Coming*, 85.

¹⁰³ Boyd, *The Coming*, 108-109.

reappeared in the following years because the malarial parasite was present in the blood of those who had survived. In this way, the people living with relatives throughout the Columbia and Willamette Valleys—where the mosquitoes would also present—carried the disease to all of the Chinookan and Kalapuyan populations.¹⁰⁴ Another element in the spread of intermittent fever was the role of local trading centers as points of disease transfer.¹⁰⁵ Since Willamette Falls and Champoege were meeting places for Columbia and Willamette River peoples, the northern and central Kalapuyan populations were the first to suffer the disease in the late summer of 1831.

In July 1831, the intermittent fever reappeared at Fort Vancouver. This second wave was worse than the first and it spread to a larger geographic area.¹⁰⁶ John McLoughlin reported that malaria reached to the Kalapuyans of the Willamette Valley by September 9, 1831.¹⁰⁷ The third year (1832-1833), this scourge continued to ravage the lower Columbia and the Willamette Valley. In the fourth year, it extended south to the length of the Willamette Valley, the upper Umpqua and upper Rogue, the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys. It may have also occurred in southeastern Oregon and the Great Basin.¹⁰⁸ Dr. William Bailey, a settler from 1835, estimated in 1841 that during the height of the fever and ague epidemic in the Willamette Valley, close to one-fourth of the remaining Kalapuyans died each year. By 1837, William Slacum reported that 5,000 to 6,000 Kalapuyans had perished.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Boyd, *The Coming*, 109.

¹⁰⁵ Henry F. Dobyns, "Native American Trade Centers as Contagious Disease Foci," in *Disease and Demography in the Americas*, edited by John W. Verano and Douglas H. Ubelaker (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992): 215-222; Arthur J. Ray, "Diffusion of Disease in the Western Interior of Canada, 1830-1850," *Geographic Review* 66: 2 (1976): 139-157.

¹⁰⁶ Boyd, *The Coming*, 92; Taylor and Hoaglin, 169.

¹⁰⁷ Boyd, *The Coming*, 95.

¹⁰⁸ Boyd, *The Coming*, 99.

¹⁰⁹ Slacum, 201; Charles Wilkes, "Diary of Wilkes in the Northwest," *WaHQ* 12:1 (January 19256), 57.

The accounts of the early years of the intermittent fever epidemics in the Willamette Valley, historical and mythical in nature, are limited in scope and smaller in number. However, they do provide a window on the experiences and responses of the Kalapuyans in the face of the catastrophe. The only historical account from an aboriginal source survives in the ethnographic texts of Victoria (Victoire) Howard née Wishikin (ca. 1860-1930), who was of Clackamas, Molala, and Tualatin Kalapuyan ancestry.¹¹⁰ Over the course of two summers in 1929 and 1930, linguist and ethnographer Melville Jacobs spent several months recording stories, songs, and oral history from Howard, a sixty-year-old West Linn resident who had grown up on the Grand Ronde reservation.¹¹¹

Recounted to her by her mother-in-law, Wa'susgani (and also Wasa'wt), this account tells of the fate of the Clackamas Upper Chinookans who lived near the confluence of the Clackamas and Willamette Rivers. It captures the overwhelming devastation of the epidemic on the village level, and the common—and often fatal—response of the Native people:

Their village was a large one, but they all got the ague. In each and every house so many of the people were ill now. They said that when they had fever, they would go to the river, they would go drink water, they would go back home, and directly as they were proceeding (back), they would drop right there, they would die. When some of them were feverish, they would run to the river, they would go ashore, they would drop right there, they would die.¹¹²

During his stay in the territory of the Ahantchuyuk over the spring and summer of 1833, John Ball recorded that local Kalapuyans' "plunging into the water when the fever

¹¹⁰ Melville Jacobs, ed., *Clackamas Chinook Texts*, vol. 2 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore and Linguistics/*International Journal of American Linguistics*, 1959), 538, 546-547. For an examination of Victoria's Howard's role as a Native storyteller using literary and feminist theory, see Siobhan Senier, *Voice of American Indian Assimilation and Resistance: Helen Hunt Jackson, Sarah Winnemucca, and Victoria Howard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001).

¹¹¹ Victoria Howard was largely raised by her Clackamas grandmother, from whom she learned the Clackamas language as well as the historical and myth stories she related to Melville Jacobs. For her first marriage, Victoria married into a prominent Clackamas family, the Wachenos. As a result she gained additional knowledge of Clackamas history and culture from her mother-in-law. Her second husband was Eustace Howard, of Santiam Kalapuyan ancestry. Henry Zenk, personal communication, 2002.

¹¹² Jacobs, *Clackamas Texts*, 546.

came on and other improper ways” of responding to the disease increased mortality.¹¹³ He also observed evidence of fatalism amongst the Kalapuyans, which increased the mortality of the local villagers. Ball’s account of his encounter with the Clowewalla Chinookans at Willamette Falls in September 1833 illustrates the continuing impact of the intermittent fever:

When I got to the falls an Indian boy of 18 assisted us in carrying our boat. On inquiring of him how his people were, he said that they were sick and dying, and when we came back, as he expected we would, he should be dead. Asking the chief of the band below the falls for two men to row us to the fort [Vancouver], for I was feeble and had with me only my friend Sinclair, he answered that the men were all sick or dead, so he could not supply us. We had to wearily paddle our own canoe.¹¹⁴

Victoria Howard also recounted the story of her father-in-law’s cousin, Old Wood or K’am’lamayx, an infant at the onset of the intermittent fever. His mother died at the river’s edge after seeking water and he was adopted by some passing Natives, possibly Kalapuyans, who spotted him crawling beside his mother’s corpse. He grew to manhood in this foster family before being reunited with his Clackamas kin.¹¹⁵ As this story illustrates, one of the ramifications of the intermittent fever epidemic in the Willamette Valley was the loss of whole villages and families. This was likely accompanied by the reformation of remnant populations and families, with some of the orphan children being raised by extended kin or foster families.

While the reconfiguration of communities and families would have been consistent with regional indigenous cultural norms, another human response to crisis—ritualized violence—was also a component of regional cultures. In Native societies of the Columbia country, violence was one recourse to a perceived malevolence on the part of a shaman, one

¹¹³ John Ball, *Autobiography*, compiled by Kate Ball Powers and Flora Ball Hopkins (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1925), 97.

¹¹⁴ Ball, *Autobiography*, 99

¹¹⁵ Jacobs, *Clackamas Texts*, 546-547.

who either caused a person's illness or failed to cure an ill person.¹¹⁶ In the Pacific Northwest, diseases were attributed to supernatural forces and beings. Since the shamans were the linkages between this world and the supernatural world, they could either be assistants in fighting the disease or conduits for the evil that brought the disease.¹¹⁷

Robert Boyd speculated that the killing of Native doctors was a "specialized form of scapegoating," which focused on marginalized members of society. One story from the Kalapuyan myth texts recounts how an orphaned boy who gains the guardian spirit power of the grouse becomes the target of an assassination plot when a community suffers a bout of dysentery. After consulting with the village shamans, who danced for an answer to the source of the infection, the villagers concluded that the orphaned child was causing the deaths. The community's response was to bury the child alive.¹¹⁸

Boyd also reasoned that in another response of the region's Native peoples to infectious disease was to create new myths and rituals to make sense of previously unknown diseases.¹¹⁹ Since traditional cultural explanations for worldly destruction may not have been able to fully explain the introduction of infectious disease episodes—as traditional medical practice could not adequately respond to the crises—these new myths would offer explanations as well as hope to communities in desperate circumstances by conveying the lessons the survivors had learned through their experience.

One of the myth texts recounted by Santiam Kalapuyan John Hudson in the early twentieth century points to the fever and ague epidemic.¹²⁰ The story of the Coyote and

¹¹⁶ Stephen Dow Beckham, *The Indians of Western Oregon: This Land was Theirs* (Coos Bay, OR: Arago Books, 1977), 86-87.

¹¹⁷ Boyd, *The Coming*, 277.

¹¹⁸ Melville Jacobs, ed., *Kalapuya Texts*, University of Washington Texts in Anthropology, vol. 11. (Seattle: University of Washington, 1945), 272-274.

¹¹⁹ Boyd, *The Coming*, 278.

¹²⁰ Boyd, *The Coming*, 97.

turkey buzzard mentions several key observations about the spread of the disease in the Willamette: news of the disease' presence in neighboring villages, the movement away from low-lying areas to higher elevations, and the knowledge that secondary and tertiary attacks were of a less powerful force.¹²¹ By crafting an adventure story about how the trickster Coyote lessened the severity of the disease through the use of his wits, the Santiam Kalapuyans drew on their cultural resources to mount a psychological resistance to the intermittent fever.

In Boyd's analysis of the available population data for the first half of the nineteenth century, he calculates at least a 92% population loss for the Kalapuyans as a whole over the period from 1830 to 1841. The Kalapuyan population declined from a conservative total of 7,785 for the *whole* of Willamette Valley in 1830 to approximately 600 in 1841.¹²² For the lower Columbia region, which included the Chinookans, Clatskanie, and Kalapuyans, the population decline was 88%, from 15,545 to 1,932 individuals, over the period 1805-1840.¹²³ These figures are in keeping with observations from Oregon Trail pioneers of the 1840s and later estimates of Indian population decline.¹²⁴

From 1831 to 1841, the greatest percentage of Kalapuyan mortality was due to the annual malaria outbreaks. Additional deaths were the result of secondary disease such as tuberculosis and venereal disease, and a decrease in fertility rates was linked to the affects of malaria.¹²⁵ In two lower Columbia Chinookan communities, the persistence of venereal disease (syphilis) caused increased sterility. Malaria itself has a negative impact on women of

¹²¹ Boyd, *The Coming*, 97; John Hudson to Melville Jacobs, *Kalapuya Texts*, 89-90.

¹²² Boyd, *The Coming*, 244, 325, 327.

¹²³ Boyd, *The Coming*, 244.

¹²⁴ John Minto, "The Number," 298; Leslie M. Scott, "Indian Disease as Aids to the Pacific Northwest Settlement," *OHQ* 29 (1928): 144. Scott estimated in the fifty years prior the Oregon Trail migration (1790-1840), the Native population of the Pacific Northwest was reduced by 80%, with 95% for the Lower Columbia where some tribes "were exterminated."

¹²⁵ Boyd, *The Coming*, 244.

childbearing age, causing pernicious anemia, which increases the incidence of miscarriages, premature birth, and stillbirths. In addition, roughly one-third to one quarter of infants who are born alive die from malaria. The continued attacks of endemic malaria, which lowered the population's resistance to other diseases, further reduced the number of children to surviving to adulthood.¹²⁶

Under these conditions even a moderate birth rate would send a population into steady decline, which was the experience of the indigenous population of the lower Columbia and Willamette Valley regions.¹²⁷ Given the high mortality rates due to the intermittent fever coupled with additional diseases, chronic ill health, and low birth rates, the 1830s were a catastrophic decade for the Kalapuyans of the Willamette Valley. As Alfred Crosby, among many others, has observed, the cumulative effects of such a situation can be equally effective in dismantling societies as simultaneous attacks of several diseases.¹²⁸

The impact of the intermittent fever epidemics of the early 1830s was a fundamental social disruption for the Kalapuyan populations of the Willamette Valley. Although few details are present in the historical record from the earliest years of the epidemics, observations on the region as a whole give some indication of the social changes affecting the Kalapuyans. Settlers from the late 1830s and early 1840s remarked on the abandoned villages sites in the region.¹²⁹ One of the major results of the epidemics and the population disruption was the reshaping of smaller communities with refugee and remnant populations, as in periods of warfare or famine. These new villages in the Willamette Valley likely

¹²⁶ Boyd, *The Coming*, 258-261; Burnet and White, 235; Robert Boyd, "Population Decline from Two Epidemics on the Northwest Coast," in *Disease and Demography in the Americas*, edited by John W. Verano and Douglas H. Ubelaker (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 251.

¹²⁷ Boyd, *The Coming*, 245.

¹²⁸ Crosby, "Virgin Soil," 295.

¹²⁹ For example, see Francis Norbert Blanchet's comments about the Clackamas Chinookan village on the Clackamas River nearest Willamette Falls in Landerholm, *Notices*, 84.

contained people of differing, though neighboring languages and dialects.¹³⁰ Similarly, some Kalapuyans orphaned due to the epidemics may have asked for shelter amongst non-Kalapuyan groups, the French-Indian families, as well as neighboring Molalla and Chinookan villages.¹³¹

The change in settlement patterns also resulted in a disruption of economic activities such hunting, subsistence rounds, and trading, as well as a disruption of cultural practices and the transfer of traditional knowledge from the elders to the younger generations. Although the surviving Kalapuyans did continue to practice large-scale burning of the Willamette Valley roughly a decade after the initial onset of the intermittent fever, incoming Euro-American settlers forced a halt to the practice in the mid-1840s.¹³² Intertribal relations and regional trade were negatively affected by the early intermittent fever epidemics, as were HBC operations.¹³³

Like the majority of the HBC employees in the lower Columbia, the French-Indian families settled in the Willamette Valley were undoubtedly affected by the intermittent fever in the 1830s. However, no existing historical sources document the extent of the disease amongst the settler families. Neither McLoughlin nor Ogden nor any other HBC officers mention the numbers of those ill or dying with the disease in the Willamette settlement. John Ball, who lived nearby the Lucier, Bellique, and Desportes McKay families at Champoege, described being stricken with the fever and ague of the summer of 1833, but he stressed its impact on the Kalapuyans and Upper Chinookans of the Willamette Valley rather than noted

¹³⁰ Taylor, *Making*, 42-43.

¹³¹ When the Methodist missionaries arrived in the Willamette Valley in 1834, orphaned Kalapuyan children asked for shelter at the missionary settlement.

¹³² Boyd, "Indian," 99-100. Joseph Taylor concluded that the annual firing by the Natives of the inland valleys declined with the onset of disease, 42.

¹³³ Ratcliff, "What Happened," 32. Taylor, *Making Salmon*, 43.

its presence amongst the French-Indian families.¹³⁴ When Chief Trader John Work's Southern Party passed through Champoege in October of 1833, many if not all the expedition members were sick with the intermittent fever. Work noted the assistance he received from Jean Baptiste Perrault and Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay, yet he too made no observations about the impact on the settlement.¹³⁵

Given the persistence of the original settler families through the 1840s, one must conclude that although they became ill with the intermittent fever during the 1830s, many family members did recover. HBC Chief Factor John McLoughlin did not discuss the settlers' experience with the intermittent fever in his official correspondence, but it is highly likely that he would have provided assistance to the families if called upon. This conclusion is in keeping with McLoughlin's strong sense of responsibility and duty, evident in his treatment of the company servants at Fort Vancouver, and his later assistance given to hundreds of Oregon Trail emigrants in the early 1840s. Indeed, it seems highly uncharacteristic for McLoughlin *not* to have assisted the Willamette settlers in time of need. There is one clue that McLoughlin did indeed supply the settlers with medicine to treat the fever, either quinine made from cinchona bark or a homegrown variety produced from the Pacific Dogwood. In the summer of 1833, John Ball dispatched John Sinclair to obtain medicine at Fort Vancouver in the summer of 1833 after both he and Sinclair suffered recurring bouts of the fever and ague.¹³⁶ This suggests that the French-Indian settler families had at least one if not two advantages over the local Kalapuyans during the intermittent fever epidemics. The other advantage may have been an acquired immunity to malaria present in the French Canadians. They may have obtained such immunity during their formative years,

¹³⁴ Ball, *Born*, 61-63.

¹³⁵ Maloney, 81-83.

¹³⁶ Ball, "Across," 104; Ball, *Born*, 62.

since malaria had appeared in the Northeast and the Mississippi River Valley prior to the 1830s.¹³⁷

For the Kalapuyans and settlers of the Willamette Valley, the mid-1820s through the early 1830s was a period of both continuity and wrenching change. After trapping in the Willamette Valley for approximately fifteen years, the French-Indian families settled amongst the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans, their partners in trade and their extended relations through marriage. With the increase in HBC operations in the Willamette Valley, the Kalapuyans throughout the region adapted to the changing times, engaging in occasional labor and coming to the assistance of outside travelers. In the late 1820s the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans allowed the bi-cultural families of the Willamette freemen to settle permanently in their territory, thus affording the Ahantchuyuk ongoing access to European trade goods. The financial and moral support of HBC Chief Factor John McLoughlin provided additional stability to the nascent colony.

When unimaginable calamity descended upon the Kalapuyans in the form of malaria, changing forever the demographic balance and the social fabric of the Willamette Valley, the surviving Kalapuyans, carried on, regrouping into reformulated families and smaller communities. These reconstituted communities would face the arrival of a new set of foreigners, the Methodist missionaries who settled amongst the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans in November 1834. The Methodists would ultimately contribute to a full-scale Euro-American colonization of the Willamette Valley some ten years later.

¹³⁷ Dunn, 850; Erwin W. Ackerknecht, *Malaria in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1760-1900*, supplement to the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 4, edited by Henry E. Sigerist (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1945).

CHAPTER FOUR

“WE HAVE ALMOST EVERY RELIGION BUT OUR OWN”:
THE METHODIST MISSION AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES, 1834-1837

Over the early summer months of 1834, the French-Canadian male settlers in the Willamette Valley, likely in consultation with their Indian wives, discussed the need for religious and educational training for their growing families. By July they resolved to send a letter to the nearest Roman Catholic ecclesiastical seat, located at Red River in the Canadian North West, to ask for priests to be sent to their nascent community. Dated July 5, 1834, the Willamette settlers' first letter to Joseph Provencher, then known as the Bishop of Juliopolis, likely did not reach the Red River colony until the fall or winter of 1834.¹ With no news from the bishop by the early spring of 1835, the French-Canadians sent a second letter, repeating their request for priests and “promising to do all in their power to help them survive.” Indeed, the French Canadians pledged twenty minots of grain per family to support the priests, “which the members of the company there saying that they can easily deliver,” since the Willamette Valley was a “beautiful country where one plants and harvests nearly year-round, and fishing there is in abundance.”²

¹ Joseph Provencher to Joseph Signay, Archbishop of Quebec City, June 9, 1835, British Columbia Records, 26 CN, Archives of the Archdiocese of Quebec (AAQ), Quebec City; Francis Norbert Blanchet, “The Catholic Missionaries of Oregon,” P-A 5, BAN, 3; Francis Norbert Blanchet, *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon*, re-edited by Edward J. Kowrach, (Portland: 1878; rpt; Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1983), 38.

² Provencher to Signay, June 9, 1835. These passages, translated from the French by the author, are Provencher's paraphrasing of the French Canadians' letter. According to officials at La Société historique de St. Boniface, which holds the early Red River Catholic records, neither the originals nor copies of the 1834 and 1835 letters have survived. The Archives of Archdiocese of Quebec likewise does not have copies of these two initial letters.

The French Canadians' petition for Catholic priests was not to bear fruit for another four years. However, in a curious turn of events, while the French Canadians were busy drafting their initial letter to Bishop Provencher, the first party of Christian missionaries were already en route for Oregon. Headed by the Reverend Jason Lee, a small group of Methodist missionaries joined Nathaniel Wyeth's second expedition, and arrived at Fort Vancouver in mid-September 1834.³ The Methodists subsequently established their mission in the Willamette Valley with little apparent thought to the views of the local Kalapuyan groups. Given this approach, it is not surprising that the Natives expressed little interest in the Methodists. Those Kalapuyans who chose to interact with the Methodists, particularly adolescent orphans, viewed the mission as a temporary source of aid in times of need. For their part, the Methodists were hampered by organizational problems, bouts of poor health, and their own cultural biases, and made no significant attempts to convert local Kalapuyans during their first three years in the Willamette Valley.

In contrast to the tenuous relationship with the Kalapuyans, the missionaries did consult with the growing French-Indian population, re-settled on Kalapuyan lands. The Methodists had not departed the United States with the intention of establishing their mission in the Willamette Valley. However, once they arrived in the Far West, Jason Lee came to share the opinion of HBC Chief Factor John McLoughlin that the valley provided the best location for an establishment. Lee's decision was partly based on the realities of Native-newcomer relations in the region. He was also motivated by the more practical concerns of the missionaries, who were neither accustomed to living amongst Native peoples, nor to the

³ Jason Lee, "The Diary of Rev. Jason Lee," *OHQ* 17:3 (September 1916), 261; Cyrus Shepard, *The Diary of Cyrus Shepard*, edited by Gerry Gilman (Vancouver: Clark County Genealogical Society, 1986), 65; Robert J. Loewenberg, *Equality on the Oregon Frontier: Jason Lee and the Methodist Mission, 1834-43* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 80-82.

isolation and physical labor that Indian missionary work entailed. Rather than affecting religious conversion amongst local Native groups, the Methodists were more successful working with their Catholic French-Indian neighbors, who were their earliest supporters.

For their part, the French-Indian families would prove surprisingly hospitable to the American Protestants during their early years in the Willamette Valley. The settlers could afford such hospitality, for they had weathered the malaria epidemics much better than their Kalapuyan neighbors. As the 1830s progressed, the French-Indian settlers would become more demographically prominent, increasing the size and importance of their French Prairie colony.

The surviving documentary record on intercultural relations in French Prairie for the mid-1830s illustrates the importance of local Protestant-Catholic initiatives. These cooperative problem solving efforts provide strong evidence for the formation of an interethnic community in French Prairie during the early colonial period. They demonstrate a continuing ability to reach across the cultural divide—even in times of tension and conflict—as well as a commitment to ethnic, religious, and community solidarity amongst the French-Indian settlers themselves. In contrast to commonly held interpretations about sectarian conflict in American society during the nineteenth century, and previous narratives about the progressive “disappearance” of the Kalapuyans from Oregon history, a re-evaluation of the surviving historical record indicates a complex, contingent colonization process in French Prairie during the 1830s.

The Methodist Mission to Oregon

The Methodist Mission to Oregon developed in response to the journey of a group of Nez Perce (Nimipu) and Flathead (Eastern Salish) to St. Louis, Missouri in 1831. The publicity and mythologizing that ultimately followed in the wake of the group's voyage dovetailed with an evangelizing fervor then permeating American Protestantism. However, the purpose of group's journey to St. Louis was not to bring about wholesale Christianization nor acculturation to the Plateau—as many evangelical Protestants may have believed—but rather to provide the Nez Perce and the Flathead with trained religious leaders, who might educate the Indians about Euro-American religion and culture. Nez Perce and Flathead leaders reasoned these religious leaders would afford the Natives access to both the knowledge and spirit power that the Euro-Americans seemed to have in abundance.⁴

The 1831 delegation resulted from current stresses within the Native communities of the Plateau region. For several decades, the Plateau peoples had experienced the effects of contact with encroaching Euro-Americans, including better access to European trade goods, and the deleterious effects of infectious disease epidemics and tribal warfare. In the face of the social, cultural, and economic changes wrought by Euro-American expansion, the Plateau peoples sought guidance in traditional spiritual practices, and a new, syncretic religion, which fur trader John McLean referred to as the “Columbia Religion.” This new religion combined Native spirituality with elements of Christianity learned from fur traders, Iroquois settled amongst the Flathead, and from young Natives who had been educated by Protestant missionaries at the Red River colony in Manitoba. Within the context of the social changes

⁴ Larry Cebula, *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 86-89; Francis Haines, *The Nez Percés: Tribesmen of the Columbia Plateau* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955): 57-70; Christopher L. Miller, *Prophetic Worlds: Indians and Whites on the Columbia Plateau*, with a new foreword by Chris Friday (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1985; rpt; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 59-62; Alvin M. Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965; rpt; New York: Mariner Books, 1997), 92-96.

marking these early decades of the nineteenth century, and the rise of a new syncretic religion, several Plateau groups became convinced that they needed more information about the Euro-Americans, and their culture and religion. Indeed, the Plateau peoples had learned of the impact of Euro-American colonization on the Plains and the Southwest through their contacts with neighboring Indian groups. They were intrigued by newcomers' strong spirit power, which seemed to flow from Euro-Americans' religious practices.⁵

In the spring of 1831, a group of Nez Perce leaders decided to send a delegation to St. Louis, and they later consulted with several Flathead groups, who agreed to have some of their men join the expedition. The timing of this decision may have been a direct response to the popularity of a Spokane missionary trained at Red River, known as Spokane Garry. Although the Nez Perce had recently sent two young lads to the mission school at Red River, they would not be able to assist their people for several years. Thus, until that time, the Nez Perce remained at disadvantage vis-à-vis their Spokane neighbors in their ability to access Euro-American intellectual and religious traditions. The Nez Perce and Flathead leaders may have chosen to send the delegation to St. Louis, home to a large Catholic community, due to the influence of Romanized Iroquois trappers long since intermarried with the Flathead.⁶ The Iroquois had come West under contract with the North West Company beginning in the 1810s.⁷

In the spring of 1831, a group of seven Nez Perce and Flathead men departed for the East in the company of fur traders Lucien Fontenelle and Andrew Drips, who were

⁵ Cebula, 68-83; Miller, 37-57.

⁶ Cebula, 87-89; Josephy, 90-96.

⁷ John C. Ewers, "Iroquois Indians in the Far West," *Montana: Magazine of Western History* 13:2 (April 1963): 2-10; Jack A. Frisch, "Some Ethnological and Ethnohistoric Notes on the Iroquois in Alberta," *Man in the Northeast* 12 (1976): 51-64; Jan Grabowski and Nicole St-Onge, "Montreal Iroquois *Engagés*, in the Western Fur Trade," *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, edited by Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens, and R.C. Macleod (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2001), 23-58.

themselves returning to the United States. Three of the Natives later turned back at Council Bluffs, Nebraska, while the remaining four continued on to complete their trek. The four who finally reached St. Louis in October 1831 included three Nez Perce, Tipayahlanah (Eagle), Hi-yuts-to-henin (Rabbit Skin Leggings), and Tawis Geejuman (No Horns on His Heads), and Ka-ou-pu (Man of the Dawn Light), an individual of Nez Perce and Flathead ancestry.⁸ Upon their arrival in the city, the Nez Perce-Flathead delegation called on William Clark, former co-leader of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, who had visited the Flathead and Nez Perce in 1805-1806. The group also met with Catholic priests in St. Louis, who baptized the Indians before two of them fell ill and died. Tipayahlanah and Ka-ou-pu, the two deceased travelers, were buried in a local Catholic parish, while the Hi-yuts-to-henin and Tawis Geejuman died while en route to their home villages. During the delegation's visit to St. Louis, the Indians and the Euro-American settlers were unable to communicate effectively with each other because the two groups did not share a common language. For this reason, the objectives of the delegation's visit remained unclear to the residents of St. Louis. Joseph Rosati, the local Roman Catholic Bishop, may have considered sending Catholic missionaries to the Far West in response to the delegation. However, he was hampered by financial and manpower constraints, as well as the logistical difficulty of gaining approval for a new missionary in an as yet unincorporated ecclesiastical territory.⁹

Although the Nez Perce-Flathead delegation did not immediately engender a marked response, news of the Indians' visit to St. Louis did reach an American audience some seventeen months later. In March of 1833, the Methodist *Christian Advocate and Journal*

⁸ Josephy, 96-97.

⁹ Bishop Joseph Rosati to the Editor, *Annales de l'Association de la propagation de la foi*, vol. 6 (Lyon, France: M.P. Rusand, 1834), 597-600. Rosati was not present at the time of the delegation's visit but learned of it from two of the local Catholic priests who baptized and buried the two Nez Perce who had died.

published a letter that provided an embellished account of the Flathead-Nez Perce delegation, penned by one William Walker. Although Walker was apparently in St. Louis at the time of the group's sojourn in the city, it is unlikely that he met with the travelers. This fact proved no obstacle to Walker, who crafted an appealing story of how the Indians had come east seeking the Holy Bible and Protestant missionaries.¹⁰ Walker's sketch of an Indian with a stylized "flathead" (based on a drawing by William Clark), accompanied the letter. The letter and illustration had a tremendous influence on Methodist readers, prompting a clarion call for missionaries to be sent to Christianize the Indians of the Far West. One prominent respondent was Wesleyan University President Wilbur Fisk, who urged the Missionary Board of the Methodist Episcopal Church to establish an Indian mission to the Flathead.¹¹

The Nez Perce-Flathead delegation to St. Louis and the excitement it engendered amongst American Methodists in the early 1830s coincided with a period of national agitation on the question of the Protestant missionary vocation. Methodism, like the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregationalist traditions, rested upon a strong evangelical ideology. Evangelism, with its emphasis on the individual conversion experience, also stressed revivalism, missionization, the redemptive power of Christ's crucifixion, and the central authority of the bible.¹² The American Methodists' own evangelical impulse was rooted in two great events in the political and religious history of North America in the late eighteenth century: the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) and the Second Great Awakening (1795-1810). In the aftermath of the war, the American Methodist Church re-organized and reinvented itself after suffering structural problems, loss of members, and

¹⁰ Loewenberg, 78; Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*, 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1982), 458-459.

¹¹ Loewenberg, 78-79.

¹² Susan Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 66.

widespread opposition, especially in New England, in response to John Wesley's royalist position during the war.¹³

The nationalism that emerged following the Revolutionary War offered American Protestants a new ideology linking democratic ideals, political freedom, and Christian liberty. Notions of religious freedom grounded in the separation of church and state coincided with a spirit of revival that became prevalent in the United States beginning in the 1790s, and which gave rise to a more democratized American Christianity.¹⁴ Known collectively as the Second Great Awakening, this revivalist movement was characterized by a devotion to God, personal salvation, and a dogged determination to convert the "unchurched." Although the established Protestant sects (Anglicanism, Congregationalism, and Presbyterianism) had led the First Great Awakening in the 1740s, Baptists, Disciples, and Methodists led this second revivalist movement.¹⁵

Beginning in the late 1780s, evangelical missionaries enthusiastically moved west alongside the American settlers who were streaming into the trans-Appalachia and Midwest regions—with Methodist circuit riders taking a prominent role in the evangelizing effort.¹⁶ The missionary impulse was not confined to settler communities. Indeed, a missionary zeal to convert the Native peoples of the interior was a natural progression of American Protestantism in the early nineteenth century. Inspired by the evangelical movement, both

¹³ Dee E. Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 55-72.

¹⁴ Sydney A. Alhstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 360-384; Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 3-16. Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United State and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 115-118.

¹⁵ Noll, 166-169. Whitney E. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950).

¹⁶ Francis L. Moates, "The Rise of Methodism in the Middle West," *MVHR* 15:1 (June 1928): 69-88. William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier*, vol. 4, *The Methodists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 42-68.

male and female missionaries left their homes in New England and New York and ventured west to Christianize the Indians. These Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalist, and Presbyterian missionaries shared a passionate commitment to spreading the Christian gospel, as well as American institutions, to the western frontiers.¹⁷

In late March 1833, the Missionary Board of the Methodist Episcopal Church initiated a dialogue with the Methodist bishops on the question of forming a mission to the Flathead Indians. In July 1833, the Board approved the idea and named the Reverend Jason Lee, a Canadian-born Methodist minister, as superintendent of the Flathead Mission (later the Oregon Mission). His nephew, the Reverend Daniel Lee, was appointed to the mission in September 1833, and Cyrus Shepard, a schoolteacher and devout Methodist, signed on in December 1833.¹⁸ Jason Lee's organizing efforts over the fall and winter of 1833-34 coincided with Nathaniel Wyeth's return to Massachusetts from Oregon. Lee subsequently met with Wyeth in Boston, and he agreed to allow the Methodist group to accompany his second expedition.¹⁹ The three missionaries left the northeast in early 1834, and made their way to Independence, Missouri. There Jason Lee engaged two laymen, Philip Leget Edwards and Courtney M. Walker, to assist the mission for a period of one year. In late April 1834, the Methodist party finally joined Wyeth at a rendezvous point eight miles upriver from Independence.²⁰

¹⁷ Robert F. Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Responses* (New York: Atheneum, 1976); C.L. Higman, *Noble, Wretched & Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians of Canada and the United States, 1820-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000); Keith Widder, *Battle for the Soul: Métis Children Encounter Evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw Mission, 1823-1837* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999).

¹⁸ Robert Moulton Gatke, ed. "A Document of Missionary History, 1833-43." *OHQ* 36:1 (March 1935), 72-74.

¹⁹ Charles Henry Carey, "The Mission Record Book of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Willamette Station, Oregon, Commenced 1834," *OHQ* 23:3 (September 1922), 232.

²⁰ For narratives of the Wyeth's second expedition and the Methodist missionaries, see Jason Lee, "Diary," 116-146, 240-261; Shepard, *The Diary*, 4-84; John Kirk Townsend, *Narrative of a Journey Across the Rocky Mountains to the Columbia River*, with a new introduction and annotations by George A. Jobanek

During the westward journey, the missionaries met at least twice with mixed Nez Perce and Flathead groups, once toward the end of June and in second time early July 1833.²¹ On both occasions, the Nez Perce-Flathead groups expressed a desire for the Methodists to establish a mission amongst their people. At the first meeting there was a language barrier, since Jason Lee wrote that he "conversed a little with them through an indifferent interpreter."²² At the second meeting, Jason Lee told the Natives that:

If they came where Capt. Wyeth purposed to build up [a] fort that if it were not too far I would go and see the chief and talk with him about it and if we did not come this winter that we would come next year or the following.²³

Lee's plan was to first retrieve the missionaries' supplies scheduled to arrive on Wyeth's ship the *May Dacre* in the Columbia River before he would decide upon a site for the mission. At the onset of the westward voyage, Jason Lee remained open to the possibility of a mission amongst the Nez Perce-Flathead groups. However, doubts about the planned Flathead mission crept into Lee's thinking while on the journey, likely in conversations with members of Wyeth's expedition and other fur trappers whom he met along the way. Lee's creeping uncertainty appears to have resulted from concerns about the safety of Plateau region, the geographic isolation of the Flathead territory from fur trade posts, and the Methodists' reaction to both the landscape and the Indians whom they met. Lee himself expressed little confidence that he wanted to remain the Plateau region, an arid environment so alien to both the New Englanders and the Americans from the Midwestern frontier

(Philadelphia: H. Perkins, 1839; rpt; Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1999); Nathaniel J. Wyeth, *The Correspondence and Journals of Captain Nathaniel J. Wyeth, 1831-6*, edited by Frederick G. Young (Eugene, OR: University Press, 1899), 131-143; Nathaniel J. Wyeth, *The Journals of Captain Nathaniel J. Wyeth's Expeditions to the Oregon Country, 1831-1836*, edited by Don Johnson (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1984), 71-82.

²¹ Jason Lee, "Diary," 139-143.

²² Jason Lee, "Diary," 139.

²³ Jason Lee, "Diary," 142.

states.²⁴ The missionary party finally arrived at Fort Vancouver on September 15, 1834, ten days after Nathaniel Wyeth.

Methodists in the Willamette Valley

After spending a few days recuperating from their journey, Jason and Daniel Lee set out to search for a location for their mission on September 18, 1834.²⁵ During their initial sojourn at the fort, Lee decided to locate his mission west of the Cascade Mountains, perhaps within a reasonable distance of the HBC's Fort Vancouver. In his memoir dating from the 1850s, HBC Chief Factor John McLoughlin wrote that in speaking with Jason and Daniel Lee about possible locations for their mission, he advised against settling amongst the Flathead because such a venture would be too dangerous. McLoughlin counseled them instead to consider the Willamette Valley, since the valley would provide a prime location to teach local Indians the "benefits" an agrarian lifestyle and, thereby, change their cultural practices, particularly their hunting activities and seasonal migrations. Another advantage to locating in the Willamette Valley was the proximity to the French-Indian families who were established there already and would be able to offer the missionaries any assistance they might need.²⁶

Jason and Daniel Lee spent September 19 through September 26, 1834 touring the upper Willamette Valley. During their scouting trip to the Valley, the Lees passed by Thomas McKay's farm located near present-day Scappoose, then proceeded to the Willamette Valley. There they visited the French-Indian families living in Ahantchuyuk territory, staying with

²⁴ Jason Lee, "Diary," 240-260; Shepard, *Diary*, 44-45.

²⁵ Carey, "Mission," 234.

²⁶ John McLoughlin, "Copy of a Document Found Among the Papers of John McLoughlin," *TOPA*, vol. 8 (Salem: E.M. Waite, 1881), 50.

Joseph Gervais and Yiamust Clatsop and their family, who lived on a farm about ten miles southwest of *Campement de sable* (Champoeg). At the Gervais home, the Lees met Yiamust's sister Celiast and her husband, Solomon Smith, who were living with the Gervais family. Solomon was then serving as a schoolteacher to the local French-Indian children.²⁷ The French-Indian families whom the missionaries met at the Gervais farm were happy to see the Lees and provided them with food and lodging during their initial scouting trip to the valley. From Lee's diary, it is clear the French-Indians families encouraged the Methodists to build a mission near their small agrarian settlement.

There is no evidence that Jason and Daniel Lee consulted with the local Anantchuyuk Kalapuyans about the possibility of establishing a mission in their territory. In fact, when the two men encountered a band of Kalapuyans, the missionaries demonstrated a marked disinclination to engage the locals or empathize with them:

There are 30 Indians, old and young, a few rods from us, and some of the men are as naked as they were born – a filthy, miserable-looking company, and yet they are quite contented. They subsist mostly on cammas. Probably more than [. . .] in this vicinity have fallen a sacrifice to the fever and ague within four years.²⁸

Jason Lee's passages in his diary about observing the Kalapuyans, but making no mention of speaking with them—even desiring to speak with them—is decidedly odd behavior for a missionary who had traveled more than 3,000 miles to convert the Indians of the Far West. This marks a sharp contrast to his first encounters with the Nez Perce-Flathead groups in the Plateau region in July 1834. It appears from the diary entry that at this point the Lees were unaccompanied by anyone from the French-Indian farms, which would indicate a language barrier existed between the Methodists and the Kalapuyans. Although this might explain why

²⁷ Jason Lee, "Diary," 263-264.

²⁸ Jason Lee, "Diary," 264. The brackets are included in the published version of the Lee diary; they indicate a break or illegible passage in the manuscript.

he had no exchanges with these Indians, Lee subsequently made no efforts to enlist the aid of the French-Indian families in communicating with the Ahantchuyuk.

In explaining why Lee did not solicit the views of the Kalapuyans—as he had the opinions of the mixed Nez Perce and Flathead groups on his overland journey from St. Louis—it appears likely that he believed the Willamette Valley was open for settlement. He apparently did not consider that the Kalapuyans had title to the local territory, and, therefore, he did not believe it necessary to negotiate with them in order to occupy it. Support of this conclusion is contained in the memoir Daniel Lee wrote of the Methodist mission ten years later. In it he referred to the Willamette Valley as “uninhabited save by a remnant of the Calapooyas.”²⁹ By not engaging in negotiations with the local Kalapuyans—indeed, by not considering such a step necessary—the Methodists were in fact bypassing one approach that had been commonplace in North America since colonial times, which involved gaining land concessions from Indian groups to pave the way for Euro-American settlement.

Despite Jason Lee's lack of engagement with the local Kalapuyans, his decision about where to locate the mission was not an easy one. In his diary, he documented his worries over the momentous decision facing him. He wrote on September 24, 1834: “My mind is yet much exercised in respect to our location. I know not what to do.”³⁰ The source of Lee's distress stemmed from growing realizations about his lack of missionary training and managerial skills, and his own limited experience with Indians.³¹ In keeping with the spiritual orientation of early nineteenth century evangelical Methodism and Lee's own devout religious faith, he turned to God for guidance through prayer. Lee also consulted with other

²⁹ Daniel Lee and Joseph H. Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon* (New York: J. Collord, 1844; rpt; Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1968), 90.

³⁰ Jason Lee, “Diary,” 265.

³¹ Robert James Decker, “Jason Lee, Missionary to Oregon: A Re-Evaluation,” (Ph.D diss., Indiana University, 1961), 51-52.

members of the party and upon returning to Fort Vancouver on Saturday, September 27, he finally decided to locate the mission in the Willamette Valley, confirming his decision at Sunday services the next day.

In his narrative of the early years of the Methodist mission, co-written with the missionary Joseph H. Frost, Daniel Lee outlined four major reasons for Jason Lee's decision to locate the mission in the Willamette Valley. First, subsistence and supply lines were paramount concerns. The territory of the Flathead was not conducive to Euro-American agrarian culture and it was too remote to be well supplied by the HBC or by St. Louis-based fur traders. Second, the missionaries felt that the Flathead, or at least those interested in missionization, were too small in number and often at war with the Blackfeet. Third, the Methodists were fearful of being vulnerable to attack by the Blackfeet, who had a fierce reputation for violence against Euro-Americans. Finally, Daniel Lee rationalized that the missionaries would have a larger missionary field with access to more Native peoples in the Willamette Valley, and since they would be better supplied, they would also be better equipped to missionize the Indians.³² However, these arguments belie a contradiction in the missionaries' reasoning. Throughout their narrative, Daniel Lee and Joseph Frost express an ambivalent attitude towards the Indians' fate. They were sent to convert them and save them from "heathen ways," yet they believed that many, especially the Kalapuyans, were destined to die off. This ambivalence, which speaks to an underlying racist attitude toward the Natives, was one factor undermining missionary efforts within the Willamette Valley.

Leaving an ill Cyrus Shepard at Fort Vancouver, Jason and Daniel Lee, Philip Edwards, and Courtney Walker departed for the Willamette Valley on Monday, September 29, 1834. After spending the night aboard Nathaniel Wyeth's vessel anchored in the

³² Lee and Frost, 127-128.

Willamette River, the party retrieved their supplies and headed to the Willamette Valley to establish their mission.³³ They arrived at their chosen site on October 6 and immediately began work on a house structure. The site was located approximately twelve miles upriver from Champoege (60 miles from the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers) on a lowland prairie within the territory of the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans.³⁴ Here we might surmise that Joseph Gervais or other French Canadian settlers may have directed the Methodists to an unoccupied site since they did not locate nearby any known village.

The local Kalapuyan groups, the Ahantchuyuk to the north and the Santiam to the south, did not physically prevent the Methodists from founding the mission. While the local bands numbers had fallen from 150-200 before the intermittent fever, to about 30 in 1834, they still retained a demographic advantage over the Methodists, which would have allowed them to contest the Methodists' presence. However, there is no evidence that the Kalapuyans physically threatened the Methodists in any way. Based on the two decades of Native-newcomer relations in the Willamette Valley, the Kalapuyans may not have perceived the Methodists as a threat, but rather in a fashion similar to how they viewed the French-Indian fur trappers—that is, as another small group with which to trade and exchange labor for European goods.

Jason Lee's diary, which became sporadic after the Willamette settlement, only covers the missionaries' first five weeks in the Willamette Valley. However, Lee does provide some information on early intercultural relations. Over the first week of October 1834, the Methodists engaged Natives, likely local Upper Chinookans, to assist them in

³³ Lee, Jason, "Diary," 264-265; Carey, "Mission," 234; Shepard, "Diary," 67-68.

³⁴ Loewenberg, 63; Judith A. Sanders, Mary K. Weber, and David R. Brauner, *Willamette Mission Archeological Assessment, Anthropology Northwest*, No. 1 (Corvallis: Oregon State University Anthropology Department, 1983), 15.

portaging supplies and canoes over the falls. Jason Lee then noted that he found it a "perplexing business" trying to determine how to pay the Indians, but they did reach some agreement.³⁵ Through the months of October and November, as the fall rains turned into winter rains, the missionaries constructed their buildings in the valley. Fortunately for them, they did not work in complete isolation. Daniel Lee noted that they traded with local Kalapuyans for venison. Beginning in mid-November 1834, they employed an "old [Sandwich] Islander," Edwards Rora, and a local Native youth, John Calapooya, to help them build their first barn. The employment of Edwards Rora and John Calapooya as laborers coincided with the arrival of the Ewing Young party from California.³⁶ Daniel Lee mentioned that when the barn was partially completed, the missionaries realized they would need assistance to finish the structure, and so the Methodists called on the French-Indian settlers, who willingly came forward to help their neighbors. The missionaries also hired two Americans who had accompanied Ewing Young's party from California.

For the French Canadians, there were several advantages to the Methodists' presence in the valley. Their initial letters to the Bishop Provencher in Red River demonstrated a keen interest in educational and religious training for their families. Upon the Methodists' arrival, the French-Indian families allowed the missionaries to conduct worship services in their homes, and accepted the missionaries offer of schooling for their children. Perhaps equally important to the French Canadians was the opportunity for additional socializing. In his diary, Jason Lee expressed annoyance that the French Canadian settlers liked to visit the mission and talk for hours on all manner of subjects—and in French, which Jason Lee did not

³⁵ Jason Lee, "Diary," 401.

³⁶ Daniel Lee, 128-129; Shepard, "Diary," 71-73; Kenneth L. Holmes, *Ewing Young: Master Trapper* (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1967), 103-105.

well understand.³⁷ Although Lee was sometimes annoyed with the French Canadians, they evinced an ecumenical, community spirit in welcoming the Protestant missionaries to the Willamette Valley.

During the month of November of 1834, as the small missionary group and additional laborers finished the log house and the barn that comprised the mission's first buildings, three Kalapuyan youths arrived at the establishment. These three, identified as orphans, expressed a desire to reside with the missionaries. First came Sintwa (renamed John March by the missionaries), age 10 on November 7, his sister Kyeatah (Lucy Hedding), age 12 on November 16, and Kilapoos (Charles Moorehead), age 12.³⁸ In all three instances, the mission scribe wrote that the youths came to the mission of their own volition, and in the case of Kilapoos, he "requested permission to remain in the family." A letter written by Jason Lee to the Reverend Wilbur Fish suggests that Sintwa and Kyeatah were Kalapuyans from a nearby community, whose mother had recently passed away.³⁹ Sintwa may have come ten days before his sister in order to test out the mission while the children's mother was still alive. No additional information is available on Kilapoos. It is clear that all three took the extraordinary step of seeking refuge not amongst the local Kalapuyan or Chinookan populations, but with the newly arrived foreigners. This was an unusual development vis-à-vis the Native context, and as such it may indicate the level of social dislocation caused by the ongoing presence of the intermittent fever.

³⁷ Jason Lee, "Diary," 401.

³⁸ Carey, "Mission," 235.

³⁹ Jason Lee to Wilbur Fisk, cited in Cornelius J. Brosnan, *Jason Lee: Prophet of the New Oregon* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 73. There is an age discrepancy for Sintwa between the Mission Record Book and Lee's letter to Brosnan. However, the timing and details of the two sources indicate that the Kalapuyan youth described in both sources was in fact the same individual.

During the period from November 1834 through June 1838, the Methodist mission took in a total of fifty-two individuals, the majority of whom were children, and many of these were orphans (see Appendix 4, Individuals Admitted to the Methodist Mission, 1834-1838). An examination of the individuals' ancestry demonstrates a marked ethnic diversity at the mission: Kalapuyans, Iroquois, Iroquois-Chinookans, Columbia River Chinookans, Willamette River Chinookans, Tillamook, French-Indians, Cayuse, Klickitat, Walla Walla, Chasta, "Silelah" (perhaps a western Columbia River Sahaptin from the village of Celilo/wayám), and former slaves of unknown Native ancestry.⁴⁰ Twenty-one of the fifty-two individuals admitted to the mission, or roughly 40% of the total, were documented to be Natives of the Lower Columbia-Willamette region. Another 20% percent were bi-cultural children from fur trade families. The remaining 40% hailed largely from the Plateau and the middle Columbia River regions.

A number of the children were placed in the mission by parents who wanted them to receive a Euro-American education. This was the stated case for Kenootesh, a Silelah (Celilo?) lad, and Kokallah, a Tillamook youth, both of whom Michel Laframboise brought to the mission "for the purpose of having them educated" on April 26, 1835.⁴¹ However, Kokallah later left with his father on June 17, 1835. At one point, the missionaries received two Chinook youths who requested admittance to the mission on the advice of John McLoughlin. In July 1836, Welaptulekt, identified as Cayuse, visited the mission bringing his two sons, Wislahowitka and Siahhen. Welaptulekt had traveled with the missionaries on the portion of their overland journey from Fort Hall to Fort Walla Walla (Fort Nez Percés) in

⁴⁰ Carey, "Mission," 265-266.

⁴¹ Carey, "Mission," 236.

fall 1834. He too brought his sons to the mission to "have them remain" with the [missionaries] to be educated."⁴²

The data on the children at the mission 1834 to 1838 indicates that for many children at the mission, illness, disease, and death were a serious problem. At least eight of the thirty-two children at the mission between November 1834 and December 1836 died within six months to two years of their arrival. Excluding Kokallah, the Tillamook lad who later departed with his father, this leaves a death rate of 25%. The sources indicate the children suffered from the effects of the recurrent intermittent fever (malaria), scrofula (tuberculosis of the lung and lymph nodes), influenza (first documented in February 1837), and venereal diseases, which some of the children inherited from their mothers.⁴³ Given the developing disease ecology that accompanied Euro-American expansionism, the presence of so many diseases at the mission may have been the result of two interrelated developments: the presence of infectious disease amongst indigenous populations, diseases with the children brought with them to the mission, and the introduction of previously unknown illnesses, such as influenza, via regional fur trade networks.

The prevalence of various disease at the mission, which also regularly struck all of the missionaries, coupled with subsistence tasks and activities related to ministering to the local French-Indian community, often overwhelmed the three missionaries and their lay assistants in the first years of the mission. The Methodists found themselves with little time or energy to devote to the missionization of the local Kalapuyans. In a letter to the Reverend Wilbur Fisk, dated March 15, 1836, Lee admitted as much. He urged the influential

⁴² Carey, "Mission," 244.

⁴³ Carrey, "Mission," 237-245; Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Disease and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 136-138.

Methodist leader to have the missionary board send additional "lay-men to attend to the temporels" so he could "gladly attend to the spirituals."⁴⁴ In Lee's view, his labor-shortage at the mission could not be solved by relying on any local settlers because there was not "a man in this place that can be hired that is fit to be in a mission family."⁴⁵

However, the health of the missionary personnel and the logistical problems they faced were not the only factors limiting the Methodists' efforts amongst the Kalapuyans. Lee himself expressed disappointment with the local Natives, indicating his own inability to surmount the cultural divide that separated the missionaries from the Kalapuyans. In March 1836, Lee characterized the Kalapuyans as "a scattered, periled, and deserted race," and wrote Wilbur Fisk that "unless the God of heaven undertake their cause, they must perish from off the face of the Earth, and their name be blotted out from under heaven."⁴⁶ Lee must have sensed the fatalistic tone this struck, so in the next sentence he expressed hope that God would allow "a remnant" to be saved. Given the Methodists' limited resources, their lack of missionary training, and their ambivalent attitude towards the Kalapuyans, it is not surprising that in these early years, they focused their energies on the mission school and on their services to the French-Indian community.

The orphaned children admitted to the Methodist Mission came not only from lower Columbia native groups that were disproportionately affected by the intermittent fever for several years, but also from the ranks of former fur trade families. The mission thereby provided the region with a much-needed social service. Here it is important to note that both the French-Indian families and HBC Chief Factor John McLoughlin supported this role for the mission. Upon the death of a spouse, some widowed French Canadians placed their

⁴⁴ Jason Lee to Wilbur Fisk, March 15, 1836, cited in, Brosnan, 79.

⁴⁵ Lee to Fisk, March, 15, 1836.

⁴⁶ Lee to Fisk, March 15, 1836.

children at the mission. One such example was Charles Carpentier who enrolled his daughters Angélique and Sophie following the death of their mother.⁴⁷ At the death of retired Iroquois hunter Louis Sanagaratti (listed as "Shanagarati" in the Mission Record Book), McLoughlin appointed Jason Lee to act as executor of Sanagaratti's estate, and asked him to take Sanagaratti's children and former slaves into the mission, which Lee did on October 18, 1835.⁴⁸

With regard to the social relations between the French-Indian families and the American Methodist missionaries, these can be described as generally positive in the early years of the mission. From the beginning, when Jason Lee and Daniel Lee scouted a place to locate their mission, to the establishment of the mission in the fall of 1834, the French Canadians and their families provided moral support to the missionaries, opened up their homes, provided food, and assisted the missionaries in construction work when called upon. The French-Indian neighbors demonstrated their support for the Methodist mission by donating labor, attending and hosting services led by the Jason and Daniel Lee, and having their children educated by teachers Cyrus Shepard and Philip L. Edward. The agrarian community also gave contributions to the mission in the form of material presents and cash monies. In March of 1836, the leading HBC officers in the region wrote a letter of support and contributed a total of 26 lbs.⁴⁹

Beginning in October 1834, Jason Lee held services at the home of nearby settler Joseph Gervais and Yiamust Clatsop. He also led services in Champoege settlement some

⁴⁷ Harriet D. Munnick, "Annotations," in *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest, St. Paul, 1839-1898 (CCRPN-SP)*, A-14, For the admission dates of Angelique and Sophie, see Carey, "Mission," 265-266.

⁴⁸ For information on the Sanagratti clan and some of the other children admitted to the mission, see Harriett D. Munnick, "Mission Roll Call," *MCH* 11 (1972-1976): 23-26. Joseph Sanagratti, Louis son's only surviving child, joined the Grand Ronde tribal community in the reservation period, where his descendants continue to reside.

⁴⁹ Carey, "Mission." 242-243.

twelve miles to the north.⁵⁰ According to HBC officer George Roberts, relations between Jason Lee and his nearest neighbor Joseph Gervais, were very friendly. Roberts believed that a "good deal of stuff or kindly contributions of the Eastern People" went to Joseph Gervais and his French Canadian neighbors.⁵¹ These were the contributions and items intended for the local Indians. On Monday October 26, 1835, Philip Edwards, a school teacher began teaching at *Campement de Sable*, by December 31, 1834, he had thirteen pupils whom he was instructing in the "first rudiments of education."⁵²

The sources documenting the Methodists' initial years in the Willamette Valley illustrate the complexity of the early colonial society. In contrast to the sectarian conflicts that reemerged in the United States between Protestants and Catholics, in these early years, the French Canadian men of the fur trade demonstrated broad-mindedness towards the newly arrived Protestant missionaries. This is significant given the fact that prior to the Methodists' arrival, the French Canadians had sent a petition to the bishop of Red River asking for Catholic clergy in Oregon. Clearly, the concerns and values of these families are evident in their interactions with the Methodists. They were interested in the spiritual and intellectual welfare of their children, and the welfare of Native and bi-cultural orphans in the region. In their eyes then, a Protestant mission providing needed social, education, and Christian religious services to the community was more important than its denomination.

The French-Indian families' collaboration with the Methodists is an example of the alternative, or non-traditional, culture of French North American communities born of the fur trade where an official Catholic Church hierarchy was either absent, only present in small numbers, or held limited power. The multi-cultural world of the fur trade had long exposed

⁵⁰ Carey, "Mission," 235; Samuel A. Clarke, *Pioneer Days in Old Oregon*, vol. 1 (Portland: J.K. Gill), 340.

⁵¹ George Roberts, "Recollections," P-A 83, BAN, 40.

⁵² Carey, "Mission," 239-242.

French Canadian men and Native and Métis women to a variety of religious traditions, both European and Indian. This religious and ethnic diversity created an environment in which strict adherence to sectarian and ethnic differences were the exceptions rather than the norm.⁵³ Moreover, the survival of the laborers and their families often depended on such flexibility. It is significant that the French-Indian families were in a superior position—both demographically and economically—to the Methodist missionaries and the handful of Americans who had come to the Willamette Valley from California. Additionally, the French-Indian settlers had long-standing ties with local Native groups and the HBC, which afforded them access to both of these communities. The interethnic families were thus confident enough to work cooperatively with the American Methodists. Given their numbers and their mixed fur trade-agricultural economy, the French-Indian families enjoyed a prominent role in the growing agrarian community.

The dynamics of intercultural contact between the French-Indian families and the Methodists during the mid-1830s also raise questions about the attitudes of the Methodists towards their Catholic neighbors. Given the animosity towards the Catholic Church on the part of American Protestants, including evangelicals, throughout the nineteenth century, the willingness of the Methodists to work cooperatively with the French-Indian families on religious, educational, and social initiative might seem puzzling. However, when viewed in light of local conditions, the Methodists' actions and attitudes were pragmatic to some extent. They were a small group of five men with no missionary experience, and limited resources, living amongst a population of Kalapuyans and French-Indian settlers. Had they

⁵³ For an American example of the alternative lifeways, marriage and kinship patterns prevalent amongst interethnic French-Indian community born of the fur trade, see Tanis Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996), 64-97.

not demonstrated a willingness to work cooperatively with the settlers, they would likely have found it difficult to persevere in the Willamette Valley on their own.

However, pragmatic concerns were not the only factors contributing to the Methodists' positive engagement with the French-Indian families. Of equal importance was the missionary's own evangelical spirituality. All three religious members of the mission, Jason Lee, Daniel Lee, and Cyrus Shepard, were devout Methodists who believed it their Christian duty to minister to the spiritual and educational needs of the settlers. Their writings demonstrate that they supported the righteousness of the Protestant tradition vis-à-vis Roman Catholicism. However, this sense of righteousness was not a roadblock to positive social relations in this early period due to the absence of institutional opposition from the Catholic Church. With no literate, highly educated Catholic clergy in the Oregon Country, there were no direct challenges to the authority or practices of the Methodists, little occasion for theological debates to sow discord in the Willamette Valley. This exemption from sectarian strife would last only until the fall of 1838, when French Canadian Catholic missionaries finally arrived in the Columbia region.

Community Initiatives

The presence of American Methodists in the Willamette Valley during the mid-1830s coincided with the development of several community initiatives. These initiatives included cooperative efforts that crossed ethnic and sectarian lines as well an intra-ethnic project pursued by the French-Indian families. Both contemporary observers and historians have tended to interpret the role of the French Canadian male settlers within these community initiatives from the perspective of either the Methodist missionaries or HBC officials.

However, a closer examination of the surviving historical record suggests that while the settlers may have been influenced by both the Methodists and HBC officials, they acted according to their own cultural values and their own interests. Ultimately, the French-Indian families worked cooperatively with McLoughlin and the Methodists on these additional community initiatives because they sought to maintain healthy social and economic ties with two groups, while also establishing their own institutions.

The first community initiative that ranged outside ongoing projects related to religious practice, education, or subsistence agriculture was a Methodist-led temperance effort. In the spring of 1836, Ewing Young, who was then settled on a claim across the Willamette River on present-day Chehalem Creek, purchased a large caldron once belonging to Nathaniel Wyeth's company for the purpose of establishing a whiskey distillery.⁵⁴ Young's project eventually came to the attention of the Methodists, who, along with John McLoughlin, led an effort to oppose it. McLoughlin had previously sought to curb the use of alcohol as a trade item in the Columbia Department in keeping with the HBC's 1821 charter. In McLoughlin's 1837 annual report to the HBC Governor and Committee in London, he notified officials that he had ceased operations at the Fort Vancouver distillery the previous year due to the "bad effects it had on our affairs" and recommended to that such a project never be attempted again.⁵⁵ According to Elijah White, the New York-born physician who joined the Methodist mission in May 1837, McLoughlin responded to Young's distillery

⁵⁴ Courtney Walker, "Sketch of Ewing Young." *TOPA* (1880), 57-58.

⁵⁵ John McLoughlin, *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver Letters, 1st Series*, edited by E.E. Rich (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1941), 208.

plans by issuing orders that no grains would be ground in the HBC mills for the distilling of liquors.⁵⁶

For his part, Jason Lee conferred with McLoughlin and sought to re-energize the temperance organization, the Oregon Temperance Society, which the Methodists had founded in February 1836.⁵⁷ Lee's first step was to confront Ewing directly and ask him to abandon his plans for a distillery. When Ewing declined to accede to Lee's request, apparently for financial reasons, Lee and the other missionaries turned to the larger settler population for support.⁵⁸ They organized a temperance society meeting at their mission on January 2, 1837.⁵⁹ The outcome of the gathering was the drafting of a petition addressed to Ewing and his business partner, Lawrence Carmichael, outlining the reasons why the settlers believed the two should cease their distillery operations. In comparing the Oregon Temperance Society petition and the 1837 Willamette Valley census of U.S. envoy William Slacum, we find overwhelming support for the initiative from within the different settler groups. In addition to the four current members of the Methodist mission (Jason and Daniel Lee, Cyrus Shepard, and Phillip Edwards), twelve of the fifteen local English-speakers unattached to the Methodist mission signed the petition, and amongst the French-Canadians settlers, all but one affixed their mark.⁶⁰

Since Ewing Young was a neighbor to the settlers, the temperance society chose a diplomatic response rather than a heavy-handed approach to his distillery plans. In the letter to Young and Carmichael, the petitioners stressed that the presence of alcohol would have a

⁵⁶ Allen, Miss. A. J., comp., *Ten Years in Oregon: Travels and Adventures of Doctor E. White and Lady West of the Rocky Mountains*. (Ithaca, NY: Mack, Andrus, & Co., 1848), 78.

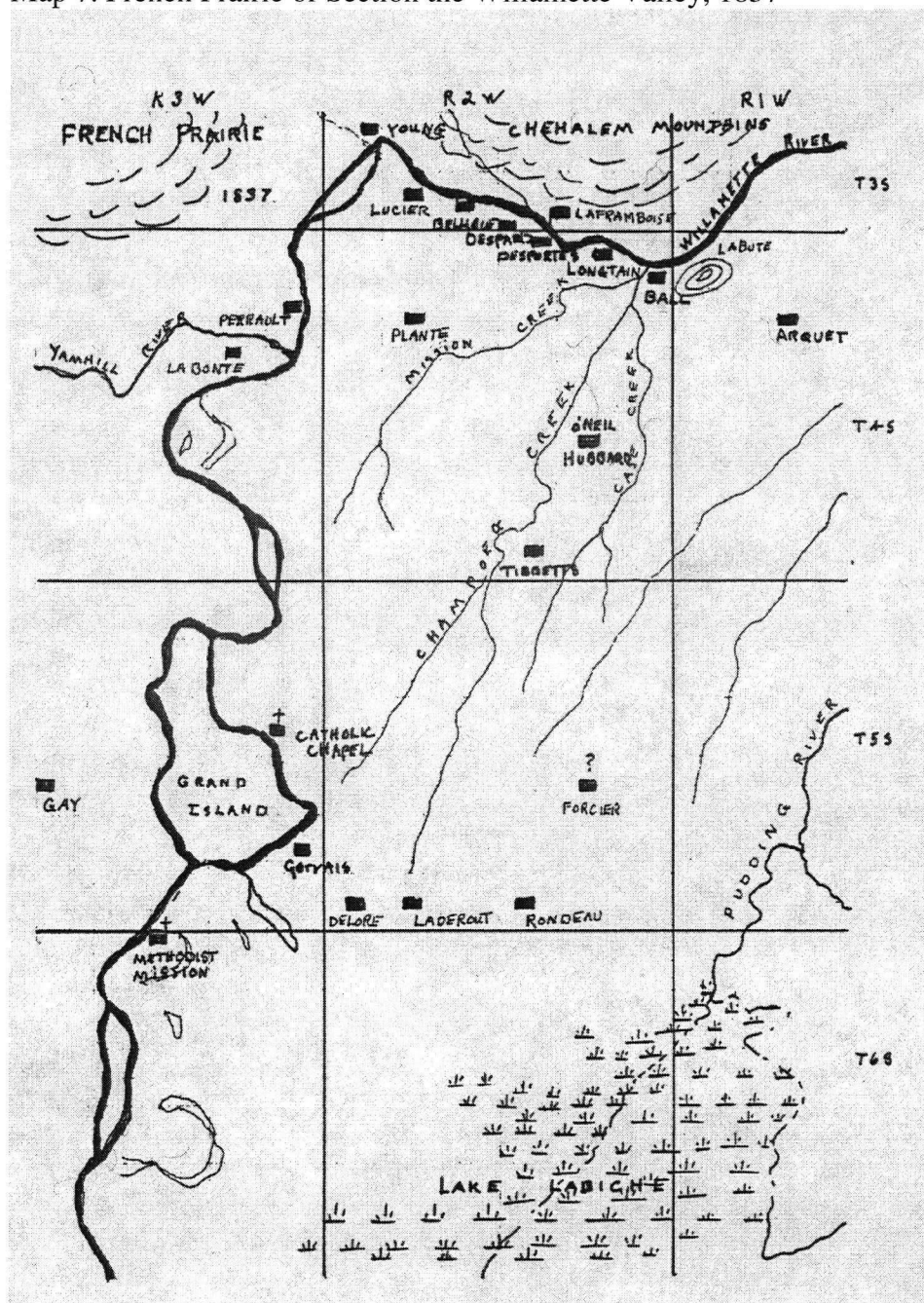
⁵⁷ Carey, "Mission," 242.

⁵⁸ Allen, 78.

⁵⁹ Carey, "Mission," 248; Lee and Frost, 141.

⁶⁰ William A. Slacum, "Slacum's Report on Oregon," *OHQ* 13:2 (June 1912), 212-213. Amongst the English-speakers in the Willamette Valley, William Bailey, William Johnson, and John Rowling did not sign. Amongst the French-speakers, only André Longtain did not affix his mark.

Map 7. French Prairie of Section the Willamette Valley, 1837



From Munnick, "The Prairie that Slacum Saw."

Reprinted with permission from the Marion County Historical Society.

negative effect on the "temporal and spiritual welfare" of both the settler community and the local Indians. They appealed to Young and Carmichael's respect for American jurisprudence, emphasizing that the sale of liquor to Indians was prohibited by U.S. law. The petitioners also stressed that they were not "not enemies but friends" of Young and Carmichael.⁶¹ Interestingly, the petition concluded with a passage stating that local settlers who had not joined the temperance society were still encouraged to sign the petition, and give a donation to the cause. Finally, they offered to compensate the two men for the monies they had invested in the project, with half of the thirty signatories agreeing to pay a set sum to the temperance effort, ranging from four to eight dollars.⁶²

Young and Carmichael did not immediately reply to the temperance society petition. However, in the meantime, an unexpected visitor to the Willamette Valley provided a means to resolve the distillery controversy. At midnight on January 12, 1837, William Slacum, the U.S. naval purser dispatched by Secretary of State John Forsyth to make a survey of the Oregon Country, arrived at the home of Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay. He spent that day meeting Jason Lee and the missionaries, local French-Indian families, and the American settlers, and he had a long talk with Ewing Young. Having been advised of the distillery controversy by HBC officials, Slacum informed Young that he had been authorized by Chief Trader Duncan Finlayson to notify the American that should he "abandon his enterprise of distilling whiskey, he could be permitted to get his necessary supplies from Fort Vancouver, on the same terms as the other men."⁶³ The naval purser further informed Young that he would assist Young by offering the settler a personal loan and passage to California on his

⁶¹ Carey, "Mission," 248-250; Slacum, 211-213.

⁶² Carey, "Mission," 248-250; Slacum, 211-213; Lee and Frost, 141.

⁶³ Slacum, 195-196.

ship, the *Loriot*. Such a trip would allow Young to clear himself of allegations of horse thieving leveled by the Mexican Governor of California, charges which had soured his initial relations with the HBC. The next day, January 13, 1837, Young and Carmichael responded favorably to the temperance petition. They agreed to cease the production of ardent spirits "for the present," citing recent "favorable circumstances" that would allow them to "get along without making spirituous liquors."⁶⁴

That day, Slacum met with many of the Willamette Valley settlers at Champoege, and extended them the same offer of passage to California to purchase livestock in the Mexican territory. Since the settlers could not purchase cattle from the HBC—McLoughlin's policy being to loan but not sell its livestock—eleven settlers signed the articles of agreement for a cattle expedition to California, designated the Willamette Cattle Company. They agreed to raise the necessary funds among themselves, and send a contingent of volunteers to California, availing themselves of Slacum's offer of passage on the *Loriot*.⁶⁵ The venture was organized as a simple joint stock company whereby the investors contributed funds for the expenses for the trip to California and the purchase of cattle. Slacum loaned Jason Lee \$500 and the other investors drew on monies owned them by the HBC. They elected Ewing Young as the expedition leader, and Philip Edwards, formerly a lay member of the mission, as company treasurer. The investors included eight Anglo-Americans, one Briton, and two French Canadians, Pierre Depot and Amable Arquette. Although only Philip Edwards signed from the mission, Jason Lee and the others invariably bought stock in the company.

⁶⁴ Slacum, 213.

⁶⁵ Slacum, 208-209.

While some nineteenth-century chroniclers argued that the HBC opposed the enterprise, there is no evidence to support such a conclusion.⁶⁶ In fact, documents relating to the probate of Ewing Young's estate, published in 1920, attest that McLoughlin invested \$558 in the venture and Chief Traders James Douglas and Duncan Finlayson jointly invested \$300.⁶⁷ At the time, McLoughlin's decision to join the venture rather than oppose it was likely both strategic and economic. A cooperative approach to the settlers' initiative would keep the HBC on good terms with the community while also securing additional cattle for its operations in the Columbia Department.

A party of eleven men departed on the *Loriot* with Slacum on January 18, 1837. After a violent storm at the mouth of the Colombia delayed the ship, Webley Hawkhurst left the party and returned to the Willamette Valley. The ship finally left on February 10, arriving at the Russian outpost of Fort Ross, located north of Bodega Bay, on February 20. The *Loriot* proceeded on to San Francisco with Edwards and Ewing. After several months of administrative and financial wrangling with Mexican military leaders, civil authorities and cattle merchants, the Willamette Cattle Company party departed San Jose in late June 1837. The expedition reached the Willamette Valley in early October 1837 with 630 Spanish cattle following an arduous four-month trip.⁶⁸ The cattle were distributed to the investing partners, and William Slacum's share of the cattle was later sold by his nephew to John McLoughlin.

In the various writings on the Willamette Valley, both nineteenth-century chroniclers and later historians have emphasized the roles of HBC officials, U.S. envoy William Slacum,

⁶⁶ S. A. Clarke, *Pioneer Days in Old Oregon*, vol. 1 (Portland: J.K. Gill, 1905), 306-309; H.O. Lang, *History of the Willamette Valley* (Portland: Geo. H. Himes, 1885), 230.

⁶⁷ F.G. Young, "Ewing Young and His Estate," *OHQ* 21: 3 (September 1920), 208-209.

⁶⁸ For detailed accounts of the cattle drive from Spanish California to the Willamette Valley, see Philip Leget Edwards, *The Diary of Philip Leget Edwards*, (San Francisco: Grabhorn Press, 1932); Kenneth L. Holmes, *Ewing Young: Master Trapper* (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1967), 122-134.

and the Methodists missionaries in the development of the Oregon Temperance Society and the Willamette Cattle Company.⁶⁹ When they have alluded to the participation of the French-Indian settlers in these events, they have conflated the interests of the settlers with the those of the HBC or the Methodists, thus intimating that the French Canadians largely followed the advice of their more educated social betters. Robert J. Loewenberg, author of a study on Jason Lee and the Methodist Mission, concluded that the HBC was the real power behind the success of the temperance effort against Young. He found that the Willamette Valley settlers acted in accordance with the wishes of HBC officials because the company, as the only source of supplies and foodstuffs in the region, held significant moral authority over the settlers.⁷⁰ However, as Daniel Lee recorded the temperance society effort some ten years later, the HBC “seconded” the Methodists’ temperance effort. Daniel Lee also believed the Willamette Valley settlers had supported the initiative due to the righteousness of the temperance cause and the moral persuasiveness of the missionaries.⁷¹

These long-standing interpretations do not fully explain the actions of the French Canadian male settlers, however. They do not address the question of agency, more particularly why the French Canadians chose to participate in these community initiatives. By re-examining the limited source record on the French-Indian settlers, it is clear that they did not simply act in deference to the wishes of either the HBC, the Methodists, or the other American settlers, but rather in accordance with the best interests of their own community. Living in a rather isolated settlement in the Willamette Valley, the French-Indian families were somewhat removed from the controversy over “the Oregon Question” of whether or not

⁶⁹ H.H. Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886), 102. The Bancroft-Victor Fuller interpretation stressed the crucial role of William Slacum.

⁷⁰ Loewenberg, 170.

⁷¹ Lee and Frost, 140-141.

the Oregon Country would become U.S. or British territory. However, by their actions, the French Canadian male settlers sought to retain positive ties with both the HBC, the current representative of the British government, and the American Methodists. As Loewenberg correctly surmises, the French Canadians could not afford to alienate HBC officials, due to their economic dependence on the company for supplies in exchange for the grain their raised on their farms. This was one factor contributing to their support of John McLoughlin in his opposition to Young's distillery plans.

Maintaining positive relations with the Methodists was also a determining factor. The French-Indian families benefited from the religious, social, and educational services offered by the small group of dedicated, educated missionaries. Perhaps most important was the need for the settlers to ensure themselves a stable social and economic position in the event of a future American annexation of the Willamette Valley. Close ties with the Methodists might ensure that end. If the settlers supported the Methodists on the temperance issues, the missionaries might in turn support the French-Indian families should the Americans eventually gain control of the region south of the Columbia River. This issue was a serious concern in the minds of the French Canadians as demonstrated by their discussion with William Slacum at Champoege on January 13, 1837. Slacum reported to U.S. officials that the French Canadians were worried about the legal title to their lands in the event of an American annexation of the Willamette Valley.⁷² Thus, from this perspective, the French Canadian male settlers' assistance to the temperance effort strengthened their ties with both the Methodists and the HBC.

Two additional factors likely played a role in the French Canadians' decision to sign the temperance petition. As a religious leader and an educated man, Jason Lee held a position

⁷² Slacum, 196-198.

of moral authority amongst the French Canadians, and so they would have agreed to consider the Methodists' temperance initiative. William Slacum noted that "every white man" in the Willamette settlement held Jason Lee and his associates missionaries with some regard.⁷³ This is the same sentiment expressed by naturalist Robert Townsend on the missionaries' overland journey to Oregon in 1834. He observed that although Jason Lee evinced the pious, sometimes self-righteous attitude typical of evangelical Protestant missionaries of the period, he had a gentle way of critiquing the "rough" fur trappers such that they came to respect him.⁷⁴

On the issue of temperance itself, the French Canadians would not have endorsed a complete ban on alcohol, but rather the notion that some measure of local regulation was warranted. The consumption of alcohol was not only a component of the Catholic mass in the Canadians' native Lower Canada, but also was a significant part of the fur trade throughout North America. It played a central role in community events, holidays, and celebrations characteristic of the trade. Yet it could also create grave problems for both Native and fur traders' communities, particularly in those areas outside the jurisdiction of the HBC or where HBC trade policies and personnel ration guidelines received short shrift.⁷⁵ Not infrequently, Native leaders pushed for a ban on the trade of alcohol. Given the HBC's on-going problems with American maritime fur traders' use of alcohol on the Northwest Coast, and McLoughlin's ending of distillery activities at Fort Vancouver, both the French Canadian

⁷³ Slacum, 195.

⁷⁴ Townsend, *Narrative*, 77. Townsend writes: "Lee is a great favorite with the men, deservedly so, and there are probably few persons to whose preaching they would have listened with so much complaisance. I have often been amused and pleased by Mr. L.'s manner of reproofing them for the coarseness of profanity of expression which is so universal amongst them. The reproof, although decided, clear, and strong, is always characterized by the mildness and affectionate manner peculiar to the man; and although the good effect of the advice may not be discernible, yet is always treated with respect, and its utility acknowledged."

⁷⁵ Thorne, 188-205; Edith I. Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline, and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770-1879* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 131-139.

male settlers and their Indian wives would have been aware of the potential problem of alcoholism in the Willamette Valley. Indeed, Elijah White reported in his memoirs that drunken brawls would sometimes erupt during the Christmas season when the head of each household would receive a "few gallons of liquor." He mentioned one case in which a drunken man nearly beat his wife to death, and she "lay insensible for thirty days."⁷⁶

The petitions sent by the Willamette settlers to the Bishop of Red River in 1834 and in 1835, indicate that, as fathers, the French Canadian men were keenly interested in the welfare of their families. Having retired from the fur trade to an agrarian community, they demonstrated a desire to establish those social institutions not found in most fur trade outposts, specifically, schools and churches. While both English and Scots fur trade officers and educated Americans tended to disparage the French Canadians as uneducated, ignorant, and lacking in "moral restraint," the settlers, by their actions, belied such stereotypes.⁷⁷ The decision to support the Methodists' temperance society suggests that the French Canadians were concerned about social issues that could have a serious impact on the nascent community, namely the problem of alcoholism.

At the same time that the French-Indian families lent their support to the Methodist Mission, and cooperated in community initiatives such as the temperance movement, they continued to lobby for Catholic missionaries from French Canada. Responding to the settlers' letters from 1834 and 1835, Joseph Provencher, "encouraged them to persevere" in the practice of their faith and promised to do all in his power to send clergymen to the small colony as soon as possible. However, he also informed them that he was unable to dispatch priests directly from Red River because none was then available for a new missionary

⁷⁶ Allen, 78.

⁷⁷ The "moral restraint" phrase is a quote from William Slacum, 195.

initiative.⁷⁸ In the spring of 1836, the French Canadian settlers sent a third letter to Bishop Provencher.⁷⁹ Since all of the French Canadian settlers at this time were illiterate, they dictated the text to a English-speaker, an individual who was himself semi-literate:

Reverend sir

Willammett March 22th 1836

We recived your kinde letter last fall wich gave us Much pleasure and ease to oure minds for it has bean a Long time since we have heard the Likes of it [...] it has Gave us a new heart since we recived your kinde instructions to us [...] we will do oure Best in deavours to instruct oure fammilies to youre wishes [...] still Living in hope to some Speadet Releafe wich we are Looking for with eager hearts for the day to Come [...] since we Recived youre kinde Letter we have beGun to Build and make some preparations to Recive oure kinde father wich we hope that oure laboure will not be in vain [...] for you know oure sittuwations better than oure selves [...] for Some of us stands in greate Neade of youre Assistance as quick as possible [...] We have nothing to Right to you about the Countrey but that the farms are All in a very thriving state and produces fine Crops [...] We have sent theis few Lines to you hoping that that it will not trouble you to much for Righting So quick to you [...] but the Countrey is setteling Slowley and oure Children are Learning very fast wich make us very eager for youre assistance wich we hope by Gods helpe will be very sone [...] oure prayers will be for his safe Arival [...] We have sent you a list of the families that Are at preasent in the settlement [...] so more preasent [...] from youre humble servants.

	[Mark]	Children
Joseph Jarvay [Joseph Gervais]	X	7
Xaviar Laderout [F. Xavier Laderoute]	X	1
Eken Luceay [Etienne Lucier]	X	6
Pearre Belleck [Pierre Bellique]	X	3
Charles Rondo [Charles Rondeau]	X	3
Charles Plant [Charles Plante]	X	4
Pear Depot [Pierre Depot]	X	1
Andrey Pecord [Andre Picard]	X	4
Joseph Delar [Joseph Delord]	X	5
Louey Fourcy [Louis Fourcier]	X	3
Lamable Erquet [Amable Arquette]	X	3
Jean Bt Perrault	X	2
Joseph Desport [Joseph Despard]	X	3
Andrey Longten [Andre Longtain]	X	4
John Bt. Desportes [McKay]	X	8
William Johnson	X	2

⁷⁸ Provencher to Signay, June 9, 1835, AAQ; Willamette Settlers [Joseph Gervais et al.] to the Bishop of Juliopolis, March 22, 1836, Oregon Historical Society (OHS), Portland, Oregon, Mss 83. The letter from the French Canadian settlers was transcribed and printed in *Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface* 31:6 (June 1932): 143-144.

⁷⁹ Willamette Settlers [Joseph Gervais et al.] to the Bishop of Juliopolis, March 22, 1836.

Charlo Chata [Charles C(h)arpentier?] X
 William Mearity [William McKarty] X

Stephen Woolworth, a history of education scholar, recently identified HBC Chief Factor John McLoughlin, who was sympathetic to religious practice of the company's Catholic laborers, as the architect of the French Canadians' early petitions to the Bishop Provencher.⁸⁰ However, there are several problems with his interpretation. Woolworth apparently restated the views of Herbert Beaver, the Anglican minister who came into conflict with McLoughlin while stationed at Fort Vancouver—though Woolworth does not cite a specific passage from Beaver's published works. Woolworth likewise provides no additional corroborating evidence for his argument, neglecting to mention the missives from the Willamette settlers to Provencher, or the correspondence of Catholic Church leaders in Canada.

Additionally, the view that the French Canadians acted in response to McLoughlin's urgings, rather than on their own initiative, conflates the interests of the HBC Chief Factor and the settlers, again negating the French Canadians' own agency in the development of historical events. I would argue that the evidence suggests a more nuanced interpretation, one in which the French Canadian settlers express a genuine desire for Catholic clergy, and this desire receives support from the highest official in the Columbia Department, John McLoughlin. Francis Norbert Blanchet, the Catholic priest who led the eventual mission to the Columbia in 1838, interpreted the French Canadians' petitions to the Bishop of Red River as an independent initiative. In a 1841 letter to HBC North American Governor George Simpson, for example, Blanchet wrote that "in writing these requests to their bishops, at a

⁸⁰ Stephen Woolworth, "The School is Under My Direction: The Politics of Education at Fort Vancouver, 1836-1838," *OHQ* 104:2 (Summer 2003): 232-233.

distance of 20 leagues from their bourgeois, they were not influenced but by the desire of their hearts.”⁸¹

The semi-literate nature of the 1836 appeal indicates that the French Canadians would have not received assistance from either the Methodists or HBC officials, since all of these men exhibited a more advanced level of writing skill than indicated by the text. This internal evidence reduces the list of possible writers to a handful of early Anglo-American settlers who enjoyed close relations with the French-Indian families, particularly English-speakers who were unfamiliar with French surnames and French pronunciations. Three likely candidates were Solomon Smith, who taught the children of the French-Indian families before the arrival of the Methodists and who was married to Celiast Clatsop; John Hoard, who married Lisette Deportes in May 1837, and T. J. Hubbard, who married a local Native woman, Mary Somamata at the home of Pierre Bellique in April 1837. Given their kinships ties to the French-Indian community, they had the greatest incentives to assist the settlers in their quest to bring French Canadian missionaries to the Willamette Valley.

The letter was signed by all of the French Canadian men of the settlement, including the French-Algonquin Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay.⁸² Aside from the unidentified Charlo Chata, and the Irishmen William McKarty who had come to the Willamette Valley with the Ewing Young party from California, the petitioners of 1836 were all former trade laborers and trappers who retired to the valley with their wives and children.⁸³ Although they were illiterate and uneducated in the formal sense, they found a means to communicate their needs

⁸¹Francis N. Blanchet to George Simpson, November 15, 1841, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon Archives (APOA).

⁸²Louis Labonté, Sr. did not sign the petition because he was then foreman of the Thomas McKay farm near Scappoose.

⁸³Munnick, *CCRPNW-SP*, “Annotations,” A-62 to A-63.; Fort George [Columbia River], Report on Districts, 1824-1835, B. 76/e/1, HBCA, Winnipeg.

to the Catholic hierarchy, one that bypassed their former employer, the HBC. The settlers' appeals of 1834, 1835, and 1836, and a final one in 1837, show a clear, consistent message. They desired social, religious, and educational institutions for their growing colony, preferably directed by Roman Catholic clergy from Quebec. While the French-Indian families welcomed similar opportunities offered by the Methodist missionaries, the French Canadian male settlers, at least, wished to create the central institution in French Canadian rural society, the local parish church.

The French Canadians living in the Willamette Valley largely hailed from rural communities throughout Lower Canada, traditional sites for the recruitment of fur trade laborers. In these villages, the local parish provided French Canadian *habitants* with traditional Catholic worship services and sacraments, as well social welfare assistance and some educational opportunities. It was also an important site of community life, where villagers would gather for discussions, debates and other types of weekly socializing. In this sense, the local parish served a dual purpose as both a religious and a secular institution for rural French Canadians. This attitude, which was somewhat at odds with the views of many priests and bishops, stemmed not only from the historical geography of the St. Lawrence region and French Canada's agrarian culture, but also from financial considerations. Since villagers supported the operations of their local parishes, they tended to view the parish as a community institution rather than as an extension of the larger Catholic Church. As such, the parish buildings, including the rectory might well be used for both regular socializing and special community events.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Allan Greer, *The Patriot and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 60-63; Peter N. Moogk, *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada a Cultural History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 212-213.

Given the French Canadians' understanding of village life in Lower Canada, it is not surprising that they would welcome the Methodists missionaries, even to the point of coming by to socialize with Jason on a regular basis. Such behavior was in keeping with their notions about community life. And yet, however much they cooperated with the American Methodists, who practiced a religion different from their own, and spoke a foreign tongue, the Methodist mission would never belong to the French-Indian families in the same way that a parish in rural Lower Canada would belong to the local villagers. Thus, the French Canadians' petitions to Bishop Provencher were as much aimed at providing their families with religious and educational opportunities as they were intended to create community institutions that would enrich the social life of the French Prairie settlers.

In response to the settlers' letter of March 1836, Bishop Provencher sent the French Canadians another pastoral letter providing encouragement and support for the small colony. He may have suggested that he would try to visit the Willamette settlement. However, he was not able to offer any information on concrete plans for the future. Church officials in Red River and Quebec were still trying to negotiate the logistics of sending missionaries to the Columbia region. The most important hurdles facing church leaders were gaining approval from the HBC, finding personnel sufficiently trained for the travails of missionary work, and securing the financial resources needed to support the proposed mission.

In the meantime, the French Canadians found the delay vexing. They sent another letter to Joseph Provencher in March 1837, their frustration evident in this fourth and final appeal:⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Willamette Settlers [Pierre Bellique et al.] to the Bishop of Juliopolis, March 8, 1837, OHS, Mss 83. This letter was also transcribed and printed in *Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface* 31:7 (July 1932): 165-66.

Reverend Sir

Willammett March 8, 1837

We have taken the Opportunity to Rite to you hoping this Will meate you on youre way to oure Settlement for we are waiting with Greate Angsitty for youre Arivall [,] wich we have beane looking for [,] this sometime since we have the Pleasure of Reciving youre kinde leatter [,] wich Gave us Greate encouragement [,] But we finde the time very long [,] Reverend Sir you will think us very troublesome [,] But we hope you will excuse us for We have much Neede of some Assistance from you [,] *for we have allmost Every Religion but our own [,] wich you know Reverend Sir with oute youre Assistance wen we are surounded by every One [,] it will be very hard for us to bring Our famelues up to our owne Religion wen their i[s] so maney others around them [,]* We are bringing oure famelyes up as well as we possible Can [,] But not so well as We would wish [,] We have built a bidend [building] to receve the Reverend Gentlemen that Should please to Come wich will be a hapy Day for us [,] we still remaine youre humble Servants [,]
Willammette Settlers [,] *[italics added]*

[Mark]

Pearre Belleck [Pierre Bellique]	X
Joseph Desportes	X
Charlo Chayta [Charles C(h)arpentier ?]	X
Andrey Longten [André Longtain]	X
John B. Desportes McK [McKay]	X
Atoam Lafourty [Antoine Laferte]	X
Jonva [F. Xavier] Laderoute	X
Joseph Jarvay [Joseph Geravis]	X
Charlo Raut [Charles Plante]	X
Charls Rondo [Charles Rondeau]	X
Joseph Delar[d]	X
Louey Labounty [Louis Labonte]	X
Luey Foursey [Louis Forcier]	X
Pearre Depo [Pierre Depot]	X
Lemob Erquect [Amable Arquette]	X
Eken Lucey [Étienne Lucier]	X

This second surviving letter to Bishop Provencher contains the same emphasis on the need for Catholic clergy as the previous petition. However, its tone is more urgent, with the French Canadians referring directly to their concerns about the growing prominence of Protestant missionaries in Oregon. Their concerns had been magnified by the arrival of a group of American Presbyterian missionaries, headed by Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, at Fort Vancouver in the fall of 1836. Although the Presbyterians decided to establish their installations among the Cayuse and Nez Perce in the Columbia Plateau east of the Cascades

Mountains, this letter marks a shift in the French Canadians' attitudes towards Protestant missionaries in the region. Without institutional support from the Catholic Church, the French Canadians appeared increasingly worried about bringing their families "up to [their] own religion." This ambiguous attitude toward the Protestant missionaries may also indicate growing concerns about the social and political position of the missionaries vis-à-vis the French Canadian settlers. In such an instance, the presence of an educated Catholic priest would strengthen the standing of the bi-cultural community, for the settlers would then have an additional community representative to advocate on their behalf. The settlers' determination to establish a parish and make ready for a priest's arrival is evident in their decision to begin construction of a church, despite the lack of a firm commitment from Canadian church officials.

In 1837 the French Prairie settlers faced an expansion of the Methodist establishment when two groups of reinforcements joined the Willamette Valley mission. The first party, headed by Dr. Elijah White, arrived at Fort Vancouver in late May, and included Dr. White's wife and son, Susan Downing, Anna Marie Pittman, Elvira Johnson, Alanson Beers, and William H. Willson. The second group, led by the Reverend David Leslie, disembarked in early September 1837, and included Leslie's wife and three daughters, Margaret J. Smith (later Margaret Bailey), and the Reverend Henry K. W. Perkins.⁸⁶

When these two groups of reinforcements arrived at the Methodist mission in 1837, they encountered a colonial society which had undergone several changes over the previous three years. Most significantly, Northern and Central Kalapuyan groups—the Tualatin, Yamhill, Ahantchuyuk, and Santiam—witnessed the increased settlement of their lands by

⁸⁶ Brosnan, 87-90.

Euro-Americans having no kinships ties with them. Americans from Ewing Young party claimed lands on the west side of the Willamette River, while the American Methodists established a mission twelve miles south of Champoege. This new wave of settlers and missionaries instituted a process, both material and ideological, and for the first time, marginalized the Kalapuyans within their own homeland. For their part, the Methodist missionaries proved both unable and unwilling to make a significant effort to communicate with the local Kalapuyans.

However, in the process, the newcomers did receive the support and encouragement of the local French-Indian settlers, which reinforced the marginalization of the Kalapuyans. The ability of the Methodists and the French-Indian families to work across ethnic and sectarian lines on community initiatives resulted from a complex set of factors: pragmatism, self-interest, spiritual and cultural traditions, and a common need for social interaction. Historical sources documenting the intercultural relations between the Americans and the French-Indian families demonstrate a growing sense of community amongst the earliest settlers. For as much as they aided their Protestant neighbors, they remained determined to establish a local Catholic parish, a social institution that would allow the French Canadian male settlers to recreate elements of their native culture of Lower Canada. Their yearly petitions to the Catholic bishop at Red River, Joseph Provencher, from 1834 through 1837, demonstrate a growing desire for a French Canadian, Catholic presence in French Prairie. While supporting the Methodists and benefiting from the educational opportunities they offered, the French-Indian families also showed themselves as active agents in colonization of the Willamette Valley, rather than as the deferential, uneducated followers of either the Methodists or the HBC.

CHAPTER FIVE

“A BAD FEELING HAS BEEN EXCITED AMONG THE AMERICANS”:
CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS, 1838-1840

On March 16, 1838, a little over a year after the visit of U.S. envoy William Slacum to the Willamette Valley, a group of settlers met at the Methodist Mission to discuss a petition to the U.S. Congress. The petition, supported by Jason Lee and drafted by Phillip L. Edwards, proposed that Congress extend its jurisdiction over the Oregon Country south of the Columbia River as soon as possible. In his argument for American sovereignty, Edwards emphasized the region's agricultural and commercial advantages, the settlers' current, unwanted dependence on the HBC, and the need for civil governance and federal control over emigration and Indian affairs.¹ After some discussion, thirty-six men affixed their signatures or marks to the petition, also known as the Edwards Memorial. The thirty-six included ten members of the Methodist mission, seventeen Americans and nine French Canadians. While the memorial ultimately did not affect a change in U.S. foreign policy with regard to the Oregon Country, it did mark another cooperative effort by the various settlers groups in the Willamette Valley, and thereby served to marginalize the Kalapuyans even further from the developing colonial society. The arrival of French Canadian Catholic missionaries in the fall of 1838 would also create tensions between the Methodists and the French Prairie settlers.

¹ *Sen. Doc. 154*, 25th Cong., 3rd Sess., January 28, 1839, reprinted in Cornelius J. Brosnan, *Jason Lee: Prophet of the New Oregon* (New York: Macmillan: 1932), 220-223. See also Cornelius Brosnan, "The Oregon Memorial of 1838," *OHQ* 34:1 (March 1933): 68-77; Cornelius Brosnan, "The Signers of the Oregon Memorial of 1838," *WHQ* 24:3 (July 1933): 174-189; Robert J. Loewenberg, "Saving Oregon Again: A Western Perennial?" *OHQ* 76:4 (December 1977), 341-342; and C.J. Pike, "Petitions of Oregon Settlers, 1838-48," *OHQ* 34:3 (September 1933): 216-235.

Previously historians have interpreted the participation of the nine French Canadians—all leading members of the French-Indian settlement—in the venture as a sign that they “wanted to become Americans citizens.”² However, given the French Canadians’ concerns about their land claims and their letters requesting French Catholic missionaries for Oregon, it seems more likely that the settlers were not so much interested in becoming American citizens as in safeguarding their interests and maintaining positive relations with their American neighbors in the event of an American annexation of the region south of the Columbia. By cooperating to some degree with the Methodists and the American settlers, the French Canadians retained a voice in the developing social dialogue regarding civil governance. What the Canadians might not have foreseen in the spring of 1838 was that by the end of the year, educated clergymen would arrive in the region to support the interests of the Catholic Church, as well as the interests of the French-Indian community in the Willamette Valley.

The arrival of two French Canadian Catholic priests, Francis Norbert Blanchet and Modest Demers, in Oregon the fall of 1838 injected a new element into social relations in the Willamette Valley. Within the French-Indian settlement, the presence of the missionaries strengthened intra-community ties by concentrating the settlers’ energies on the erection and maintenance of a Catholic mission. By baptizing the women and children of the settlement, solemnizing the settlers’ country marriages, and instituting religious instruction and observance, Blanchet supported the creation of a community culture distinct from the Methodist mission and the American settlements, located on the west side of the Willamette River. Like the Methodists before him, Blanchet did not establish a strong missionary

² Brosnan, *Jason Lee*, 219. The nine French Canadians who signed the Edwards Memorial included Pierre Bellique, Joseph Delard, Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay, Joseph Deloze, Joseph Gervais, François Xavier Laderoute, Étienne Lucier, Jean Baptiste Perrault, and André Picard.

presence amongst the local Kalapuyans. Within this context, the remaining Kalapuyans were increasingly marginalized in their own territory as the Native-newcomer demographic shift continued, and the Methodists and American settlers focused their attention on cementing the establishment of a settler colonial society under American jurisdiction.

While the presence of a French Canadian Catholic clergyman tended to strengthen intra-community ties during the late 1830s, a series of inter-community controversies during this period revealed a divergence of interests between the French-Indian families, the Methodists, and the American settlers. While the Methodists and Americans agitated for a U.S. annexation of the region south of the Columbia, the French Canadian male settlers attempted to maintain positive ties with both the incoming settlers and their former employer, the HBC. Equally important was the issue of community leadership. The presence of a second religious elite represented by the Catholic priest, Father Francis Blanchet, injected personal and institutional dynamics that served as a catalyst for sectarian conflict. These social, political, and religious tensions would complicate later attempts at civil governance in the early 1840s following the arrival of additional American settlers.

The Catholic Mission to Oregon

As I have noted, each spring between 1834 and 1837, the French Canadian male settlers in the Willamette Valley, sent annual letters to the closest Canadian Catholic ecclesiastical representative, Bishop Provencher at Red River. Although Provencher's manpower shortage precluded him from taking the positive action he wished, he did inform

his superior, Joseph Signay, Archbishop of Quebec, of the settlers' request.³ Provencher's commitment to the eventual establishment a Columbia mission was understandable because he had founded the first Roman Catholic establishment in the Red River colony in 1818. There he had ministered to both the local bi-cultural Métis population, and French Canadian colonists from Lower Canada.⁴ Thus, Provencher well understood the needs of the fledgling and distant Pacific slope colony.

In his initial letter to Archbishop Signay, Provencher indicated that in the spring of 1835 he had had a discussion with George Simpson about the feasibility of sending Catholic missionaries to the Columbia Department.⁵ Unlike the American Methodists, French Canadian Catholic authorities needed the permission of HBC officials to travel to the Columbia Department. This was because the company was the official representative of the British crown in the Pacific Northwest, and it provided the only means of overland transportation to the region (the French Canadians likely did not consider charting an American ship from Boston which would have been the only other option).⁶ Although Simpson expressed his high regard for the competency of the Catholic clergy, the Governor declined this initial request for policy reasons. He was concerned about lending support to a Catholic mission in the Willamette Valley, which the HBC officials believed would likely become American territory when the international boundary was finally to be established.

³ Joseph Provencher to Willamette Settlers, June 8, 1835, cited in Francis Norbert Blanchet, *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon*, edited by Edward J. Kowrach (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1983), 44; Joseph Provencher to Joseph Signay, June 9, 1835, British Columbia Records, 36 CN, AAQ.

⁴ A. G. Morice, *A History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Musson Book Company, 1910), 95-112.

⁵ Provencher to Signay, June 9, 1835; Provencher to Signay, November 24, 1835, Red River Records, 330 CN, AAQ.

⁶ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 42; Francis N. Blanchet, "The Catholic Missionaries to Oregon," Mss. P-A 5, BAN, 3;

Simpson also wished to avoid sectarian conflicts between Catholic missionaries and the Methodists already established in the valley.⁷

The proposed French Catholic mission to Oregon did receive support from the senior HBC official in the Columbia Department, Chief Factor McLoughlin. In October 1837, McLoughlin boldly responded to Simpson's recommendation that HBC officials in London decline Provencher's request by offering a well-reasoned reply to Simpson's position, an unusual step since few men ever directly disagreed with Simpson. McLoughlin argued that rather than create problems for the HBC, Roman Catholic missionaries would enhance the company's position in the region because it would "prevent the American Missionaries acquiring influence over the Canadians." Further, McLoughlin asserted that if the HBC refused this request for priests, the company would injure its relationship with the Willamette settlers. When making this point, he noted that "the influence of the Company will be much diminished if they hear that you have refused to accommodate with a passage of a Missionary [sic]."⁸

Given Simpson's opposition to a Catholic mission in the Columbia Department, McLoughlin's advocacy was crucial.⁹ On direction from the HBC's governing board in London, George Simpson finally granted permission for the passage of Catholic missionaries to the Columbia Department in February 1838. Simpson's letter to Archbishop Signay, dated February 17, 1838, informed the prelate that the missionary priests should be ready to depart with the HBC's overland brigade that was scheduled to leave Lachine, Quebec on April 25,

⁷ Governor and Committee to John McLoughlin, January 25, 1837. A.6/24, folios 64d-65. HBCA, cited by E.E. Rich in John McLoughlin, *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver*, vol. 1 (London: Hudson's Bay Company Record Society, 1941), note#1, 202; E.E. Rich, *The Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, vol. 3, (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 682.

⁸ McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, October 31, 1837, in McLoughlin, *The Letters*, vol. 1, 202-203.

⁹ Rich, *Hudson's*, 682.

1838. Simpson granted his approval on the condition that Signay agree to establish the Catholic mission on the north side of the Columbia in the Cowlitz Valley.¹⁰ Locating the Catholic mission near this new company outpost would not only encourage former HBC employees to settle north of the Columbia River, but it would also serve as a means to head off possible conflicts between Catholic missionaries and Methodists in the Willamette Valley.¹¹ Signay agreed to these terms and immediately contacted Francis Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers, the two priests he had already appointed to the mission while the negotiations with the HBC were still under way. Blanchet would serve as Vicar General of the Columbia Mission, the bishop's official deputy in the newly created ecclesiastical district that encompassed the entire Oregon Country.¹²

The two pioneer Catholic priests combined both youth and experience. Francis Blanchet, at age 42, was the elder. Blanchet came from a farming family well known for providing sons for the Catholic clergy. Ordained in 1819, he had been a priest for nearly twenty years when he received his appointment as head of the new mission. In choosing Blanchet, Signay must have believed Blanchet's previous experiences prepared him for the difficult missionary work on the remote Pacific Slope. After an initial assignment to the cathedral of Quebec, Blanchet had been appointed as pastor of a remote Acadian parish, St. Antoine of Richibucto in New Brunswick. For the next seven years, Blanchet built up the stamina required for missionary work in an large, isolated parish whose dispersed

¹⁰ George Simpson to Joseph Signay, February 17, 1838, cited in Blanchet, *Sketches*, 45.

¹¹ Rich, *Hudson's*, 682-687.

¹² Blanchet, *Sketches*, 46; Patricia Brandt and Lillian A. Pereyra, *Adapting in Eden: Oregon Catholic Minority, 1838-1986* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2002), 3-4; Lucien Lemieux, *L'Établissement de la première province ecclésiastique au Canada, 1783-1844* (Montreal: Éditions Fides, 1968), 415-417; Wilfred Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest* (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1987), 26-31.

parishioners included French-speaking Acadians, English-speaking Irish settlers, and the aboriginal Mi'kmaq.

Following the New Brunswick post, Blanchet spent eleven years as a parish priest in the village of Cedars in the Montreal Diocese. This was a departure point for the fur trade brigades heading west, giving Blanchet the opportunity to become acquainted with the French Canadian voyageurs who provided a large portion of the HBC workforce in the first half of the nineteenth century.¹³ Historians have described Blanchet as "dour," "stern," "humorless," and "somewhat autocratic, even rigoristic like many French Canadian priests of his time."¹⁴ In contrast to Blanchet, Modeste Demers was a younger man of twenty-nine years of age at the time of his appointment to the Oregon mission. He had been ordained in 1836 and had spent the two years prior to being assigned to the Oregon mission assisting Provencher at the parish of Saint Boniface in Red River. While Blanchet had experience, Modeste brought his youth and enthusiasm as a young priest to the mission.¹⁵

Blanchet departed Montreal on May 3, 1838 with an HBC canoe brigade in the company of Chief Factor James Hargrave.¹⁶ Their first major destination was Red River, some 2,100 miles to the east. After an arduous trek, the party arrived at Red River on June 6, 1838. There Blanchet met Bishop Provencher and his future missionary companion, Demers. After Blanchet passed several weeks resting and visiting the local mission, Blanchet and Demers left Red River in another HBC canoe brigade on July 10, 1838. The missionaries

¹³ Brandt, *Adapting*, 4-5; Schoenberg, *History*, 28-2; Letitia Mary Lyons, *Francis Norbert Blanchet and the Founding of the Oregon Missions (1838-1848)* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1940).

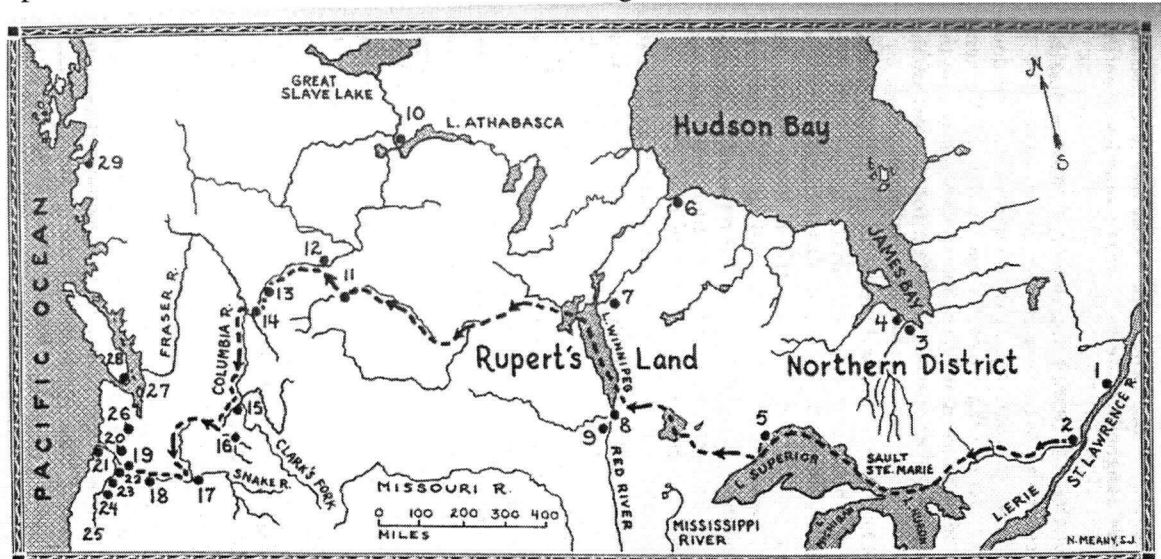
¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Brandt, *Adapting*, 4; Schoenberg, *History*, 32.

¹⁶ For Blanchet's contemporary account of the long overland trek from Montreal to Fort Vancouver, see his letter to Archbishop Signay, dated March 17, 1839, cited in Blanchet, *Sketches*, 52-62. See also Blanchet's first official mission report, dated January 1839, in Carl Landerholm, trans., *Notices and Voyages of the Famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1956), 1-9.

spent the next five months traversing the Canadian Prairies, crossing the Rocky Mountains, and descending the Columbia River before arriving at Fort Vancouver on November 24, 1838.¹⁷

Map 8. Route of Frs. Blanchet and Demers to Oregon, 1838



**ROUTE to the OREGON MISSION
of Frs. Francis Norbert Blanchet and
Modeste Demers + May 3 - Nov. 24, 1838**

- | | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Quebec | 4. Albany | 7. Norway House | 10. Fort Chipewyan | 17. Fort Walla Walla | 24. St. Paul |
| 2. Montreal | 5. Fort William | 8. Fort Garry | 11. Edmonton House | 18. The Dalles | 25. Willamette River |
| 3. Moose | 6. York Factory | 9. St. Boniface | 12. Fort Assiniboine | 19. Fort Vancouver | 26. Fort Nesqually |
| | | | 13. Jasper House | 20. Cowlitz | 27. Whidby Island |
| | | | 14. Boat Encampment | 21. Astoria | 28. Victoria |
| | | | 15. Fort Colville | 22. Portland | 29. Fort Simpson |
| | | | 16. Fort Spokane | 23. Oregon City | |

From Schoenberg, *History of the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest*.

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Throughout the long, strenuous voyage, Blanchet and Demers said mass, baptized scores of children, and performed several marriage ceremonies between company employees and their Indian or Métis spouses. Blanchet was able to perform the marriage because he had received papal authorization to grant couples in common law marriages special dispensations from Canon Law regulations regarding the publication of three wedding banns, the baptism

¹⁷ Harriet Munnick wrote a short biographical sketch of Augustin Rochon, one of the French Canadian voyageurs to accompany Blanchet and Demers to Fort Vancouver. See Harriet Munnick, "An Odor of Sanctity," *MCH* 8 (1962-1964): 12-15.

of non-Catholic spouses, and the impediment of “spiritual cognition” (the lack of religious training prior to baptism for adult converts). Blanchet had also received instructions to confirm the mutual consent of both parties before conveying the sacrament of marriage.¹⁸

Catholic Missionaries in the Willamette Valley

When Blanchet and Demers arrived at Fort Vancouver after their long overland journey, they were warmly greeted by not only Chief Trader James Douglas and the resident HBC employees (Chief Factor McLoughlin was then on leave in Canada and Europe), but also by a small delegation from the French-Indian settlement in the Willamette Valley. This small group included Joseph Gervais and Étienne Lucier, two of the oldest settlers in the community.¹⁹ In his memoir published several decades later, Blanchet recalled that a much larger contingent from the Willamette settlement had earlier traveled to Fort Vancouver to await the arrival of the missionaries. However, most had to return home after the missionaries were delayed following a drowning tragedy in the Columbia near The Dalles—the English name for the dangerous rapids known to French Canadians as *les Dalles de Mort*, “the flagstones of death.”²⁰

In his memoirs, Blanchet vividly recalled the first Catholic mass celebrated at Fort Vancouver, on Sunday November 25, 1838. For Blanchet, the French Canadian voyageurs employed by the HBC wept tears of joy upon hearing mass for the first time in “ten, fifteen,

¹⁸ Joseph Signay to Francis N. Blanchet, October 22, 1838, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA; Munnick, ed., *CCRPNW-V*, vol. 1, 1-17. See also Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 157.

¹⁹ Francis N. Blanchet, First Willamette Mission Report, 1839, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA. In his memoirs, Blanchet wrote three French Canadians waited at Fort Vancouver, Joseph Gervais and Etienne Lucier, and Pierre Bellique. See Blanchet, *Sketches*, 63.

²⁰ Blanchet, *Sketches*, 63.

and even twenty years.”²¹ From the missionary’s perspective, the French Canadians were delighted to have access to Catholic services and sacraments, especially for their children, and “were willing and ready to obey their pastors faithfully.”²² Still, Blanchet and Demers, faced a heady but necessary challenge: bringing the French Canadians and their families into line with proper Catholic practice and rooting out the influence of Protestant missionaries, as well as the cultural influences of the men’s Native wives. For these missionaries who were bent on a Catholic civilizing crusade, it seemed that fur trade society had exposed the French Canadians to “the most seducing temptations and perversions.”²³ With much important work to be done, Blanchet and Demers rested but two days before beginning their proselytizing labors in earnest.

They began by offering Catholic services and sacraments to the residents at Fort Vancouver, including mass, vespers, the singing of sacred songs, baptisms, and marriages. Blanchet and Demers took a census of the laborers’ multi-ethnic community, Kanaka Village located, outside Fort Vancouver. They also instituted a local mission at the fort that lasted for more than four months from late mid November 1838 to mid April 1839.²⁴ During that time, while Demers ran the affairs at Fort Vancouver, Blanchet made the first of several temporary missionary excursions to the Cowlitz settlement in the Cowlitz River Valley north of Fort Vancouver, and to the French-Indian settlement in the Willamette Valley. His stay in Cowlitz lasted seven days, December 12-18, 1838, and the first mission to the Willamette lasted thirty days, January 5-February 4, 1839.²⁵

²¹ Blanchet, *Sketches*, 71.

²² Blanchet, *Sketches*, 71.

²³ Blanchet, *Sketches*, 72.

²⁴ Blanchet, *Sketches*, 73; Munnick, *CCRPNW-V*, vol. 1, 17-19.

²⁵ Blanchet, *Sketches*, 77-78; Landerholm, *Notices*, 10-11; Munnick, *CCRPNW-V*, vol. 1, 19-33.

In Blanchet's report on his first sojourn in the Willamette Valley, the priest provided the first detailed descriptions of the French-Indian community in French Prairie as well as the religious activities of his mission. Although Blanchet was writing to his superior, Archbishop Signay, which colored his views of the event, there seems a genuine sense of joy on the part of the French Canadians and their Indian wives at the arrival of the missionary.²⁶ Indeed, this first Willamette mission was a community event. Women and children camped near the site of the small chapel the French Canadians had constructed on an upland prairie several miles south of Champoege (the future village of St. Paul). While the women and children remained at the mission site, the men would return to their farms from time to time. During his stay, Blanchet celebrated mass, taught prayers, songs, and catechism, and performed the sacraments of baptism, marriage, confession, and last rites. The enthusiasm Blanchet expressed in his report to Archbishop Signay indicates he appreciated the warm welcome he received from the settlers, especially their gesture of constructing a chapel prior to his arrival.²⁷

Blanchet was keen on exposing the women and children to Catholic devotional practices within the family, such as the recitation of prayers and the singing of canticles. Blanchet also initiated a program to improve the French language skills of the French-Indian children, particularly their reading ability. He was especially concerned about providing French language lessons because several of the métis children knew how to read some English after receiving instruction from the Methodists missionaries. There was only one semi-literate francophone in the community at the time, Pierre Stanislas Jacquet, a former

²⁶ Landerholm, *Notices*, 11, 13; Francis N. Blanchet, First Willamette Mission Report, 1839, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

²⁷ Blanchet, First Willamette Report; Landerholm, *Notices*, 11.

French seaman. Blanchet urged Jacquet to take up the task of teaching the women and children to read the printed prayers and canticles he had brought with him from Quebec.²⁸

During the first Willamette Mission, Blanchet, the former missionary to the Acadians and Mi'kmaq in New Brunswick, encountered an interethnic community somewhat different from his previous experience. His observations illustrate the settlement's syncretic culture. The French-Indian families, specifically the women and children, camped out in lodges and tents (a few also stayed in the small chapel). Their knowledge of French was so limited that Blanchet needed two interpreters, one translating into Chinook Jargon, the lingua franca of the lower Columbia, and the other into "Flathead," Blanchet's term for a Plateau language common in the settlement. In addition to describing these challenges, Blanchet noted that some of the French-Indian families had adopted the institution of aboriginal slavery, which, as I have noted, was a well-integrated component of Northwest Coast cultures.²⁹ He remarked that during the mission, the French Canadians returned to their farms from time to time "to prevent the waste of grain by their hired hands or native slaves."³⁰ Although Blanchet did not elaborate on his own views with regard to Indian slavery, he likely supported gradual emancipation. Several factors would have influenced such a position, including the Catholic doctrine on the potential for Indian conversion, Great Britain's abolition of slavery, and the need to "civilize" Native peoples as well as compensate slave owners.

²⁸ Blanchet, First Willamette Report, 5-6; Landerholm, *Notices*, 11-13. Evidence that Jacquet, like all of the other first generation French-speaking settlers, could not write his name can be found in the *CCRPNW-V* and *CCRPNW-SP*. See the entries for Pierre Stanislas Jacquet in *CCRPNW-V*, vol. 1, 27, 79, 115. Munnick and Warner have mistakenly identified two individuals with the surname Jacquet, "Pierre" and "Stanislas," without cross-referencing the register entries with the Blanchet writings. Munnick clarifies the point that there was one man named Pierre Stanislas Jacquet in the annotations, A-46.

²⁹ Donald Leland, *Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 309-312.

³⁰ Blanchet, First Willamette Mission Report, 1-5, 11-12; Landerholm, *Notices*, 11-13.

During the first Willamette mission and the second, which took place from May 8 through June 11, 1839, Blanchet did not undertake a serious effort to either convert or communicate with the local Kalapuyans groups living in the area.³¹ Since his time was limited, he instead concentrated his efforts on ministering to the French-Indian families. However, in an early report to Archbishop Signay, Blanchet expressed a disparaging view of the few Kalapuyans that he did encounter, describing them as "poor, lazy," and "inclined to thievery." As with the Methodists, the Kalapuyans demonstrated little interest in the Catholic missionary or his activities. Blanchet remarked that this attitude contrasted with that other Indian groups, such as the Clackamas Upper Chinookans and the Cowlitz.³² Although Blanchet quickly developed a negative attitude toward the Kalapuyans, they were not beyond his purview. One Sunday during the priest's second mission to the Willamette in the late spring of 1839, a group of them leading four or five slaves passed by the modest Catholic chapel.³³

Blanchet's perception of the Kalapuyans was predicated on commonly held assumptions amongst Catholic missionaries in North America. Like French missionaries in New France and the Great Lakes, and Catholic missionaries in the Far West, Blanchet believed in the superiority of agricultural settlements to the "wandering" lifeways of the Native hunter-gatherer societies.³⁴ The missionary was also influenced by the changing demography of the upper Willamette Valley in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Given the

³¹ Blanchet, First Willamette Mission Report; Francis N. Blanchet, Second Willamette Mission Report, 1839, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

³² Landerholm, *Notices*, 20-21.

³³ Blanchet, Second Willamette Report.

³⁴ Sherburne F. Cook and Cesare Marino, "Roman Catholic Missions in California and the Southwest," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 4, *History of Indian-White Relations*, edited by Wilcomb E. Washburn (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 472-480; Lawrence B. Palladino, *The Indian and White in the Northwest: A History of Catholicity in Montana*, 2nd ed, (Lancaster, PA: Wickersham Publishing, 1922). Claude Schaeffer, "The First Jesuit Mission to Flathead, 1840-1850: A Study in Culture Conflict," *PNQ* 3:3 (July 1937): 227-250

drastic drop in the Kalapuyan population several years earlier, and the continuing depopulation due to the effects of the intermittent fever, the surviving local Kalapuyans in the region were living alongside French-Indian families who were continuing to re-settle these Indians' territory. In two reports from 1839, Blanchet noted that the intermittent fever (*la fièvre tremblante*) continued to make inroads amongst the Native populations in the Willamette Valley.³⁵ Like the Methodists missionaries before him, Blanchet attributed the decline of the Native groups not to chance, but to providence and to the Natives' own conduct, writing that "the scourge of God, having stricken these unfortunate savages because of their abominable lives, returns to visit them every year and still carries off a certain number."³⁶ Blanchet himself felt confident enough about the changing demographical balance of the valley that he staked out a large land claim, before returning to Fort Vancouver at the close of the first Willamette mission. This claim would become the future site of the parish of St. Paul.³⁷

In addition to the Cowlitz mission previously approved by HBC officials, Blanchet also wanted to establish a permanent mission in the Willamette Valley as requested by the French-Indian community. In this endeavor, Blanchet received solid support from Bishop Provencher in Red River and Chief Factor McLoughlin. Provencher advised Blanchet that a mission in the Willamette Valley must not be "put aside" because it was the request of the Willamette settlers that had brought Blanchet to the region.³⁸ While waiting for approval from the HBC for a permanent mission in the valley, Provencher reasoned Blanchet could reside occasionally at the Willamette mission site and begin supporting the mission through

³⁵ Blanchet, Second Willamette Report, 7; Blanchet to Signay, October 5, 1839, 4.

³⁶ Landerholm, *Notices*, Notice No. 2, January 1840, 18.

³⁷ Blanchet, First Willamette Report, 1; Landerholm, *Notices*, 13.

³⁸ Joseph Provencher to Francis N. Blanchet, June 22, 1839, Blanchet Collection, APOA.

agricultural operations on the land claimed for the church. This was significant step since Provencher had urged Blanchet to become as self-supporting as possible.³⁹

Fortunately for Blanchet, McLoughlin was on leave that year, and when he met with the Governor and Committee of the HBC in London, McLoughlin convinced them of the wisdom of approving a French Canadian mission in the Willamette Valley, presumably using the same arguments he had previously made to North American HBC Governor George Simpson in the fall of 1837.⁴⁰ At Fort Vancouver on October 9, 1839, Blanchet received a letter from Chief Trader James Douglas, then acting head of the Columbia Department, that HBC officials no longer were opposed to a Catholic mission in the Willamette Valley. The Vicar General thereupon assigned Demers to the Cowlitz mission and set out himself for the Willamette the next day. Blanchet and Demers passed the winter of 1839-40 at their prospective missions.⁴¹

In establishing a permanent mission in the Willamette Valley amongst the French-Indian families, Blanchet could embark on a more regularized program of evangelization while also stabilizing the position of the Catholic missionaries in the region. Although the missionaries enjoyed the hospitality and support of Douglas, and later McLoughlin, at Fort Vancouver, the Willamette mission held several distinct advantages. Removed from direct dependence upon HBC officials and located within a supportive community, Blanchet gained a measure of political independence.⁴² From this perspective, Blanchet would also be in a more strategic position to ensure that the local French-Indian families came under the

³⁹ Provencher to Blanchet, June 22, 1839.

⁴⁰ Francis N. Blanchet to Joseph Signay, March 3, 1840, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA; Blanchet, "The Catholic Missionaries of Oregon," 1878, Mss. P-A 5, BAN, 4. McLoughlin had earlier indicated to Bishop Provencher that he would make a request in Quebec for missionaries amongst the Ursuline convent in Quebec City, headed by his sister. See Provencher to Blanchet, June 22, 1838.

⁴¹ Blanchet, "Catholic Missionaries," 4; Blanchet, *Sketches*, 91; Landerholm, *Notices*, 25.

⁴² Blanchet to Joseph Signay, March 3, 1840, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

influence of the Catholic Church rather than the nearby Methodists missionaries. Blanchet's land claim for the mission and its location amongst the French-Indian families also provided access to subsistence resources and financial support. In addition to supplying the labor and materials needed to build the St. Paul mission church, the families also donated a portion of their grain surplus, the common form of currency in the settlement, to the mission collection (known as *le denier du culte*).⁴³

Blanchet was particularly worried about the friendly relations between the French-Indian families and the Methodist missionaries, whom Blanchet viewed as heretics who were actively trying to lead the French Canadians away from the Catholic Church. Blanchet was also concerned about the Methodists spreading heretical teachings amongst the local Native groups. During his early years at St. Paul, Blanchet made several missionizing trips to the Clackamas and Clowewalla, Upper Chinookans on the lower Willamette, in addition to other efforts outside the Willamette Valley. However, the priest was always troubled by the thought that in his absence, the French-Indian families in the Willamette Valley would not only renew close ties with the Methodists, but also return to practices that Blanchet deemed improper. In this sense, Blanchet, like the Methodists, experienced a conflict between serving as missionary to the Indians and serving the French-Indian community.⁴⁴

After establishing a permanent mission in the Willamette Valley in the fall of 1839, Blanchet continued his work amongst the French-Indian population, saying mass and providing instruction in literacy, church doctrine, prayers, and sacred songs. He also immediately turned his attention to those aspects of community life that he was accustomed to dealing with in Lower Canada: social welfare, moral behavior, and social relations. At the

⁴³ Blanchet to Signay, March 3, 1840.

⁴⁴ Francis N. Blanchet to Modeste Demers, September 1, 1840, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

mission, he began accepting orphaned Indian and French-Indian children, thereby tackling a community need that had been present from the inception of the settlement, one that previously been handled by the Methodists.⁴⁵ In the spring of 1840 he wrote to Archbishop Signay about his plans for the purchase of a farm next to the church. Blanchet wanted to use the farm for the benefit of the local community: "it will serve to generate income for the support of the men, women, children, widows, orphans and all the Natives as for the Canadians." Blanchet was convinced that without some means to support a church-sponsored social welfare program, newly widowed spouses and children would "fall back" into an Indian lifestyle.⁴⁶

As the official representative of the Roman Catholic Church in the Columbia Department, Blanchet confronted various social and cultural norms of the fur trade, behaviors that did not correspond to accepted social behavior as outlined by the Church in Quebec, and which Blanchet himself considered personally distasteful. A major concern for the Catholic missionary was the issue of country marriages. Blanchet and Demers were both familiar with the long-established convention in the fur trade (*le mariage à la façon du pays*), which involved both short-term and long-term relationships between fur traders and Native and métis women.⁴⁷ Moreover, Blanchet had received papal authorizations to grant dispensations for the impediments to the sacrament of marriage that involved non-Catholic spouses, the

⁴⁵ Blanchet to Signay, March 3, 1840.

⁴⁶ Blanchet, Third Willamette Mission Report, March 19, 1840, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

⁴⁷ For discussions of cross-cultural marriage in the North American fur trade, see: Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); John Mack Faragher, "The Custom of the County: Cross-cultural Marriage in the Far Western Fur Trade," in *Western Women: Their Land, Their Lives*, edited by Lillian Schlissel, Vicki L. Ruiz, and Janice Monk (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 199-216; Jacqueline Peterson, "The People in Between: Indian-White Marriage and the Genesis of Metis Society and Culture in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1830," (Ph.D diss., University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1981); Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Tanis Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996); Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*.

inability to post three banns of marriage, and a lack of religious training. These authorizations gave Blanchet and Demers flexibility that many earlier Catholic missionaries in North American had lacked, and thus made it easier for the missionaries to quickly establish generally positive relations with the French-Indian families in the Willamette River and elsewhere.⁴⁸

Upon their arrival in the Pacific Northwest in the fall of 1838, both Blanchet and Demers informed the French-Indian families in the Columbia region that they should adhere to Catholic Church regulations regarding marriage and sexual relations. Blanchet and Demers insisted that the French Canadian men and their Indian spouses live separately until the women and children could be baptized, and sacrament of marriage performed. As the Catholic Church records illustrate, Blanchet and Demers quickly set to work baptizing the Native spouses of former and current fur trade personnel, along with their French-Indian children. Often the children were baptized the same day as their mothers. The couples would then be married, and the children officially recognized by their French Canadian fathers. The church registry of baptisms and marriages document a willingness of nearly all the Catholic settlers and their Native wives to formalize their marriage bonds in accordance with church practice. Over the course of the month-long Willamette mission in January 1839, Blanchet married twenty-five couples. These included long-term couples in the settlement, such as Joseph Gervais and Marguerite Clatsop, and Étienne Lucier and Josette Nouité, more recently acquainted couples such Charles Rondeau and Agathe Kalapuya Dupati, and the Irishman German Horagan and Nancy Kalapuya (Tualatin).⁴⁹

⁴⁸ For an example of the inability of early Catholic missionaries to adapt to cross-cultural marriages between Frenchmen and Indian women, see Sleeper-Smith, 16-17.

⁴⁹ Munnick, *CCRPNW-V*, vol. 1, 25-33.

When confronted with instances of polygamy (or polygyny), Blanchet insisted that Catholic settlers in the Willamette Valley separate themselves from any additional wives.⁵⁰ He was particularly concerned about men who had left behind a wife in Lower Canada. One such case arose during the First Willamette Mission in January 1838. Blanchet did not record the names of the individuals involved, however. The priest wrote to his superiors that he was successful in separating the couple until he could verify that the man's first wife in Lower Canada had passed away. Unfortunately, since no corroborating evidence has come to light, Blanchet's success in this instance must remain an open question. What is perhaps most striking in this fragmentary tale is Blanchet's own lack of reflection on the emotional impact of his insistence that the couples separate until the proper requirements for a church wedding could be met.

During Blanchet's second mission to the French-Indian settlement in the Willamette Valley, he encountered marked resistance from one individual in particular, Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay dit Dupati. Desportes McKay's comportment was especially troublesome for Blanchet because the French-Algonquin proved himself an unapologetic polygamist. At the time, Desportes McKay had at least two female companions, one of whom may have originally held the status of slave, and perhaps another wife was still alive in Canada. The two country wives were Eugenie (Jane) Wanakske, daughter of a Clowewalla headman, and Marguerite, a Kalapuyan woman.⁵¹ During the summer of 1839, Blanchet attempted to separate Desportes McKay from the two women until such a time as Blanchet could verify that French-Algonquin's first wife had died, and that he had committed himself to a single

⁵⁰ For a later, second-hand account of Blanchet's effort to root out polygamy, see Samuel Clarke's remark that L.H. Poujade, the son of French emigrant Jean Pierre Poujade (1790-1875), related how Nicholas Montour told Poujade that "after the arrival of Father Blanchet they [the French Canadian and French-Indian men] were allowed to have but one wife." S. A. Clarke, *Pioneer Days*, vol. 2 (Portland: J.K. Gill Co., 1905), 592.

⁵¹ For a discussion of the Catholic Church Records on Desportes McKay, his wives, and children, see Chapter 3.

spouse. Nonetheless, Desportes McKay was unresponsive to Blanchet's efforts. He would abandon neither Eugenie nor Marguerite because he had children with both women and because, as he told Blanchet, "his servant was his."⁵²

Although Desportes McKay allowed all his children by Eugenie (Jane) Wanakske, Marguerite Kalapuya, and Catherine Chehalis (a deceased companion) to be baptized at the first Willamette Mission in January 1839, he did not formally marry in the Church until 1843, when he wed Eugenie Wanakske. It would appear that by that time his relationship with Marguerite Kalapuya had ended, by death or some other means, i.e., he abandoned her or she returned to her native community. However, given his attitudes toward plural marriage and the observation that Marguerite Kalapuya may have been a slave, it appears more likely that she passed away before he formally married Eugenie Wanakske in the Church.

Later in April of 1840, Archbishop Signay advised Blanchet to take a more compassionate approach on the question of country marriages between cradle Catholics and Natives. Signay explained that:

If the Indian women [*infidèles*] married according to the custom of the country present themselves to be admitted amongst the catechumens and believe in good faith that their marriages are valid, you should leave them alone and not demand that they separate. A practice to the contrary could have the effect of making the couples who are genuinely married separate forever.⁵³

Blanchet did prove more adaptable to existing social conditions amongst the settler population in the Willamette settlement than the Methodist missionaries. In addition to

⁵² Blanchet, Second Willamette Report, 1839.

⁵³ Joseph Signay to Francis. N. Blanchet, April 10, 1840, Blanchet Collection, APOA. Signay argued that the impediment to marriage between Christians and non-Christians was initially customary. Drawing on history, Signay argued that in the early Christianity, marriages between Christians and non-Christians was valid. It was not until the fifth century A.D. that the marriages were declared invalid by the Roman emperors and until the twelfth century that such marriages were officially repudiated by the Catholic Church. From this Signay, concluded that a Christian man married to a non-Christian woman (*une infidèle*) who is in good standing in the Church is not living in sin. Signay further concluded that a missionary passing quickly in a region could leave these married couples as they were if the priest believed that they would not profit from their situation. The missionary could theoretically validate these marriages in such circumstances.

Blanchet's willingness to marry French-Indian couples on short notice—due to his papal authorizations and his recognition of pre-existing common law marriages—the vicar general developed proficiency in Chinook Jargon, which allowed Blanchet to communicate more effectively with the women and children of the French-Indian community. Blanchet also developed a visual teaching tool for Christian evangelization, *l'échelle historique*, later known as the Catholic Ladder, during his second Willamette mission in the summer of 1839. This visual narrative, a type of memory aid, was based on the "sahale stick" ("stick from heaven" in Chinook Jargon), which Blanchet had first used during his mission to Cowlitz Prairie in the spring of 1839. The Catholic Ladder relied on a notation system supplemented with images that represented the history of the world and the development of Christianity. It proved popular with the members of the French-Indian community in the Willamette Valley, and later with segments of the region's Indian population interested in the religious traditions of their French Canadian kin relations.⁵⁴

While Blanchet made some accommodations to local conditions in the Willamette Valley, he remained committed to regulating moral behavior and instituting regularized religious observance amongst the settlers. Particularly distressing to Blanchet was what he viewed as the tendency of French Canadians in the fur trade to adopt Indian lifeways. In his report on the third Willamette mission, from October 10, 1838 to March 19, 1840, the Catholic missionary complained that "in the service, there are old servants, single and married, in charge of children who live like savages." Blanchet wondered "how many Canadian children have been abandoned amongst the Savages by their *malheureux*

⁵⁴ Philip M. Hanley, *History of the Catholic Ladder*, edited by Edward J. Kowrach (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1993). For a discussion of the oldest known Catholic Ladder in existence created by Francis N. Blanchet, see Kris A. White and Janice St. Laurent, "Mysterious Journey: The Catholic Ladder of 1840," *OHQ* 97:1 (Spring 1997): 70-90.

fathers?"⁵⁵ Blanchet was not only perturbed about what he perceived as a lackadaisical attitude on the part of the French Canadian fathers regarding their Christian duty to educate their children. He was also upset about what he perceived as a *laissez faire* attitude on the part of the HBC since he believed that the company wanted to relieve itself (*s'en débarrasser*) from any responsibility for retiring company laborers.⁵⁶ Blanchet's distress at this state of affairs mirrors the reactions of the Methodist ministers upon their arrival in the Pacific Northwest. Blanchet, like his Protestant counterparts, believed that depriving the Indian women and their interethnic children of Christian salvation was not only a serious injustice, but also demonstrated a lack of moral rectitude.⁵⁷ However, he disagreed with the Methodists on the content and form Christian salvation would take—Blanchet believing in the absolute necessity of the sacraments provided by Catholic clergy.

In response to his attempts to instruct the French-Indian families and inculcate a commitment to religious practice, Blanchet encountered both accommodation and resistance from community members. In addition to working to inculcate piety amongst the settlers, Blanchet trained members of the community who would be able to instruct the children on religious matters (prayers, songs, and catechism), as well as reading and writing. One such young teacher was the youth Jean Baptiste Jeaudoin, who eagerly began teaching community members after receiving instruction from Blanchet. Blanchet informed his superiors that Jeaudoin would spend his spare time, usually on Sundays, teaching the Catholic Ladder to the local settlers.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Francis N. Blanchet, Third Willamette Report, 1840.

⁵⁶ Blanchet to Signay, March 3, 1840.

⁵⁷ Blanchet to Signay, March 3, 1840.

⁵⁸ Blanchet, Third Willamette Report, 1840.

During the Second Willamette Mission in the summer of 1839, one middle-aged métis couple, Marie Anne Humpherville, age 47, and Nicholas Montour, age 57, demonstrated enough of this zeal to be mentioned in Blanchet's report. Humpherville, a French-Cree woman, and Montour, a former NWC and HBC clerk, had recently retired to the Willamette Valley after a Montour's long career in the fur trade. In their new community, they were eager to learn the Catholic catechism alongside their children. During the mission, Montour, assisted with the daily mass, while Humpherville, "whose faith was intense," made the necessary steps to become a Catholic. After Montour's abjuration of faith and Humpherville's baptism, Blanchet married them at the mission of St. Paul in French Prairie.⁵⁹

Although Blanchet employed a variety of methods to gain a measure of control over French-Indian community, he recorded a few instances of resistance to his actions on the part of women in the settlement. In the fall of 1840, Blanchet wrote Demers about a conflict he had with the wife of one of the Poirer brothers, Basile or Toussaint. Blanchet harangued the woman, either Catherine Clatsop or Louise Moatwas, for an unexplained reason. Since the woman did not appreciate the priest's treatment, she insisted that the couple return to her native territory, which they did.⁶⁰ That same fall, Blanchet also complained about the obstinate nature of Suzanne Tawakon, the wife of Willamette Mission verger Amable Petit. Apparently Tawakon wanted a greater say in the running of domestic arrangements at the mission. As a result of this dispute, Tawakon and Petit moved back to Fort Vancouver for a time. Demonstrating a measure of sexism if not misogyny, Blanchet remarked that Suzanne

⁵⁹ Blanchet, Second Willamette Report; Munnick, *CCRPNW-V*, vol. 1, 42.

⁶⁰ Blanchet to Demers, September 1, 1840.

Tawakon “debauched” Amable Petit, pressuring him to turn his back on the mission at that time.⁶¹

The limited qualitative sources on French Prairie in the late 1830s, combined with the Catholic Church registers kept by Francis N. Blanchet, illustrate not only the level of religious practice, but also provide a window into the social dynamics of this bi-cultural settler community. As demonstrated in the attitudes of Jean Baptiste Jeaudoin, Nicolas Montour, and Marie Anne Humpherville, religious practice and religious education could be a positive experience for both men and women, providing both a sense of purpose and a connection to the local community, especially in times of significant social change.⁶² Indeed, the willingness of the great majority of the French-Indian families to solemnize their unions in church weddings during Blanchet’s First Willamette Mission suggests that the local church, built by the settlers themselves, was becoming a central gathering place for the families. Located midway between the farms at Champoege in the northern part of French Prairie, and the Gervais-Clatsop farm in the southern section, the St. Paul mission was an institution that truly belonged to the French-Indian families—a contrast to the American Methodist mission.

However, the arrival of Father Blanchet was not without incident for the local settlers. The resistance of Jean Baptiste Desportes McKay and several Native women to Blanchet’s attempts to regulate sexual relations and gender norms highlights the limits of Blanchet’s authority within the community. Not unlike Catholic parishioners and clergy in Lower Canada and the French-Indian settlements in the Great Lakes and Lower Missouri region,

⁶¹ Blanchet to Demers, September 1, 1840.

⁶² For an in-depth discussion of this dynamic within a Protestant missionary setting, based on a more extensive documentary record, see Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tshimsian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 105-127.

Blanchet and the French Prairie colonists sometimes held differing notions about acceptable social behavior, the role of women, marriage practices, and a clergyman's level of control over the local community. Although Blanchet was able to adapt his approach to local conditions, he too remained committed to establishing a leading role for himself within the community, so as to affect the acculturation of the French-Indian families and strengthen their commitment to the Catholic faith. This tension between Blanchet's pursuit of social influence and his adaptation to local conditions would remain a constant through the 1840s.

In his early years in the Columbia Department, Blanchet made his most concentrated efforts to evangelize various Indian groups in the Pacific Northwest. However, his relations with the local Kalapuyan groups in the Willamette Valley remained sporadic at best. He did not undertake to missionize the Kalapuyans for several reasons. Like the Methodists before him, Blanchet encountered local Kalapuyans who expressed an occasional willingness to listen to his teachings, but displayed little interest in Christian conversion. In his letters and reports back to Quebec, Blanchet vaunted the few times that Kalapuyans would listen to his teachings or attend mass because these were exceptional incidents, rather than regular events. Sometime in the fall of 1839 or early spring of 1840, Blanchet spoke to a group of Kalapuyans who were hosting a "foreign" Native at their village located near the "prairie of Xavier Laderoute" in the Champoege area. Blanchet noted that:

They appeared to listen with attention to the explanation of the ladder, and promised to come to the chapel in good weather. These were the head-hearted ones (*les endurcis*) who had never wanted to listen to the Methodist missionaries. Some amongst them have come to the chapel since that time. The truth of the temple appeared agreeable to them. They have promised to come on Sunday.⁶³

⁶³ Blanchet, Third Willamette Report.

Although the group of Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans living near Laderoute appeared willing to attend services at the Catholic mission for a time, Blanchet did not report further progress on converting the Kalapuyans to Catholicism. Rather, what appears in Blanchet's writings are occasional instances of deathbed conversions of individual Indians that were not uncommon in missionaries writings of the nineteenth century. The French Canadians and their Indian wives apparently played a role in the deathbed conversions that Blanchet recorded. In the first Willamette mission report, dated March 1840, Blanchet recorded such an event at the passing of one local Indian man:

"An old Native in service to Amable Arquette had come once to the mission; he refused to return, and even to listen to the instruction that his relative, the Canadian's wife [Marguerite Chinook], gave with the aid of the *échelle historique* [the Catholic Ladder] to the people of the house. Eh bien! Sickness took him; he saw himself going when he asked what one sees upon dying; the response made him shiver. He wanted to be buried with the French; he asked the priest to baptize him. He received it after preliminary instruction. His faith made him say that he was no longer a Savage, that he had rejected everything, that he was French . . . It was at four o'clock in the afternoon that he died in good spirits."⁶⁴

Although Blanchet wrote to his superiors in Quebec in celebratory terms about these supposed conversions, recent studies in the history of missionary-Native encounters suggests a much more complex historical reality. As Larry Cebula and Susan Neylan have argued, Indian responses to Christian missionaries were influenced by the degree of social changes that Native peoples experienced as a result of Euro-American colonization. The incorporation Christianity into existing indigenous belief systems allowed Natives to access any perceived benefits offered by the missionaries, while also providing a means to resist some of the changes being forced on Indian groups by the various Euro-American colonizers

⁶⁴ Blanchet, Third Willamette Report.

(missionaries, settlers, government officials).⁶⁵ Thus, the desire of some ill and dying Kalapuyans to seek the assistance of Father Blanchet demonstrates not so much a conversion to Christianity as openness to the advantages, especially the spirit power, of the Catholic religion. Like the young Kalapuyans who sought refuge with the Methodist missionaries, the few Kalapuyans who welcomed Blanchet's aid would have seen Blanchet's presence as an addition to, rather than as a replacement for, existing Kalapuyan religious practice.

Catholic-Methodist Relations

The arrival of Blanchet had an important impact on social relations between the Methodist missionary and their French-Indian neighbors. Immediately after his arrival, he challenged the nature of social relations that were well established between the two groups. It is clear from the original documents left by both the Methodist and Catholic missionaries that cultural, institutional, and personal differences separated the two camps. Each viewed the other with a strong degree of antipathy, not uncommon for the mid-nineteenth century.⁶⁶ For the Methodists, Blanchet was an unwanted interloper, arriving where the Methodists had established the first Indian mission in the region and had been offering religious, social, and educational services to the nearby community. In addition, given their populist traditions and theological background, the Methodists did not appreciate Blanchet's air of moral and intellectual superiority. They viewed him as haughty, dogmatic, anti-democratic, and autocratic. Thus, although the initial conflict between Blanchet and the Methodists certainly concerned theology and religious practice, it was equally about the presence of a Catholic

⁶⁵ Neylan, *The Heavens*; Larry Cebula, *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

⁶⁶ Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Nancy Lusignan Schultz, *Fire & Roses: The Burning of the Charlestown Convent, 1834* (New York: Free Press, 2000).

clergymen who challenged the Methodists for a leadership role vis-à-vis the French-Indian community.

From Blanchet's perspective, the Methodists' work amongst the French-Indian community was not be lauded but condemned because they clearly intended to lead the French-Indian families away from the true religion of their mother Church, and convert them to Protestant heresies. In this sense, Blanchet viewed his initial ministry in the Willamette Valley as defensive. Blanchet was also very critical of what he perceived as the Methodists' lack of intellectual training and doctrinal rigor, their limited knowledge of the history of Christianity, and their poor performance in missionizing the local Indians. Blanchet perceived the American Methodists as particularly arrogant and illiberal. For all their talk of democracy and freedom, he found their conduct hypocritical because they were intolerant towards those who differed in matters of opinion and faith. Moreover, coming from the ultramontane tradition in Quebec, Blanchet found their more populist political traditions troubling. In contrast to the Gallicanist tradition within Roman Catholicism, which gave a greater role to national church leaders and local customs, the ultramontane approach emphasized allegiance to the pope, the chain of hierarchical command, and strict observance of Catholic teachings. The anti-religious sentiments of the French Revolution and the social disruptions caused by the Canadian Rebellions of 1837-38, were striking examples to French Canadian Catholic Church officials about the dangers of overturning more traditional forms of representative government—such as the British parliamentary system then in place in Upper and Lower Canada.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Alan Greer, *The Patriots*, 233-235; Ralph Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism, 1789-1914* (New York: Routledge, 1989); 60-61; Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 250-255.

During the first two years of Blanchet's tenure in the Willamette Valley, several incidents arose between the Methodists and the French-Indian community that seriously tested social relations in the settlements. These incidents, which have received cursory treatment in previous historical narratives, were documented by Francis N. Blanchet in his letters. Aside from Letitia Mary Lyons, who studied Blanchet's role in the founding of the Catholic mission in the Oregon territory, American scholars have made limited use of the Blanchet collection because the vast majority of the documents are written in French.⁶⁸ This is unfortunate because Blanchet's letters offer the best documentation of the perspective on the French-Indian families—who left almost no written records of their own because they were illiterate—concerning three incidents that took place between 1838 and 1840. These disturbances illustrate the strained nature of Catholic-Methodist relations at the time as well as tensions within the French-Indian community itself. They reveal dynamics of conflict, cooperation, misunderstanding, and the struggle to address civil affairs despite sectarian and cultural differences between the two settler groups. The first was the controversy that developed over the Farnham Memorial of 1839; the second incident involved a conflict over the funeral of Cyrus Shepard early in 1840; and the final event was a series of controversies surrounding the Methodist missionary doctor, Elijah White, over the summer and fall of 1840.

In the fall of 1839, the first detachment of a small group of Americans, originally known as the Peoria Party, reached the Lower Columbia River region via the overland route

⁶⁸ Letitia Mary Lyons, *Francis Norbert Blanchet and the Founding of the Oregon Missions* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1940). Although Robert J. Loewenberg cites the Francis N. Blanchet Collection in his bibliography for *Equality on the Frontier*, he largely relies on translations included in Letitia Lyons' study.

that would later become known as the Oregon Trail.⁶⁹ A leading member of this group was the former Vermont lawyer and Illinois settler, Thomas Jefferson Farnham. While visiting the Willamette Valley in late October 1839, Farnham, an ardent nationalist, talked with the local American settlers about “their fatherland” and “the probability that its laws would be extended over them.”⁷⁰ The settlers expressed resentment toward the HBC, complaining of their great dependence on the company and what they perceived as its domineering position over them. According to Farnham, he advised the settlers to draw up a petition to the U.S. Congress outlining their grievances, which they proceeded to do. Various accounts suggest that Dr. William Bailey, and two members of the Methodist mission, David Leslie and Dr. Elijah White, collaborated in drafting the petition and circulating it amongst the Willamette settlers in late October 1839.⁷¹ Sixty-seven colonists signed their name or affixed their mark to the missive, including more than two dozen formerly connected with HBC. In Farnham’s version of event, the British subjects who signed the missive, such as the French Canadians, were desirous of becoming American citizens.⁷² Farnham subsequently sent the petition, also known as the Farnham Memorial, to the U.S. from Honolulu, and Senator Lewis Linn of Missouri officially presented it to Congress in early June 1840.

The Farnham Memorial of 1839 contained some of the similar arguments for the U.S. annexation of the Oregon Country that were contained in the Edwards Memorial of 1838. It

⁶⁹ For the overland narratives of the Peoria Party, see LeRoy R Hafen and Ann Hafen, eds., *To the Rockies and Oregon, 1839-1842* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1955). The remaining members of the Peoria Party reached Fort Vancouver in two groups during the spring and summer of 1840.

⁷⁰ Thomas J. Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, vol. 2, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1906), 23.

⁷¹ Bancroft, *Oregon*, vol., 230-236; Farnham, 23; Francis N. Blanchet to John McLoughlin, February 12, 1840, copy enclosed in Francis N. Blanchet to A.M.A. Blanchet, February, 8, 1841, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA. The petition, signed “David Leslie and others,” is registered as *Sen. Doc 514.*, 26 Cong., 1st sess., June 4, 1840. A hand-written copy can be found in the HBC Archives, Fort Vancouver Correspondence-Outward, B.223/b/25.

⁷² Farnham, 23.

pointed out that the region was rich in natural resources, strategically located for trade with the Pacific, and the settlers were in need of formal government administration in order to protect their lives and their property. However, this second petition also contained a heightened level of American nationalism, which led the authors of the letter to openly criticize the British government and its representative, the HBC. This was an approach that Jason Lee and Phillip Edwards had avoided in the petition of 1838. The authors of the Farnham Memorial specifically warned Congress about the British exploring expedition, commanded by Captain Edward Belcher, which had surveyed the region, and about the supposed machinations by the British government and the HBC to establish unilateral sovereignty over the Oregon Country north of the Columbia River (present-day Washington State), and profit from its natural resources.

When news of the contents of the Farnham Memorial reached Chief Factor McLoughlin in February 1840, he was understandably distressed by what he perceived as the ungrateful, slanderous accusations penned by American settlers, whom he had long assisted. He was also disappointed by the participation of the French Canadians. In his correspondence with McLoughlin regarding the petition, Blanchet outlined the French Canadians' predicament. Since the French Canadians relied on an oral description of the text because they could not read, they claimed to have been misled by the Americans. According to the Canadians, the Americans informed them that the Farnham Memorial was a restatement of the Edwards Memorial of 1838, which McLoughlin had not opposed. David Leslie had even told Charles Rondeau that there would be no harm in signing the petition.⁷³ However, the Farnham Memorial caused enough tension between the French Canadian settlers and HBC officials to lead a group of eighteen colonists to agree to write letter to McLoughlin

⁷³ Francis N. Blanchet to McLoughlin, February 12, 1840.

explaining the misunderstanding. They also emphasized the valuable assistance they had received from the company, which had allowed them to establish farms in the Willamette Valley. McLoughlin's Scotts-Chippewa stepson, Thomas McKay, signed his name, and seventeen settlers made their mark, including all of the leading French Canadians.⁷⁴

In a letter from Pierre C. Pambrun, the HBC clerk in charge of Fort Nez Percés, to Father Blanchet, Pambrun criticized the French Canadian settlers for allowing themselves to be persuaded by the Americans into signing the Farnham Memorial. Pambrun echoed Blanchet's earlier comments to McLoughlin that the Americans had simply used the Canadians for their own interests, noting that the Canadians should have consulted with HBC officials before signing the petition.⁷⁵ It was Pambrun's opinion that HBC officials were more concerned about the welfare of the French-Indian families in the Willamette Valley than were the Americans. However, it is important to consider whether the French Canadians would have had reason to question the motives and testimony of the authors of the Farnham petition. From all accounts, the French Canadian settlers were on positive terms with most, if not all, of Americans, including the Methodist missionaries. Moreover, all of the settler groups had previously cooperated on several community initiatives, and the leading Canadian settlers had supported the Edwards Memorial of 1838. Seen from this perspective, the French Canadians would have decided to sign the Farnham petition in accordance with their long-standing approach to relations with their American neighbors. They were determined to maintain ties with them, as it appeared likely that the U.S. would annex the Oregon Country south of the Columbia. Since the Edwards Memorial had not harmed their relationship with HBC officials, the French-Indian community thought that this new petition would allow them

⁷⁴ Joseph Delard, et al. to John McLoughlin, March 18, 1840, Fort Vancouver Correspondence-Outward, B.223/b/25, HBCA.

⁷⁵ Pierre C. Pambrun to Francis N. Blanchet, May 6, 1840, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

to retain a measure of influence amongst the American settlers without any adverse consequences. If the French Canadian male settlers were largely unfamiliar with the potency of American nationalism before this incident, they were not so after it. Indeed, they learned a valuable lesson by it. When more and more Americans began to arrive in Oregon in the early 1840s, they would take a more cautious approach when it came to trusting the motives of Americans advocating for civil governance. Father Blanchet was himself ever wary of the local Americans and their objectives.

Upon Blanchet's arrival, one of his major objectives was to dissuade the families from attending the Methodists' religious services, since from Blanchet's perspective, these services exposed the French-Indian families to Protestant heresies. Susan (Downing) Shepard, the wife of mission teacher Cyrus Shepard, remarked on a shift in social relations between the communities a little less than a year after Blanchet first arrived in the Northwest. Her view of the changed relations was colored by her own antipathy towards Catholicism, which she shared with the other Methodist missionaries. Writing about a recent Methodist mission meeting in a letter dated, September 15, 1839, Shepard wrote that it was "quite a rare thing to see the French people out to meting since there [sic] priest came here." She believed that Blanchet had "forbidden" the French-Indian families from calling on the Methodist because they did not visit the missionaries "as frequently as formerly with there familyes [sic]."⁷⁶ In Shepard's opinion, the French-Indian families were "ignorant" for following Blanchet's advice and allowing him to take up a leadership role in their community. She was particularly offended by the French-Indians' "foolish" behavior of permitting themselves to be re-baptized and re-married by Blanchet, after Jason Lee had previously performed these

⁷⁶ Susan (Downing) Shepard to Ann Lloyd, September 15, 1839, Mss. 1219, Oregon Historical Society (OHS), Portland.

services. Shepard's letter suggests that she, and perhaps the other Methodists at the mission, believed that the change in relations between the two communities demonstrated that the French-Indian families, and especially Blanchet, had unneighborly attitudes.

A few months after Shepard made her comments, tensions increased sharply between the two groups. The event that sparked a worsening in inter-community relations was the death of her husband, Cyrus Shepard. He had long suffered from scrofula (tuberculosis of the lymph glands), and in the spring of 1839, the disease attacked his right knee joint. He suffered in pain throughout the summer. During the fall his condition so deteriorated that by November, he was being bled on a regular basis to relieve the pressure on the joint. On December 11, 1839, Dr. Elijah White amputated Cyrus Shepard's leg. However, this failed to stop Shepard's decline, and he passed away on December 31, 1839.⁷⁷

In one of his last letters, addressed to Methodist missionaries stationed at The Dalles (Wascopam) station, Shepard expressed gratitude for the sympathy shown him by the "French, English, Americans . . . [and] poor Indians."⁷⁸ Accordingly, the Methodists invited all the settlers to attend Shepard's funeral in early January 1840. Upon receiving an invitation, a representative from the French Canadians consulted Father Francis Blanchet about his views on the French-Indian families attending the funeral at the Methodist mission. Blanchet advised the French Canadian that the Catholic families must not attend the funeral. The priest reasoned that it would be improper for the Catholic families to attend the funeral because the Methodist missionaries, including Cyrus Shepard, had blackened the name of the Roman Catholic faith with malicious slander. Additionally, Shepard himself had beaten a

⁷⁷ Francis N. Blancher to Modest Demers, January 13, 1840, APOA; Z. A. Mudge, *The Missionary Teacher: A Memoir of Cyrus Shepard* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1848), 207-211; Gustavus Hines, *Oregon: Its History, Condition and Prospects* (Buffalo: Geo. H. Derby, 1851), 35.

⁷⁸ Mudge, 208-209.

French-Indian child who had dared to declare that the beating did not stop him from loving the religion of his deceased father.⁷⁹

Unfortunately for Blanchet, rather than communicate his position directly to the Methodists, or negotiate with them about Catholic attendance, he apparently left the matter to the French Canadians. The French Canadian who had sought Blanchet's council informed the Methodists that Blanchet had forbidden the Catholics from attending the funeral. Given the former neighborly relations between the two communities, the Methodists were deeply offended by Blanchet's actions. The funeral went ahead as scheduled, and in accordance with Blanchet's interdiction, no French Canadians attended the service. However, Blanchet recorded in a letter to his brother Augustin Blanchet that some of the Irish settlers in valley did attend the funeral. They reported to Blanchet that during service, the Methodists severely criticized the Catholics in general, and Blanchet in particular.⁸⁰

During the controversy that ensued, Blanchet initially saw himself as the victim of both the Methodists' ill will and the cowardly demeanor of the French Canadians. Blanchet wrote to HBC Chief Trade James Douglas at Fort Vancouver, and he agreed that the French Canadians should have demonstrated courage and supported their priest.⁸¹ Douglas admitted that he felt "a degree of uneasiness" about the "bad feeling [that] had been excited among the Americans" because of the Canadians' refusal to attend the funeral. However, he was particularly harsh in his judgment of the

Canadians, who throw odium on their spiritual guide, where in justice they ought to have shielded you from the storm, by declaring with many frankness that they were influenced in that instance by the rites and essential doctrines of their Church. They

⁷⁹ F. N. Blanchet to A. M. A. Blanchet, February 8, 1841, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

⁸⁰ F. N. Blanchet to A. M. A. Blanchet, February 8, 1841. There is no mention of this controversy in the Reverend Zachariah Mudge's hagiographic biography of Cyrus Shepard, *The Missionary Teacher*.

⁸¹ James Douglas to Francis N. Blanchet, January 14, 1840, and Blanchet to Douglas, February 10, 1840, enclosed in F. N. Blanchet to A. M.A. Blanchet, February 8, 1841.

are indeed devoid of Spirit, pride or self-respect, and must act another part, before they are considered worthy of having you among them.⁸²

In his response to James Douglas's letter, Blanchet expressed his belief that this misunderstanding between the Methodists and Catholics demonstrated the need for vigilance on his part. He re-committed himself to warning and protecting his "flock" from heretical doctrines. Indeed, Blanchet saw a parallel between the work of the Apostles and his work against the heresy of the Methodists.⁸³ With hindsight, Blanchet felt that the Methodist should have properly written him a letter and requested that the Catholic community attend the funeral. This would have allowed Blanchet to explain the situation, and perhaps allowed the Catholics to attend the burial service.⁸⁴ Blanchet was particularly insulted by what he perceived as the chauvinism of the American Methodists. He felt that they did not treat others with respect, but demanded that they be so treated. According to Blanchet, they also made public threats against the Catholics, and he quoted them as saying, "when we will be the stronger." Nevertheless, Blanchet was not bowed by this opposition. Rather, he expressed confidence that the Americans and the Methodists would regret their lack of consideration.⁸⁵

Clearly in this instance, it was the underlying cultural and religious differences between the two camps that fueled this unfortunately misunderstanding. Blanchet hailed from a more hierarchical society in which the parish priest held a distinctive leadership role and wielded considerable power within the community. The Americans, who came from a less hierarchical society, had difficulty understanding the priest's right and authority to instruct the Canadians not to attend the funeral service. Indeed, given the former relations

⁸² Douglas to Blanchet, January 14, 1840.

⁸³ Blanchet to Douglas, February 10, 1840.

⁸⁴ Blanchet to Douglas, February 10, 1840.

⁸⁵ Blanchet to Douglas, February 10, 1840.

between the two communities, the Methodists would have seen the refusal not as faithfulness to the Catholic's church, but as a social snub inspired by a newcomer. It likely never occurred to the Methodists to write Blanchet asking him to permit his flock to attend the funeral. They may not have known that official Church teaching of the time might have prevented the French Canadians from participating in Protestant services. Indeed, this is likely since the Catholic members of the local community had attended Methodist services for several years prior to Blanchet's arrival. These cultural differences were compounded by the sectarian hostilities that existed between the Catholic priests and the Methodists missionaries, each camp viewed the other with considerable animus.

In light of the problems raised by the Shepard funeral, Blanchet came away from the controversy he had provoked with two useful observations. Despite the cultural and religious differences between the Methodist and French-Indian communities, Blanchet believed that they were all "the children of the same Father, the same God." As such, they should endeavor to live in harmony and peace.⁸⁶ He also thought that he must press the Methodists about the need to respect the freedom of religion and the liberty of the individual conscience (he even went so far as to use this argument to support the notion that husbands did not have complete authority over their wives). Given the dominance of Protestantism in North America—and the British Empire—Blanchet's support for the freedom of religion was not an argument for religious pluralism, but rather a defensive position affirming the threatened rights of Catholic minorities.

Relations with the Methodists were tested once again in February 1840. On February 1, in response to an invitation to join the Methodists' temperance society, Blanchet wrote a long, detailed letter in French to the Elijah White explaining why he would not take part in

⁸⁶ Blanchet to Douglas, February 10, 1840.

the movement. The Catholic priest also outlined a series of complaints regarding the Methodists' malfeasance against the French-Indian community in recent months. These included duping the French Canadians into signing the Farnham Memorial to the U.S. Congress, defamation of Blanchet, the whipping of a Catholic orphan, and professional misconduct on the part of Dr. White. The charges against White were serious, with Blanchet intimating sexual misconduct by White against a wife of one of the French Canadian settlers—likely Julie Gervais, wife of Xavier Laderoute.⁸⁷ Blanchet asserted that White visited the woman and conducted a physical exam without the woman's husband being present. Such behavior was not only at odds with French Canadian practice, but it also exposed the young woman to temptation and caused her husband sorrow.⁸⁸

Blanchet sent a copy of the letter to HBC Chief Trader James Douglas, who responded with concern about Blanchet's lack of moderation in charging Dr. White with a serious moral breach. Douglas warned Blanchet that if proved false, the accusation against Dr. White might "recoil with equal force upon the author of the calumny."⁸⁹ Blanchet took Douglas' opinion quite hard, criticizing himself heavily for his lack of moderation and diplomacy in relations with the Methodists. Fortunately for Blanchet, since the letter was written in French, Dr. White claimed that he did not comprehend the full force of the priest's charges.

⁸⁷ Blanchet never named the couple. However, in a letter from Elijah White to Blanchet, White wrote: "If it shall appear that Saddy root has done my injustice." This would suggest François Xavier Laderoute. Dr. White to Francis N. Blanchet, n. d. [circa March 1840], copy enclosed in F. N. Blanchet to A. M. A. Blanchet, February 8, 1841. Further evidence is contained in Elijah White's Census of Settlers in the Oregon Country, 1842. White enumerated Laderoute and his family as "Laddyroot, X." See Appendix 6, head of household #110.

⁸⁸ Francis N. Blanchet to Elijah White, February 1, 1840, copy enclosed in F. N. Blanchet to A. M. A. Blanchet, February 8, 1841.

⁸⁹ Douglas to Blanchet, February 26, 1840, copy enclosed in F. N. Blanchet to A.M.A. Blanchet, February 8, 1841.

In response, Blanchet revisited the Laderoute-Gervais farmstead and asked for more detailed information on the charges against Dr. White, which he noted in a letter written to his brother Augustin a year later. The couple gave testimony that suggests two possible scenarios: professional and sexual misconduct on the part of Dr. White or a consensual sexual liaison between White and Julie Gervais. A first visit (or encounter) took place at the home of the wife's father, Joseph Gervais. A second visit occurred at the doctor's house, and two additional visits took place at the couple's farm in the absence of her husband. The final two visits (or encounters) occurred in the farm's granary "despite the repugnance of the female who said that her body remained untouched and she only had a stomach ache."⁹⁰ A final visit was canceled after Blanchet forbid it. Since Blanchet mentioned this alleged misconduct caused "sorrow" to the husband, and because the woman protested her innocence, this might have been a case of a sexual liaison, which had come to the attention of the husband, who then reported it to Blanchet.

Given the advice of James Douglas about making serious charges, Blanchet wrote a second letter to Dr. White in which the priest attempted to retract what he had written in his initial letter. Writing in English this time, Blanchet apologized if he had inadvertently injured White's character. After Dr. White asked another missionary, Mr. Willson, to translate the original French letter, this second letter caused friction between the Blanchet and Dr. White. Dr. White expressed (feigned?) both surprise and anger at the charges, writing that "If it shall appear that Saddy root has done me injustice, I am sure you will have no objection to his being brought to justice or properly exposed to the publick."⁹¹ However, "out of respect" for Blanchet, White agreed to remain silent on the issue for time being.

⁹⁰ F. N. Blanchet to A.M.A. Blanchet, February 8, 1841.

⁹¹ Elijah White to Francis N. Blanchet, n. d [circa March 1840].

Worried that the letter would become public, Blanchet went to see Elijah White to try and mutually resolve the situation. The encounter was an attempt at diplomacy that, according to the account left by Blanchet, illustrates the personalities of both men. Blanchet, who presented himself as both the spiritual leader and civil representative of his community, insisted that even if the relations between Dr. White and Julie Gervais had not involved a criminal act, they did involve imprudence. To avoid future misunderstanding, Blanchet advised White to follow several rules of conduct: if possible he should give remedies that do not involve physical exams and if a physical examination was necessary, the doctor should request the husband's permission and examine the female patient in the presence of her husband.⁹² Blanchet recounted that Dr. White was surprised that Blanchet, a priest should have become involved in such a matter. White protested his innocence with the argument that he had only acted out of duty and responsibility. However, he accepted Blanchet's apology and explanation and returned Blanchet's original letter. They shook hands over the matter before Blanchet departed from the Methodist mission.

Although Blanchet had managed to resolve this affair, it was not the last time he would face considerable worry over the conduct of Dr. White. Upon Elijah White's break with Jason Lee and the Methodist Mission in September 1840, White asked for Blanchet's permission to hold a meeting to transact some business at the Catholic mission before White and his wife departed for their return to United States. Blanchet, believing this "business" involved members of the Catholic community, agreed to White's request. Unfortunately for Blanchet, this was a serious misstep in his relations with the Methodist missionaries. Rather than a friendly meeting with the local French-Indian community, White had arranged a public meeting with Jason Lee and other members of the Methodist mission, other American

⁹² F. N. Blanchet to A. M. A. Blanchet, February 8, 1841.

settlers, and the French-Indian families.⁹³ His purpose was to have the American and Canadian settlers act as judges in his confrontation with Jason Lee, and thereby vindicate himself in the eyes of the settlers.

At the meeting, Dr. White proved to be quite the showman and easily disputed, point by point, a series of charges that Jason Lee had previously leveled against White at the Methodist mission—charges largely related to White's drawing on missionary funds for personal use when Lee away in the United States from March 1838 to June 1840. Blanchet described the encounter as a public humiliation for Jason Lee.⁹⁴ In the face of White's oratory, Lee did not defend himself well, and, therefore, White gained the support of the French Canadian settlers. While the settlers declared they were not competent to judge White, they urged Lee to give White all the documents he would need to defend himself against the charges upon his return to the East. Given the given the public forum, Lee had little choice but to agree. The French Canadians' support for White primarily rested upon the doctor's reputation for generosity amongst the settlers, since White did not charge them for medical visits.⁹⁵

Lee later complained that the French Canadian settlers declined to support him; they responded that Lee had not given them sufficient reason to do so during the confrontation with White. Although Blanchet was initially upset that White had used the Catholic mission for a public meeting to discredit Jason Lee, Blanchet later believed that the confrontation between White and Lee had weakened Lee's influence amongst the French-Indian settlers. In a letter to his brother Augustin, Blanchet noted that "in this way were all humiliated the

⁹³ F. N. Blanchet to A. M. A. Blanchet, February 8, 1841.

⁹⁴ For an in-depth discussion of the caustic relationship that developed between Elijah White and Jason Lee upon Lee's return from the United States in June 1840, see R.J. Loewenberg, "Elijah White vs. Jason Lee: A Tale of Hard Times," *Journal of the West* 11:4 (October 1971): 636-662.

⁹⁵ Loewenberg, "Elijah White," 652-653.

enemies of the Catholic Mission.”⁹⁶ However, although Dr. and Mrs. White departed Oregon on generally good terms with the French Canadians, the incident had strained relations between the Catholic priest and the remaining Methodist ministers, who had earlier found White guilty of professional misconduct in a church trial.⁹⁷

In many respects, Father Blanchet’s presence amongst the French-Indian families was a boon for the settlement. The families were able to attend mass in French, solemnize their marriages in the Catholic Church, and officially recognize their children. With the construction of the St. Paul mission in French Prairie, the bi-cultural families created a gathering place where they might also see their children educated in French, while also regularly socializing with their neighbors. In this sense, the erection of a Catholic mission afforded the French-Indian families a place of their own, and in contrast to the Methodist mission, one that might offer personal opportunities for community members. Moreover, Blanchet’s ability to accommodate some local conditions within the Catholic mission—legitimizing country marriages, learning Chinook Jargon, and developing the Catholic Ladder—strengthened the community by recognizing its syncretic culture.

However, Blanchet’s arrival was not without conflict, both inside and outside the French-Indian community. The resistance by some settlers to Blanchet’s administrative approach and his attempts at social control demonstrated that there were limits to the priest’s authority. Yet, the most significant problems resulted from the cultural, institutional, and personal differences between Blanchet and the American Methodist missionaries. As a designated church leader, Blanchet sought to modify the long-standing social dynamics

⁹⁶ F. N. Blanchet to A. M. A. Blanchet, February 8, 1841.

⁹⁷ Elijah White to Francis N. Blanchet, September 9, 1840, copy enclosed in F.N. Blanchet to A.M.A. Blanchet, February 8, 1841.

between the French-Indian families and the Methodists. He was especially wary of their attempts to expose the French Canadians to Protestant heresies, and to convince them to support an American annexation of the Willamette Valley. In this sense, the concerns of HBC North American Governor did prove prophetic. The presence of Catholic missionaries engendered sectarian conflict, complicating matters for HBC officials. However, on the other hand, the French Canadians' experience with the controversy over the Farnham Memorial demonstrated that lacking literate, educated individuals, the settlers remained at a disadvantages vis-à-vis their American neighbors. International tensions over U.S. and British territorial claims in the Oregon Country began to impact social relations in the Willamette Valley, and the French Canadian settlers remained determined to safeguard their own interests, namely the welfare of their families and property. Their miscalculation over the Farnham Memorial had temporarily strained their relationships with the HBC, and showed their vulnerability between the competing interests of the company and the American settlers bent on U.S. annexation. In the coming years, the French Canadian settlers would draw on their previous experience with the Methodists and the American settlers, as well as seek the assistance of the local Catholic leader, Francis N. Blanchet, in responding to the Oregon Trail emigrants who flooded into the Willamette Valley in the early 1840s.

CHAPTER SIX

“THE CANADIANS ARE ACCUSTOMED TO FEEL INFERIOR TO NO ONE”:

A HETEROGENEOUS COLONIAL SOCIETY, 1841-1843

The Canadians on the whole are accustomed to feel that they are inferior to no one, except those who have emigrated from France; evidences of this appear constantly even over the most trifling incidents. Thus they call the finest domestic duck, French duck; shoes made of English leather, French shoes; pounds sterling, louis; Europe, France; and all white men, Frenchmen. Even the Indians themselves have been so imbued with this deep-rooted tradition that an aged guide, an Iroquois Métis whom we asked where a fine gun he was carrying over his shoulder had been made, replied that it had come from *la vieille France de Londres* (London in old France). Even Napoleon's name is not unknown, several natives having named their children in his honor. The settlers' houses are built uniformly of wood, lands under cultivation are enclosed with light fences or hedges. At each white settlement has been established a mission which serves as a center for the French-Canadian colony.¹

This passage from the travel of memoir of Eugène Duflot de Mofras recounts an impression of the cultural superiority of the French-Indian settlement in French Prairie in the fall of 1841. Duflot de Mofras, a member of the French diplomatic corps, was then attached to the French Legation of Mexico. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Duc de Dalmatie, had instructed de Mofras in 1839 to undertake a journey to Western Mexico, the Spanish settlements in Baja and Alta California, and the Oregon Country, then jointly claimed by Great Britain and the United States. De Mofras' objective was to provide the

¹ Eugène Duflot de Mofras, *Duflot de Mofras' Travels on the Pacific Coast*, vol. 2, translated and edited by Marguerite Eyer Wilbur (Santa Ana, CA: The Fine Arts Press, 1937), 111-112. See also the original French version, [Eugène] Duflot de Mofras, *Exploration du territoire de l'Orégon, des Californies et de la Mer Vermeille exécutée pendant les années 1840, 1841 et 1842*, vol. 2 (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1844), 213-214. Aside from two phrases, this citation follows the Wilbur translation: *ce qui vient de France* I have translated as “who have emigrated from France” rather than as “those who have just come from France;” *un Métis Iroquois* I have translated as “an Iroquois Métis” rather than as “an Iroquois half-breed.”

French Foreign Ministry with much needed reconnaissance on political, commercial, and geographic conditions in these regions.²

French officials sought detailed information on the Pacific Slope owing to French colonial designs in the Pacific region with regard to Mexico, California, and the Hawaiian Islands. De Mofras provided the requested details in the account of his travels, published in 1844. In producing a travel memoir that echoed not only French ambitions in the Pacific, but also nostalgia over lost French possessions in North America, de Mofras clearly played up the superiority of French culture to his francophone readers in Europe. As such, the image of French Canadian settlers in Oregon as depicted in this short citation might seem a fanciful tale drawn from the imagination of de Mofras.³ Indeed, when referring to both British pounds and American dollars, the French Canadians commonly used the old French term *piastre*, not *louis* as suggested by de Mofras.⁴ And yet, this portrait of the French Canadian settlers expressing matter-of-fact confidence in their ethnic superiority raises questions about how they perceived themselves in relation to in-coming American settlers, who brought their own sense of national superiority to the Oregon Country and were largely ignorant of the French-Indian settlement that flourished there.

The Americans who emigrated to the Willamette Valley in the early 1840s encountered a heterogeneous colonial society, due in large part to the dynamic community created by the French-Indian families. Their long tenure in the valley had allowed them to

² See DuFlot de Mofras' preface, and the introduction by Marguerite Wilbur in Duflot de Mofras, *Travels*, xi-xii and xix-xx. Wilbur quotes the diplomatic correspondence of the Duc de Dalmatie, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, wherein he outlines the purpose of Duflot the Mofras' mission.

³ See Marguerite E. Wilbur's discussion of the French dreams of empire in the Pacific in her "Introduction" to *Duflot de Mofras' Travels*, xxx-xxxii. For a classic treatment of the literary license taken by European travel writers, see Percy G. Adams' *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660-1800*. 2nd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1980).

⁴ *Piastre* is a common term in Canadian French that refers to local currencies in North America and remains in use today. For a source on its use in Oregon, see Francis N. Blanchet, Willamette Mission Report, 1839, Blanchet Collection, APOA.

develop a unique and privileged position in the region. Relying on a diversified economy, the French-Indian families were able to meet their subsistence needs while also supplying the Hudson's Bay Company with wheat and other grains for export to Russian America. While supportive of the local Catholic Mission, the settlers also demonstrated a degree of independence in their hospitality to outsiders, their continued relations with the Methodist missionaries, and their lively social life. The French Prairie colonists also enjoyed close relations with the local Kalapuyan owing to long-standing social and economic ties between the two communities. And even as the French-Indian families continued to resettle and repopulate the territory of the Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans, the newcomers remained on friendly terms with their neighbors—willing to offer assistance to the Natives in times of need.

Given the French-Indians' economic position and their long tenure in the valley, their community demonstrated solidarity in the face of several tests in the early 1840s. The community had been strengthened by the permanent residence of a French Canadian Catholic missionary, and as small groups of Americans migrated to the valley in the early 1840s, the French Canadian male settlers proved willing to participate in debates about the future of local governance in the Willamette Valley. Americans and French-Indians maintained a demographic parity in the valley before the Migration of 1843, which marked the beginning of an overall change in Oregon's colonial society. Thereafter, Anglo-Americans progressively gained ascendancy over all social, political, and economic institutions in the settler colony, a dominance that was later assured by the Oregon Treaty of 1846.

Beginnings of American Overland Migration to the Willamette Valley

The mass migration of American emigrants to the Oregon Country that began in the early 1840s was a movement several decades in the making. The term "Oregon" (initially following various spellings) entered the American lexicon in the late eighteenth century with the publication of Jonathan Carver's best-selling travel memoir, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (1778). This volume contained the first printed citation of "Oregon" as referring to the Great River of the West. Robert Rogers, who had hired Carver to explore the Far West in the 1760s, believed that the River Oregon could be reached by following the Missouri River to its source.⁵ Although the overland travels of Lewis and Clark Expedition and the John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company cast doubt on the Rogers's earlier notions about the course of the River Oregon, the publications resulting from these expeditions disseminated popular notions about the region that came to be known as the Oregon Country.

At the onset of the Jacksonian era in the 1820s, a series of boosters took up Thomas Jefferson's dream of westward expansion and actively promoted American movement to the Far West.⁶ Most notable amongst these boosters were Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri and Representatives John Floyd of Virginia and Peter Little of Maryland. Their aim was to mobilize the citizenry and thereby force the federal government to act in supporting

⁵ Jonathan Carver, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768*. (London: 1778; rpt; Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1956); Jonathan Carver, *The Journals of Jonathan Carver and Related Documents, 1766-1770*. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1976). See a discussion of possible Native influences on Robert Rogers's geographic notions, see Scott Byram and David G. Lewis, "Ourigan: Wealth of the Northwest Coast," *OHQ* 102:2 (Summer 2001): 127-157.

⁶ For discussions of culture and expansionist rhetoric of Jacksonian America, see Thomas Hietala, *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Rush Welter, *The Mind of America, 1820-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 298-330; Robert H. Wiebe, *The Opening of American Society: From the Adoption of the Constitution to the Eve of Disunion* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 131-142.

westward migration and settlement. This first generation of Oregon boosters communicated their program through congressional hearing, government reports, newspaper articles, pamphlets, and speeches.⁷

The earliest congressional report of the 1820s, the January 1821 report of the House Committee on the Occupation of the Columbia, chaired by Rep. Floyd, relied on the original Biddle edition of the Lewis and Clark journals. Although this report did emphasize a vision of the Oregon Country as a bountiful Eden, it relied on an older analysis of Oregon as a resource base for the fur trade market, whaling, lumbering, and small-scale farming.⁸ Six years later in 1826, Senator Hart's Select Committee on the Exploration of the Northwest produced a more extensive report, which provided both factual information about the Pacific Northwest as well as a manifesto for American expansion into that quarter. The report argued that it was the destiny of Americans to expand into the Far West, and that Oregon could be settled with minimal conflict with the region's Native peoples.⁹ In 1828 several citizens also presented memorials to the U.S. House calling for settlement of Pacific Northwest; however, none received official government action at the time.¹⁰

By the 1830s, the popular vision of American colonization in the Oregon country was no longer one of fur trade, but one of expanding of American agrarian culture in keeping with Jefferson's original vision. Perhaps the most well known proponent of settlement in this period was Hall Jackson Kelley (1790-1874). Kelley, a Boston school teacher and land surveyor, became convinced of the need for the United States to occupying the Oregon Country after reading the Biddle volumes of the Lewis and Clark journals. Beginning about

⁷ Frederick Wilbur Powell, Introduction to *Hall J. Kelley on Oregon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932), x-xi.

⁸ Ronda, "Calculating, 126-127.

⁹ Ronda, "Calculating," 127.

¹⁰ Powell, x-xi.

1824 and continuing for the next twenty years, he became a fervent booster of American settlement in the Oregon Country. He wrote numerous tracts, articles, and pamphlets on the subject; petitioned congress; gave speeches; organized a settlement society; and made one ill-fated trip to Oregon in 1832-1834.¹¹

Kelley articulated a vision for American settlement in Oregon that drew on both the romantic notions of Jefferson and on the pragmatic experience of New England fur trade merchants who had long operated in the Pacific.¹² Oregon—essentially the Willamette Valley—was an agrarian paradise of rich soil, water, abundant forests, and a salubrious climate. From this perspective, Americans were destined to settle it as a promised land. Colonization of the Pacific Northwest would also check British expansion in the North Pacific, offer the U.S. important military and commercial bases on the coast, and thereby preserve essential trade links to the Far East. The project would open up new lands for settlement, increase economic opportunities for citizens, and lead to social and cultural advancement. In any event, since there was an urgent need to settle the Indian question on the western frontier, the U.S. ought to engage the Native people in trade relations so as to prevent further frontier violence. Above all, in nationalistic terms the settlement of Oregon would “energize the mild and vital principles” of the American republic.¹³

As Frederick Powell noted, it is difficult to judge the impact of Kelley’s settlement propaganda on Americans generally. There was opposition to his plans, as evidenced in the problems he encountered during speaking engagements. However, his ideas, though not

¹¹ Powell, vii-xii. For a first-hand account of Hall J. Kelley’s stay at Fort Vancouver, see George B. Roberts, “Recollections,” BAN, P-A 83, 12 & 48.

¹² Rhonda, “Calculating,” 134; Powell, ix-xii; Hall Jackson Kelley, “A Geographical Sketch of that part of North American called Oregon,” [1830] in Powell, 1-59; Kelley, “A General Circular to all Person’s of Good Character who Wish to Emigrate to the Oregon Territory,” [1831] in Powell, 93-132.

¹³ Kelley, “Geographic Sketch of Oregon,” 4.

original, were current at the time and popular with a growing segment of society. Indeed, those eager to travel to Oregon registered with his settlement society. One very important individual whom Hall Jackson Kelley influenced to a significant degree was the Boston merchant Nathaniel J. Wyeth. Wyeth had joined Kelley's settlement society in the early 1830s. However, when it appeared that Kelley lacked the personal leadership skills and financial resources to follow through on his dream, Wyeth decided to organize his own expedition to Oregon.

In contrast to Kelley, Wyeth was a businessman who was determined to establish a commercial venture based on the fur trade and the salmon trade (not unlike John Jacob Astor a generation before). Although Wyeth's visions of an international enterprise ultimately ended in failure due to various factor—most notably the vast logistical hurdles involved, determined opposition from the HBC, and Wyeth's own management decisions—he did play a crucial role in the American colonization of Oregon.¹⁴ In 1834, Wyeth allowed the small group of Methodist missionaries, headed by Jason Lee, to travel with him on his second overland trek to Oregon. Without Width's party, the Methodists may not have had the means to reach Oregon as early as the fall of 1834.

When Jason Lee and his fellow missionaries, responded to the religious zeal born of the Second Great Awakening and settled in Oregon, they began writing rousing letters back to correspondents in the United States. Their letters and others by the Presbyterian Missionaries Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, and Henry and Eliza Spalding, who followed two years later, continued to keep Oregon in the public eye. The overland journey of the

¹⁴ Cole, Bradford. "Failure on the Columbia: Nathaniel Wyeth's Columbia River Fishing and Trading Company," in *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991*, edited by Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 269-283.

Whitmans and Spaldings in 1836, together with the direct work of Elijah White in organizing the small wagon train of 1842, demonstrated that overland migration to Oregon was possible.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Americans continued to migrate from the eastern seaboard into the Trans-Appalachia region, the Old Northwest and the Mississippi Valley.¹⁵ Growing demographic pressures on the land and exhausted soils pushed families and entrepreneurs—both Northern and Southern—to open up new territories for settlement and exploitation. The 1830s (the high point of Hall Jackson Kelley's Oregon boosterism) proved too early for large-scale emigration from the Mississippi Valley to the Far West. By the 1840s, however, the same social and economic forces that had driven Americans into the Middle West led many to set their sights on the distant Oregon Country. Americans were motivated to migrate the Far West because their conception of Oregon closely resembled the semi-forested, mixed landscape of their Western European agricultural traditions and many landscapes of the Midwest in contrast to the treeless, dry prairies of the Great Plains, which were also known as the "Great Western Desert."¹⁶

French-Indian Community in the Early 1840s

The settler population in the Willamette Valley began to increase markedly after 1840. A covered wagon caravan of some twenty-five families migrated from the HBC's Red River settlement in the Canadian Northwest in 1841. They were originally sent to farm in the

¹⁵ John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986; Reginald Horsemans, *The Frontier in the Formative Years, 1783-1815* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970); Malcolm Rohrbough, *The Trans-Appalachian Frontier* (New York: Oxford University press, 1978).

¹⁶ William L. Barney, *The Passage of the Republic: An Interdisciplinary History of Nineteenth-Century America* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Co., 1987), 10-17; Elliott West, "American Frontier," in *The Oxford History of the American West*, edited by Clyde A. Milner, Carol A. O'Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 115-150; Richard White, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own:" *A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 61-84. See also Ralph Morris, "The Notion of a Great American Desert East of the Rockies." *MVHR* 13:2 (September 1926): 190-200.

Nisqually and the Cowlitz Prairie areas north of Columbia River as per the aspirations of HBC officials. However, by 1842 these families began to re-settle in the more attractive Willamette Valley. The group included both Anglo-Indian and French-Indian families. The more numerous English-speaking families tended to settle in the Tualatin Plains while the French-speaking families settled in with the French-Indian community on the east bank of the Willamette River.¹⁷ Although the majority of new French-Indian families resettling in the Ahantchuyuk territory during this period were headed by French Canadian voyageurs retiring from the fur trade, small numbers of French-speaking emigrants from both the U.S. and Canada made the trek to the Northwest via the Oregon Trail. For the first three years of the 1840s, small parties of Americans made the overland trek along the Oregon Trail to the Willamette Valley, the yearly migrations numbering 12 in 1841, 34 in 1842, and 125 in 1843.¹⁸ A party of six French North Americans, including François Xavier Matthieu, arrived in Oregon with the 1842 overland party initially headed by Elijah White.¹⁹

Upon Elijah's White's arrival in Oregon in the fall of 1842, the newly appointed U.S. sub-Indian Agent for Oregon conducted a comprehensive nominal census of the settler population in the Willamette Valley and the Columbia Plateau. He identified these areas as "south of the Columbia," a region which most settlers and fur traders believed would come eventually under the jurisdiction of the U.S. (see Appendix 6, Elijah White's Census of

¹⁷ For John McLoughlin's first-hand account of the Red River emigrants' reasons' for leaving Nisqually and Cowlitz, see John McLoughlin, *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver, Second Series, 1839-44*. Edited by E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1943), 77-79; Jesse S. Douglas, "Origins of the Population of Oregon in 1850," *PNQ* 41:2 (April 1950): 95-114. Paul Bourke and Donald BeBake provide the most recent overview of the two Red River Migrations to Oregon (1841 and 1854) in *Washington County: Politics and Community in Antebellum America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 47-48. Red River emigrant John Flett published a newspaper account of the 1841 trek in 1885. William J. Betts presents this account with a short introductory essay in *The Beaver Outfit* 301:1 (Spring 1971): 50-55.

¹⁸ John D. Unruh, Jr., *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60* (Urbana: university of Illinois Press, 1979), 119.

¹⁹ Lyman, Horace S., "Reminiscences of Francois Xavier Matthieu," *OHQ* 1:1 (March 1900), 13.

Map 9. Overland Trails to Western Oregon, 1840s



From Loy, *Atlas of Oregon*. Reprinted with permission from the University of Oregon Press.

All of the western emigrant trails depicted here ended in the Willamette Valley. The northern route ended at Oregon City (Willamette Falls). The southern route, also known as the Applegate Trail, ended in Dallas, just across the Willamette River from Salem. Thus, both of these routes ended within a relatively short distance of French Prairie.

Settlers in the Oregon Country, 1842). White's 1842 census returned a settler population of approximately 818 souls, including 250 men, 171 women, and 397 children.²⁰ After subtracting the Presbyterian and Congregationalist missionaries living in the Plateau region, and the Catholic missionary Modeste Demers, regularly stationed at Fort Vancouver, the Willamette Valley settlers population was approximately 792: 243 men, 165 women, and 383 children. The great majority of these settlers were concentrated in Tualatin, Yamhill, and Ahantchuyuk/French Prairie areas of the valley.

In 1841 the head of the U.S. Exploring Expedition, Lieutenant Charles Wilkes recorded a figure of 600 for the entire Kalapuyan population of the Willamette Valley, and 275 for the Upper Chinookans of the lower Willamette Valley.²¹ This suggests that the local Kalapuyans groups had been reduced to bands of approximately 50 members. By 1842, the settler population in the Willamette Valley thus already outnumbered the Kalapuyans by approximately thirty percent. The Migration of 1843, which brought another 875 Americans to the Willamette Valley, tipped the balance throughout the valley and for the existing population as a whole, giving the in-coming Americans demographic superiority over both the French-Indian and Anglo-Indian families and all the remaining Kalapuyans.²² Thus, by 1844, the American settler population majority would dominate the colonial society developing south of the Columbia River. Once again, the resident population would in the process be marginalized.

Due to their long tenure in the Ahantchuyuk/French Prairie area, the French-Indian families would resist marginalization as the Kalapuyans had before them. The French-Indian

²⁰ Elijah White, *Census of Settlers in the Oregon Country, 1842*, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1842-1880, Oregon Superintendency, 1842-1853, RG 75, NARA.

²¹ Charles Wilkes, *The Diary of Charles Wilkes in the Pacific Northwest*. Edited by Edmond S. Meany (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1926), 49.

²² Unruh, 119.

community held choice parcels of land when the American overlanders began arriving in the early 1840s. This led Medoram Crawford, one of the 1842 overland emigrants, to tell Hubert Bancroft in an interview that, when he arrived in the Willamette Valley in the early 1840s, “all the little prairies and spots along the river convenient to navigation were taken up by the French voyageurs as they were called [,] by those who has been in the employ of the Hudson [sic] Bay Company.”²³ An analysis of the census data from Elijah White’s 1842 enumeration of the Willamette Valley settlers reveals that the French-Indian families held a slight edge over the non-French households with regard to the average improved acreages and the amount of wheat and grain production per farm (see figure Table 6, French and Anglo Settlers in the Willamette Valley, 1842). The American and immigrant farmers on average held somewhat larger cattle herds.

Table 6. French and Anglo Settlers in the Willamette Valley, 1842

Male settlers with French surnames with land claims	60
Average acreage under improvement	65 acres
Average wheat production	337 bushels
Average grain production	166 bushels
Average number of horses	19
Average number of neat stock	18
Male settlers with non-French surnames with land claims	50
Average acreage under improvement	46 acres
Average wheat production	310 bushels
Average grain production	148 bushels
Average number of horses	20
Average number of neat stock	37

Source: Elijah White’s Census of Settlers in the Oregon Country, 1842.

The few elites who visited the Willamette Valley and recorded their impressions of the settlement concluded that the French-Indian settlement was decidedly backward, a concept typically attributed to marginalized and colonized peoples. For these elites, the

²³ Medorem Crawford, “The Missionaries,” BAN, P-A 19, 9.

French-Indian families appeared to lack a progressive, entrepreneurial, mentality because they appeared uninterested in creating new businesses or increasing their wealth or the yields of their crops. For example, Lieutenant Wilkes expressed disappointment “not to find [the settlement] in a state of greater forwardness, considering the advantage the missionaries have had.”²⁴ However, the information from Elijah White’s census contradicts this view, suggesting that the elite observers tended to rely on received notions colored by class and cultural biases rather than on quantitative analysis.

The elites offered several explanations for the so-called “backwardness” of the French-Indian settlement. One held that the French Canadians and their Indian wives and children were culturally backward by inclination—the children doubly burdened by their mixed-raced ancestry. Another common belief was the assumption that the former voyageurs were physically disabled from long years of hard service with the HBC, and thus burdened by their social class. Both Father Blanchet and Josiah L. Parrish, an American settler, referred to the French Canadians as “broken down.”²⁵ Some American settlers believed that HBC officials kept the French-Indian families in a kind of semi-servitude because as holders of a monopoly, they could set arbitrary prices for both grain and trade goods that the families were obliged to pay.²⁶ These viewpoints were distorted by the Americans’ support for Jacksonian democracy and their anti-monopolistic and anti-British sentiments. However, in viewing the French-Indian families as beholding to the HBC, these Americans failed to appreciate that the company was also dependent on the settlers for grain supplies that the company was contracted to sell to the Russians in Alaska.

²⁴ Charles Wilkes, “Report on the Territory of Oregon,” *OHQ* 13:3 (September 1911), 285.

²⁵ Parrish, “Anecdotes,” BAN, 76; Francis N. Blanchet to Joseph Provencher, March 22, 1842, Blanchet Collection, APOA; Francis N. Blanchet to George Simpson, November 15, 1841, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

²⁶ DuFlot de Mofras, *Travels*, vol. 2, 105; Crawford, “The Missionaries,” BAN, 9-10.

The diversified economy of the French-Indian families was a rational economic strategy that resembled those of other Native-European settlements in North America that were in transition from a reliance on the fur trade to a dependence on agriculture and animal husbandry.²⁷ The French Prairie settlers raised grains and neat stock for both subsistence and sale, and vegetables (peas, beans, etc.) for consumption.²⁸ Their surplus grain they sold to the HBC in exchange for European trade manufactures and additional foodstuffs. Charles Wilkes reported on both the superior yield of the allegedly backward Willamette Valley farms and the favorable condition for stock raising. The French-Indian families also still continued to supplement their wheat production with trade in animal pelts. The abundance of wild game in the valley also gave the French-Indian families both a ready food source and a product for trade with the HBC. These included the remaining beaver, elk, deer, antelope, bears, wolves, foxes, muskrats, and martins.²⁹

Since no official currency was in circulation, the local economy operated on a dual system. By the 1830s, the old fur currency of "made beaver" had begun to be replaced by trade in grain as the common unit of exchange.³⁰ The settlers would receive credit in bushels for their grain at the HBC store at Fort Vancouver in order to obtain manufactured goods. They also bartered goods, services, and foodstuffs amongst themselves, including labor and farm implements on neighboring farms. For example, in the early 1840s Margaret Jewett Bailey, who lived in the French-Indian settlement with her husband, the physician William Bailey, regularly faced requests from the Native wives of the French Canadians. One

²⁷ Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 72-92; Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 73-115.

²⁸ DuFlot de Mofras, *Travels*, vol. 2, 111.

²⁹ Wilkes, "Report," 285-287.

³⁰ James Henry Gilbert, *Trade and Currency in Early Oregon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1907), 32-42.

neighbor begged Bailey for one of her calico dresses, which she declined to give her; another insisted that Bailey accept a cow in exchange for one of Bailey's silk dresses.³¹ In another instance, Bailey recounts that two of her neighbors shared ownership of a horse-drawn cart.³² A few entrepreneurial men in the community introduced gristmills and brought in additional cattle from California. Blanchet instituted a gristmill at the Catholic mission in the summer of 1843.³³ In meeting their needs through a mixed economy based on agricultural production, hunting, trapping, and barter, the French-Indian families adapted aspects of their former occupations in the fur trade and their agricultural heritage from Lower Canada. This mixed approach suited the settlers at the time because it allowed them to maximize the use of their local resources while also spreading economic risk.

Although the French-Indian settlers left little in the way of written documents, the writings of elites such as Father Blanchet and literate observers from outside the community—both their positive and negative comments—provide a small window into the settlers' community life during the early 1840s. The Frenchman de Mofras wrote of the settlers' sense of ethnic superiority, while other observers remarked on the colonists' warmth, openness and hospitality. For example, John Minto, who arrived in the Willamette Valley in the fall of 1844, recalled that the Canadians "were kindly and hospitable to the incoming Americans but seemed scarcely to understand them."³⁴ François Xavier Matthieu, who emigrated to Oregon in the fall of 1842, told interviewer Horace Lyman in the late 1890s that "all the settlers of the [French] Prairie he [Matthieu] found to be hospitable in the extreme;

³¹ Margaret Jewett Bailey, *The Grains or Passages in the Life of Ruth Rover*, edited by Evelyn Leasher and Robert. J. Frank (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1986), 193.

³² Bailey, 195.

³³ Francis N. Blanchet to Modeste Demers, August 14, 1841, Blanchet Collection, APOA; Blanchet, Second Willamette Mission Report, 1839, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

³⁴ John Minto, "Early Days," 29-30.

they were willing to share with the stranger anything they had.”³⁵ De Mofras, like Jason Lee several year before, noted the gregarious, sociable attitude of the French Canadians. When de Mofras visited the settlement in the fall of 1841, the French Canadians plied the French traveler for information about France. They gave him a warm welcome at their farms, loaned him the “best horses,” and supplied him with guides for his exploration of the Willamette Valley.³⁶

The observations of Margaret Jewett Bailey, the former Methodist missionary who settled in the Champoege area with her husband William Bailey in 1839, attests to the class, ethnic, and religious differences between those Americans associated with the Methodist establishment and the French-Indian families. As a devout, educated Methodist, Bailey came to Oregon with strict notions about proper social etiquette and religious practice. In addition to the language barrier, Bailey found it difficult to establish close relationships with the French-Indian families because in her eyes they not only lacked education, sophistication, and an appreciation for her religious principles, but they demonstrated behaviors and attitudes that were morally reprehensible. She noted in her autobiographical novel that her relations with her “French” neighbors left her in “want of christian [sic] society.” According to Bailey, “the principle ornaments of conversation” in the quarter were “infidelity, blasphemy, worldliness, and all manner of ungodliness.”³⁷ Bailey was particularly annoyed by the settlers’ lively social activities on Sunday. Rather than spend the day in prayer or quiet contemplation, the French-Indian settlers were wont to “cart and pack their wheat to mill, go for their flour, trade cattle and horses, gamble, run races, &c.” Bailey even noted with distress that during the funeral procession to bury Marie Chehalis, wife of François Quesnel,

³⁵ H.S. Lyman, ed., “Reminiscences of F.X. Matthieu,” *OHQ* 1:1 (March 1900): 73-104 “Matthieu,” 90.

³⁶ DuFlot de Mofras, *Travels*, vol. 2, 109.

³⁷ Bailey, 194.

in May 1841, two men left the procession to examine some nearby wheat.³⁸ She could not understand how the settlers could be so “profane and intemperate” and “not lose their standing in the church!”³⁹

Bailey’s ingrained anti-Catholic views led her to misperceive the settlers’ relationship with both Church officials and the officers of the HBC. Anglo-American settler Medorem Crawford confirmed that the French-Indian families engaged in social activities such as horseracing, activities that were not viewed well by HBC Chief Factor McLoughlin in Vancouver. Crawford asserted that McLoughlin kept himself informed of the settlers activities and would lecture them for their intemperate behavior.⁴⁰ So too would the resident Catholic priest, Father Blanchet. His letters from the early 1840s contain occasional remarks about what Blanchet perceived as morally disreputable behavior amongst the French-Indian settlers. When Blanchet traveled to Fort Vancouver to perform funeral services for HBC clerk William Kittson a few days after Christmas in 1841, the Willamette settlers took the opportunity to organize a dancing ball at the farm of André Longtain at Champoege. The event itself was not as troubling to Blanchet as the fact that the French Canadians had invited Protestants and “three men living in concubinage.”⁴¹

Blanchet took the settlers behavior personally, feeling that it reflected poorly on both himself and the Catholic Church. Blanchet attributed this behavior to his absence and the “work of the demon.” His reacted by redoubling his efforts to instruct and supervise the settlers, and at gain additional missionaries to aid him at the St. Paul.⁴² In an undated letter to

³⁸Bailey, 198 & 195. See Harriet Munnick’s annotation on François Quesnel, Sr. where she notes the connection between Bailey’s “Indian woman, wife of a neighbor, buried to day” and the burial of Marie Chehalis, Quesnel’s wife. Munnick, *CCRPNW-SP*, A-83.

³⁹Bailey, 198.

⁴⁰Crawford, “The Missionaries,” 11.

⁴¹Francis N. Blanchet to Modeste Demers, February 9, 1842, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

⁴²Blanchet to Demers, February 9, 1842.

Joseph Signay, Archbishop of Quebec City, from 1842, Blanchet further elaborated on the settlers behavior and his efforts to reform the populace:

The disorder reigned in the village of the engages, the vice showed itself with affront. The fear of God and his judgments . . . with the help of grace and the protection of Marie, patron of the chapel, had begun to be felt. The criminal liaisons were broken or changed into holy alliances. The symbols of the apostles and the ten commandments were explained in a series of evenings.⁴³

For Blanchet, the French-Indian families stubbornly clung to attitudes and practices that reflected their history in the fur trade, as well as the independent streak of the Lower Canadian peasantry. However, de Mofras, the French traveler who visited the settlement in the fall of 1841, viewed Blanchet's role in a more positive light. De Mofras saw the settlers' willingness to follow the guidance of Blanchet in the absence of a civil authority. The Frenchman noted a "touching incident indicative" of Blanchet's "patriarchal justice." After a community council comprised of several French Canadians and presided over by Blanchet found a French Canadian guilty of having stolen the horse of an American, the man received a stiff sentence. He was ordered to return the horse, and remain outside the door of the mission church without entering for three months. However, after the second week, Blanchet allowed the man to rejoin the congregation. De Mofras concluded that Blanchet's punishment was so effective because it embodied a type of restorative justice that redeemed the individual while also strengthening the community.⁴⁴

Although Francis N. Blanchet criticized the morality and social behavior of the French-Indian settlers—including what he perceived as a sometimes less than robust support for the Church—both he and outside observers remarked on the general community-wide importance of the Catholic mission and the religious practices of its members. The "great

⁴³ Francis N. Blanchet to Joseph Signay, n. d. [fall?] 1842, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

⁴⁴ DuFlot de Mofras, *Travels*, 113-114.

dispersion of the dwellings," weather constraints in the winter and fall, the men's intense work schedules in the sowing and harvest seasons, and the long work hours of the women and tended to hamper Blanchet's efforts to insure regular church attendance and religious instruction in the community. Nonetheless, Blanchet reported continued success in the recitation of prayers within the family homes, and increased knowledge of the catechism.⁴⁵ Neighbor Margaret Jewett Bailey lamented the fact that by the early 1840s "not one of Indians, half-breeds, or whites who joined the mission church during the great revival of religion . . . in 1839 or previously to that time, are now members of the Methodist Church." They had come instead under the influence of Blanchet and the Catholic Church.⁴⁶ Indeed, the settlers showed their continued support for the Willamette mission by donating the labor for the mission farm. The proceeds from the crops raised on the farm went towards the support of the church and its social services, which included education and the care of widows and orphans.⁴⁷

Following petitions to both Archbishop Signay in Quebec City and HBC Governor George Simpson in Red River for additional staff for the Columbia Mission, Blanchet and Modest Demers finally received aid in the fall of 1842. French Canadian priests Antoine Langlois and Jean Baptiste Zacharie Bolduc arrived by boat from Boston via the Sandwich Islands in mid-September 1842 after having spent nearly a year in transit. They served as deacons for the first high mass celebrated at St. Paul on September 18, 1841. Shortly

⁴⁵ Langerholm, *Notices*, 77; Francis N. Blanchet to George Simpson, November 15, 1841; Francis N. Blanchet to Joseph Provencher, March 22, 1842, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

⁴⁶ Bailey, *The Grains*, 139. Bailey noted that Angelique Carpentier, a French-Indian woman who had been education at the Methodist Mission, expressed little interest in either Methodism or Roman Catholicism.

⁴⁷ DuFlot de Mofras, *Travels*, 113.

thereafter, Blanchet assigned Langlois to the Willamette Mission and Bolduc to the Cowlitz Mission.⁴⁸

Native-Newcomer Relations in Ahantchuyuk Territory/French Prairie

By the early 1840s demographic realities were such in Ahantchuyuk territory/French Prairie, that the indigenous Kalapuyan group was outnumbered by the French-Indian families that had been moving into the area over the previous dozen years. Given Lieutenant Wilkes' estimate of 600 Natives for the entire Willamette Valley Kalapuyan population in 1841, the Ahantchuyuk likely included some 50 people at that time.⁴⁹ In contrast, the number of French-Indian settlers stood at 322, with 75 men, 67 women, and 180 children in some 64 families.⁵⁰ Since the first attack of the intermittent fever in the summer of 1832, all of the Kalapuyan groups, including the Ahantchuyuk, had endured some ten years of infectious disease outbreaks and accompanying ancillary difficulties (impaired immune systems, reduced fertility rates and increased child mortality).

Another factor affecting the Ahantchuyuk and other Kalapuyan groups, such as the Tualatin and Yamhill, was the on-going ecological transformation of the Willamette Valley that began with inception of fur trapping and the introduction of Euro-American farming and

⁴⁸ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 110 and Langerholm, *Notices*, 75. For Bolduc's account of the missionaries' 1841-1842 journey to Oregon, see Jean Baptiste Zacharie Bolduc, *Mission of the Columbia*, edited and translated by Edward J. Kowrach (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1979).

⁴⁹ In 1852, Anson Dart estimated the Kalapuyan population at 560. In 1859, approximately 330 Kalapuyans resided on the Grand Ronde Reservation, where all the Willamette Valley indigenous groups had been forcibly resettled in the mid-1850s. Anson Dart, "Annual Report of the Oregon Superintendency of Indian Affairs, 1851," *Sen. Ex. Doc. 1*, 32nd Cong., 1 Sess; John F. Miller, "Grand Ronde Indian Agent's Annual Report," in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1859* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1859), 429-432. See also, Stephen Dow Beckham, "The Myth of the Vanishing Kalapuyans," in *What Price Eden? - The Willamette Valley in Transition* (Salem: Mission Mill Museum, 1988), 53-64; and Henry B. Zenk, "Chinook Jargon and Native Cultural Persistence in the Grand Ronde Indian Community," (Ph.D diss., University of Oregon, 1984), 82-86.

⁵⁰ White, *Census of Settlers in the Oregon Country*, 1842.

husbandry.⁵¹ Given the fragmentary evidence from the period, it is difficult to measure the rate of this change or the degree of impact it had on the Ahantchuyuk. However, since the French-Indian settlers had lived in the area for some twelve years, and held some of the largest flocks of horses and farm animals, their impact may have been the greatest in Ahantchuyuk/French Prairie area. The French-Indian settlers and the small number of Americans continued to hunt the local wild game and fowl, plow prairie land, and allowed their farm animals to eat away the native flora, such as the camas and wapato, the Kalapuyans' staples.

The limited evidence on the Kalapuyans in general, and the Ahantchuyuk in particular, for this period suggests that they followed various strategies to adapt to the changing situation. As they were able in the midst of a growing settler population, the small bands of Kalapuyans followed their subsistence rounds and continued to burn the Willamette Valley on an annual basis.⁵² The Kalapuyans would also seek assistance and work amongst the settler population. This appears to have been perhaps more prevalent in the Ahantchuyuk/French Prairie area given the kin relations between some of the Kalapuyans and the French-Indian families. For example, French Canadian emigrant François Xavier Matthieu, who arrived in Oregon in 1842 remembered that Negro slavery "did not make much of stir on French Prairie" in the mid 1800s. This was because there was a pool of hard-working, low-wage Indian laborers ready to work on the farms or man canoes in the river.⁵³ According to the Matthieu, the Indians worked in exchange for foodstuffs and goods such blankets. Charles Wilkes also reported that the introduction of cattle in the Willamette Valley

⁵¹James L. Ratcliff. "What Happened to the Kalapuya? A Study of the Depletion of Their Economic Base," *The Indian Historian* 6:3 (Summer 1973): 27-33.

⁵²Wilkes, "Report," 290.

⁵³Lyman, "Matthieu," 101.

“exerts an influence in domesticating the Indians, not only in changing their habits, but food, and attaching them to a locality.”⁵⁴

Given these realities, by the early 1840s, both Catholic and Methodist missionaries' efforts to convert the local Kalapuyans waned as the two groups directed their primary efforts toward settler communities and Native groups ostensibly more receptive to missionization. This missionaries shifted their focus in response to several developments: the decline in the Kalapuyan population and the increase in the settler population, the continuing disinterest of most Kalapuyans in the missionaries' message, and the focus of missionary efforts outside the mid-Willamette Valley in areas such the Clackamas River, the Clatsop Plains, the Columbia Plateau, at the several sites north of the Columbia in present-day Washington state.⁵⁵ There was concomitant increase in competition between the Catholic and Protestant missionaries in these areas during the early 1840s.

In the Columbia Mission Report for 1842, dated May 8, 1843, Blanchet devoted several long passages to his interactions with the local Kalapuyans. According to Blanchet, *Les Kalapouïas* continued to reside on both sides of the Willamette Valley southward to HBC fort at the source of the Umpqua River as in the pre-contact period. In his estimation, their numbers were decreasing with each passing year due to illness and privation. They lived in small, “scattered” groups and continued to follow their traditional subsistence rounds (Blanchet refers to them as “vagabonds”). Their decision to keep themselves at a distance from the missionaries, which had been one of their original reactions to the Methodists, was also a reaction to Blanchet's sporadic evangelizing efforts. Blanchet was particularly

⁵⁴ Wilkes, “Report,” 290.

⁵⁵ While Francis N. Blanchet's missionizing efforts and writings about the Kalapuyans are inconsistent, the documentation of his efforts amongst the Clackamas Upper Chinookans living near the confluence of the Clackamas and Willamette Rivers below Willamette Falls is much stronger. See for example, Langerholm, *Notices*, Notice No. 5, 79-85.

annoyed by their disinterest in Christian conversion, noting their "indifference and coldness is ever the same."⁵⁶

In 1842 Blanchet wrote Quebec City Archbishop Joseph Signay that the missionaries "had done less in 1842 for those neighboring Natives [of the Willamette Mission] and those of Puget Sound than in previous years, a result of lack of time."⁵⁷ The few incidents that he records for this period were largely the result of deathbed illnesses. On these occasions, local Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans living in close proximity to the French-Indian settlers, called upon Blanchet for spiritual assistance. Like the young Kalapuyan orphans who first approached the Methodist missionaries for aid in the mid 1830s, these Kalapuyans called on Blanchet in a time of severe distress.⁵⁸

In the spring of 1842, a local Ahantchuyuk headman from the village of Champoeg ("Champoik" in Blanchet's rendering) whom Blanchet identified as "Hiyesset" requested that Blanchet come to assist his only son who was then dying of an unnamed illness. Blanchet visited Hiyesset's lodge, instructed his son and baptized him before he died. Blanchet then performed a burial service for the family. Sometime later, around the sixth of March, 1842, Hiyesset sent a messenger to Blanchet who was then en route for Willamette Falls. The headman requested that Blanchet return immediately to the Ahantchuyuk village in order to attend to the man's wife, who now also lay dying. Blanchet complied with Hiyesset's request and offered the same service to the headman's wife that had given to his son some weeks earlier. In Blanchet's version of events, Hiyesset's wife received instruction and was duly

⁵⁶ Francis N Blanchet, Columbia Mission Report, 1842, May 8, 1843, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

⁵⁷ Francis N. Blanchet to Joseph Signay, n.d. [fall?] 1842, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

⁵⁸ Blanchet, Columbia Mission Report, 1842.

baptized before her death. Upon baptizing the Ahantchuyuk woman, Blanchet “gave” her the name of Marie, which he recorded in the St. Paul Church register on March 6, 1842.⁵⁹

Blanchet was particularly moved by what he perceived as the Kalapuyan woman’s faith, which he describes as “rather intense.” Blanchet expressed empathy for Hiyesset’s wife mixed with distain for the physical conditions within the Kalapuyan lodge: “How it is pitiful to see one’s fellow man suffer, laid out on the hard ground, hardly covered, perishing and dying as much from destitution and hunger as from illness.”⁶⁰ However, Blanchet also saw the event in largely spiritual terms. For Blanchet, the deathbed conversion of Hiyesset’s wife was a success in that it was a means of sewing a seed for what he hoped would be addition spiritual conversions of the Kalapuyans. The illness might serve as means to possibly lead the Kalapuyans toward a better appreciation of the truth presented by the Catholic missionary.

After “Marie,” Hiyesset’s wife, passed away about a week after her baptism, and her funeral and burial became an inter-community event. On March 13, 1842, the local French-Indian families transported her body by cart to Catholic mission cemetery located several miles south of Champoeg (present-day St. Paul). A large group of neighbors on horseback accompanied the burial procession. There Marie was buried alongside her recently deceased son. Afterwards, Hiyesset requested grain and flour for his villagers. Blanchet concluded the story by noting that Hiyesset also requested and obtained a robe to shroud his wife’s body.⁶¹

⁵⁹Blanchet, Columbia Mission Report, 1842; Munnick, *CCRPNW-SP*, vol. 1, 45. In the published church records, the headman’s name is rendered as “Hiyesset” and the village of Champoeg as “Champoik.” In the manuscript of 1842 Columbia Mission Report, Blanchet’s occasionally illegible handwriting suggest that he may have originally recorded the headman’s name as “Hiyepet.” Henry Zenk has indicated that that there is as yet no known record of a man named “Hiyesset” or “Hiyepet” from the French Prairie Kalapuyans amongst the early census or genealogical records for the Grande Ronde Reservation, where the remaining Kalapuyans were forcibly resettled in the mid-1850s. Henry Zenk, Person Communication, 2003.

⁶⁰ Blanchet, Columbia Mission Report, 1842.

⁶¹ Blanchet, Columbia Mission Report, 1842; Munnick, *CCRPNW-SP*, vol. 1, 44.

In mid-April 1842, Blanchet was engaged in a mission to the Clackamas, an Upper Chinookan group living near the mouth of the Clackamas River below Willamette Falls, when he received a final summons from the Ahantchuyuk at Champoeg. A villager, perhaps Hiyesset, requested that Blanchet repair immediately to Champoeg to instruct and baptize a young man, a neighbor of Hiyesset, who was also on his deathbed. The young man was suffering from an illness that left him "covered with sores that gave off a revolting odor." Blanchet further described the ill youth as "living skeleton" before his death.⁶² These few details suggest a possible case of the illusive "Columbia leprosy" that researchers have not been able to clearly identify (other possible ailment might be syphilis or scurvy).⁶³ Modeste Demers described the symptoms of the disease and the terrible suffering of its victims in an 1842 letter:

The natives of the Columbia are subject to a terrible malady very similar to leprosy of the Jews. This cruel malady is contagious, and as soon as it shows itself the unfortunate victim is isolated without pity from his family, relatives, and friends, lodged in a hut apart, and has not further communication with his fellow men than by voice from afar. They do not touch what he has used. They give him circumspect medicines, which occasionally bring about a cure if the sickness is not obstinate and without alarming severity. A woman died of it late in condition difficult to describe. Her feet, hands, and especially her face, in complete purification, shed a noisome and unbearable odor. The malady had resisted to this day the knowledge of doctors in this area.⁶⁴

In describing what Blanchet perceived to be the young Ahantchuyuk man's strong faith, he noted that the Catholic Ladder fascinated the individual as he lay dying. The gruesome nature of the illness, the social isolation of the sufferer, and Blanchet's willingness to minister to the young man, might explain his motivation for seeking some spiritual comfort from this missionary. For Kalapuyans, medical and spiritual assistance were closely linked in the person of the shaman. Margaret Bailey noted in the early 1840s that "one of the

⁶² Blanchet, Columbia Mission Report, 1842.

⁶³ Boyd, *The Coming*, 296-300; Boyd, Personal Communication, May 2003.

⁶⁴ Modeste Demers to M. C. Vancouver, March 17, 1842, in Langerholm, *Notices*, 111-112.

women, when I went to the lodge, was using her enchantments over a sick man in order to restore his health. The facility of these prescriptions I do not understand, but suppose they have confidence in them as they are frequently resorted to.”⁶⁵

If the villagers’ local shamans proved unable to treat the diseases then affecting the Natives, perhaps the knowledge and religion of Blanchet might offer some relief. From a Kalapuyan perspective, it was not a question so much of accepting the “truth” of Catholicism as Blanchet saw it, but rather of accessing the spiritual power Blanchet offered as a response to unprecedented social change and social crises—infectious disease epidemics remaining a dominant factor.⁶⁶ Given the history of social and kin relations between the Ahantchuyuk and the French-Indian families, this young man, as well as Hiyesset and his family, appeared open to the religion of their neighbors because it might be beneficial to them.

The Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyans were not unwilling to seek assistance from the settlers amongst them as evidence by Hiyesset’s request for a burial shroud and foodstuffs from the French-Indian families who attended the burial of his wife. Margaret Jewett Bailey, living in French Prairie, wrote about the occasional requests for assistance from the Ahantchuyuk living nearby who needed food, medicine, and clothing. She expressed annoyance at what she perceived as their persistent requests and their lack of gratitude.⁶⁷ Since the Kalapuyans were willing to seek material assistance from the local settlers, it is not illogical to suggest that they would seek spiritual-medical assistance as well.

Although Blanchet may have taken encouragement from these deathbed conversions, and written glowingly about them back to his superior in Quebec, the incidents did not lead

⁶⁵ Bailey, *The Grains*, 147.

⁶⁶ For a comparative view, see Kenneth M. Morrison, *The Solidarity of Kin: Ethnohistory, Religious Studies and the Algonkian-French Religious Encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 131-146.

⁶⁷ Bailey, *The Grains*, 190-191 & 201.

to successful conversions of surviving Ahantchuyuk or other Kalapuyans. His work in French Prairie remained focused on the French-Indian families. In 1843 Blanchet himself admitted as much, when he noted that the baptisms he performed at Champoege (*Campement de sable*) were in fact the most he had done for “the poor tribe of the *Kalapooïes*” in the past year.⁶⁸ When not at the Willamette Mission, Blanchet was busy on missions to Native groups in other areas in the Pacific Northwest, overseeing the efforts of Modeste Demers and Bolduc in the Cowlitz Valley, and communicating with both HBC officials and the Catholic hierarchy in Quebec, the United States, and Rome about the future of the Catholic mission in Oregon.

Political Relations on the Eve of the Migration of 1843

While the French-Indian families in the Willamette Valley housed and assisted their Kalapuyan neighbors and kin, they also engaged in tackling social and political problems developing within the settler community. In the years prior to the American overland migration of 1843, a series of events tested the bi-cultural community, raising questions about the nature of their relations with the American Methodists and American settlers in the Willamette Valley. While the actions of the American settlers and Methodists have been studied in some depth, my objective here is to explore the French-Indian perspective on these

⁶⁸ 1842 Columbia Mission Report; *CCRPNW-SP*, vol. 1, 47. Blanchet wrote that he had made exceptions for several “children (*enfants*) baptized in this camp at Champoeëk.” In the following decades, American Protestant writers came to see the Roman Catholic missions to the Pacific Northwest Natives as more “successful” than the original Protestant missionaries, such as the Methodists in the Willamette Valley and the Presbyterians in the Plateau region. These writers attributed the “success” of the Catholic missionaries to “celibacy and formalities, absence of business and separation from the ordinary affairs of men” and the “forms, ceremonies, and spectacular features of worship” that were “calculated to impress the simple-minded natives and repress their savagery by appeal in the most effectual manner to the superstition in their natures.” See S. A. Clarke, *Pioneer Days*, vol. 2, 383.

events.⁶⁹ The first event was a controversy over the prosecution of French-Canadian Jean Baptiste Perrault for theft in 1841; the second was the attempt at organizing a settler government following the death of American Ewing Young in 1841, the third was a series of community meetings in 1843 that resulted in the formation of a provisional government.

The prosecution of Jean Baptiste Perrault for theft—or more correctly, for retaining lost property—revealed not only on-going sectarian conflicts between Catholic and Methodist missionaries, but perhaps more importantly, differing notions about civil governance in the settler colony. In early October 1840, a party of Methodists missionaries headed by the Reverends John H. Frost and W. W. Kone was ascending the Willamette River from Mission Bottom to Champoege when household goods, clothing, and personal items belonging to the Kone family fell into the river after the overturning of a canoe (Frost and Kone were en route to establish a mission in the territory of the Clatsop Lower Chinookans). A number of the items were later recovered while others were lost.⁷⁰ Some three months later on January 5, 1841, Joseph Gervais, accompanied by James L. Whitcomb of the Methodist Mission, visited the home of Jean Baptiste Perrault and Angèle Chehalis. Jason Lee had asked Gervais to accompany Whitcomb to the Perrault-Chehalis farm because some of the

⁶⁹ For the most recent work on the provision government see, John A. Hussey, *Champoege: Place of Transition, A Disputed History* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society/Oregon State Highway Commission, 1967); Robert J. Loewenberg, "Creating a Provision Government in Oregon: A Revision," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 86:1 (January 1977): 13-24; Kent David Richards, "Growth and Development of Government in the Far West" The Oregon Provisional Government, Jefferson Territory; Provisional and Territorial Nevada," (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1966); Kent D. Richards, "The Methodists and the Formation of the Oregon Provisional Government," *PNQ* 61:2 (April 1970): 87-93. Robert Loewenberg provides an overview of the larger historical literature dating back to the late nineteenth century in "Creating a Provisional Government."

⁷⁰ John H. Frost, "Journal of John H. Frost," edited by Nellie B. Pipes, *OHQ* 35:1 (March 1934), 64-66; Francis N. Blanchet to Modeste Demers, February 11, 1841, Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA.

local Kalapuyans had told the Methodists that the Perrault family held *des effets naufragés*, or drowned objects, presumably belonging to the Kones.⁷¹

Perrault expressed surprise at being accused of possessing the lost Kone belongings and permitted a search of his premises. After the questioning of his wife, Angèle Chehalis, and their twenty-year-old daughter, Reine Perrault, the women brought out dresses, linen, and tools for Gervais and Whitcomb to examine. In Blanchet's second-hand account of the events, Perrault claimed that the recovery of the objects had occurred without his knowledge, thereby shifting the blame onto his wife and daughter. Gervais and Whitcomb took possession of the items and transported them to the Methodist mission. Upon hearing of the incident from Joseph Gervais later that evening, Blanchet penned a letter to Jason Lee, which he sent the next day. Blanchet informed the head of the Methodist Mission that if Perrault were found guilty of retaining lost property, he would have to make a full restitution and express sincere regret for his actions. Blanchet employed a particularly religious argument, making clear that Blanchet would hold the man accountable according to Catholic teaching. He invited Lee to come to the Catholic mission to investigate the affair in the interests of rendering justice.⁷²

In Lee's response to Blanchet, the Methodist minister agreed that the affair should be thoroughly investigated and a proper resolution agreed upon. However, rather than take a direct role himself, he begged off because of illness and expressed confidence that the civil officers selected by the Methodist missionaries in 1839 should handle the investigation:

⁷¹ Blanchet to Demers, February 11, 1841. Blanchet does not identify Perrault in this initial letter to Demers, but in a subsequent report to Archbishop Signay of Quebec City. See Francis N. Blanchet, 1841 Mission Report (June 10-October 12, 1841), Francis N. Blanchet Collection, APOA. Here Blanchet spells Perrault's surname as "Perreau." This "Perreau" undoubtedly refers to Jean Baptiste Perrault because there is no other French Canadian of a remotely similar name listed as living in the Willamette Valley in either the Catholic Church Records or in Elijah White census of a year later.

⁷² Francis N. Blanchet to Jason Lee, January 6, 1841, copy enclosed in Blanchet to Demers, February 11, 1841.

James L. Whitcomb, sheriff, and David Leslie, Justice of the Peace. Lee attempted to sidestep Blanchet's authority by suggesting that both he and Blanchet write to HBC Chief Factor John McLoughlin to sound out the chief factor's views on the company's jurisdiction in the case. Lee also explained that Blanchet had not been invited to accompany Gervais and Whitcomb to Perrault's home because Gervais likely did not think it necessary (Blanchet was also saying mass at the time that Gervais and Whitcomb passed by the Catholic mission).⁷³

Following the reception of the letter from Jason Lee, Blanchet organized a public meeting at the Catholic Mission on January 8, 1841 to consider the accusation against Perrault. Although Blanchet invited the Americans to join the meeting, he only noted the presence of James Whitcomb. It is evident in Blanchet's actions and his letters to Lee regarding this controversy, that the priest believed it was his responsibility to lead the French-Indian community in prosecuting Perrault, and punishing him, should he be found guilty. Blanchet's position stemmed not only from his fears about the Protestant missionaries efforts to gain influence and converts amongst the French Canadian Catholics, but also from a deep-seated bitterness towards the Methodists, and from a very different conception of civil governance. The American Methodists favored the institution of an American inspired legal system and political institutions. In contrast, Blanchet maintained the position that since Oregon was not yet American territory, the French-Indian Catholic community could judge and censure its own members. In Blanchet's view, working with civil authorities selected by the Methodists regarding problems with the French-Indian community was not only unnecessary, it was also a threat to community solidarity and Blanchet's own authority.

⁷³ Jason Lee to Francis N. Blanchet, January 7, 1841, copy enclosed in Blanchet to Demers, February 11, 1841.

However, contrary to Blanchet's view, the reaction of the French-Indian settlers themselves was not simply one of either following Blanchet or acquiescing to the Methodists. Rather, the settlers expressed a willingness to support a middle course. They would judge and punish Perrault themselves according to their own community standards, and they would cooperate with the civil authorities selected by the Methodists in order to reach a resolution with the Protestant community—and in particular the Kone family—which had been the victims in the case. This middle course is evident in Blanchet's narration of the community's actions during the following days.

At the public meeting on Friday, January 8, 1841 Blanchet read his letter to Jason Lee and Lee's reply. Immediately thereafter, he turned the meeting over to Whitcomb, in keeping with the wishes of the settlers present. The settlers thereupon agreed that a tribunal should judge the man. Although the community apparently did not conduct an official trial that day, those present seem to have reached a consensus about Perrault's guilt in the case. At the conclusion of the meeting, Whitcomb asked the accused to go to the Methodist Mission the following Monday, to resolve the matter with the possibility of a formal trial. This was not the conclusion of the affair that day, however.

In describing the public meeting to Modeste Demers in a letter dated February 11, 1841, Blanchet wrote that "the people [French-Indian settlers] had the witnesses speak after the public assembly was finished." According to Blanchet, the two Native witnesses, identified as a girl and boy, had been "in the service" of Perrault at the time the Kone belongings were recovered, but left soon afterwards. The two testified that they had found a trunk belonging to the Kones in early October and had brought it to the Perrault-Chehalis home. It contained two "Indian robes," some cotton cloth, some locks and augers, and other

tools. Upon arriving home that night, Perrault destroyed the trunk and forbade the Native youths from speaking about the discovery. However, the two soon left the family's service, and the Natives to whom young female witness "belonged" decided "to request a reward for what she had found." Blanchet's statement suggests that the youths may have been slaves of some local Kalapuyans. These Kalapuyans thereupon informed the Methodists of the whereabouts of the Kone possessions.⁷⁴ In addition to the testimony from the Native youths, some of the French-Indian settlers spoke about gossip circulating in the community that had also raised suspicions about the Perrault-Chehalis family. At the Christmas vigil of 1840, Reine Perrault, the daughter of the accused, had been baptized in one of the lost Kone dresses that been retailored for the special event.⁷⁵

Although Blanchet attributed Perrault's actions to the man's own weakness and his anxiety about facing punishment from Chief Factor McLoughlin at Fort Vancouver, fearing deportation to Canada, Blanchet, for his part, was determined to make an example of the French Canadian and his family. Blanchet pushed ahead with a community punishment and sanctioning of Perrault prior to a formal trial at the Methodist Mission. Blanchet declared that Perrault and his family would undergo a series of trials requiring penitence and restitution: 1) they remain at the doorstep of mission church for year rather than hear mass inside with the rest of the parishioners, 2) Perrault would receive three lashes from his compatriots in the presence of the men, women and local Indians at the mass, 3) he must make the rounds of the settlement and ask pardon from each household for his weakness and the scandal he had caused, and 4) he must present himself before the head of the Methodist mission and offer to make reparation for what he had done.

⁷⁴ Blanchet to Demers, February 11, 1841.

⁷⁵ Blanchet baptized Reine Perrault, age 20, during the Christmas vigil, December 24, 1840. See Munnick, *CCRPNW-SP*, 20.

After the first mass at which this sentence was imposed (Sunday, January 10, 1841), there was an emotional scene, when the French Canadian and his family were outside of the church. Everyone cried as Perrault repented and asked forgiveness. He also received "discipline on the part of his compatriots," and his wife and daughter "also received some on the part of the women."⁷⁶ Finally, Perrault and his family stood up and were welcomed back into the community with words of admonishment, Blanchet's instruction that he must strive to correct his relationship with the community, the Methodists, and with the Church.⁷⁷

The next Monday (January 11), Perrault went to the Methodist Mission and asked Jason Lee what he should do to make amends, much as he had with the Catholic community. Lee was surprised, declined to take up the matter, and insisted instead that the matter be decided through due process of law. As a result, the justice of the peace, David Leslie, took custody of the accused. A jury was selected and witnesses called. In contrast to the public meeting at the Catholic mission, the Indian witnesses were not called, but rather two white men, presumably Joseph Gervais and Whitcomb. They declared that Perrault had condemned himself when confronted by Whitcomb in January. They declared he was wrong for having kept the objects rather than returning them and for then denying that they were in his home. The jury found the man guilty, though the charge was not clear to Blanchet when he recorded the events: Was Perrault guilty of stealing or of receiving of lost goods? In any event,

⁷⁶ F. N. Blanchet to M. Demers, February 11, 1841.

⁷⁷ This incident, which occurred in January 1841, parallels a similar one that occurred in the fall of 1841. While visiting the French-Indian settlement in the Willamette Valley in the fall of 1841, French traveler Eugène DuFlot de Mofras witnesses a similar incident: "While staying at St. Paul on the Willamette a touching incident indicative of this patriarchal justice was witnessed. A French Canadian was accused of having stolen a horse from an American, and confessed his guilt. A council consisting of the heads of families, presided over by Father Blanchet, required him to restore the horse to its owner and, moreover, for three months to remain near the door of the church during services, but not to enter. The man agreed quietly to this penalty, but on the second Sunday, Father Blanchet, after a brief address, went out, brought the man into the church, embraced him with tears in his eyes, and had him sit down with the other settlers. Probably no punishment meted out for such an offense by a civil judge would have been so effective and in addition, the paternalism of this reproof had the inestimable advantage of removing any sign that might otherwise fall on the culprit." Mofras, *Travels*, 113-114.

Perrault was fined a total of 82 *piastres*, or dollars: 25 to the Kones, 25 to aid the building of a jail, and 32 for the costs of the jury. Although Blanchet questioned the proceedings, the French Canadian settlers agreed with the judgment.⁷⁸

A month after the controversy about the prosecution of Jean Baptiste Perrault, the settler community experienced another serious problem requiring community cooperation on a civil matter. In early February 1841, American Ewing Young, who was then settled along the Yamhill River on the west side of the Willamette River, died leaving a considerable estate of some seventy-five enclosed acres, a herd of 400 horses and 600 head of cattle. At Young's funeral ministers from the Methodist Mission suggested that the Willamette Valley settlers call a public meeting to "organize a compact to appoint and an administrator" for Ewing's estate.⁷⁹ The Methodist held an initial, informal meeting soon after the funeral, and then a second, public meeting with some of the local settlers on February 17, 1841. Those present decided to call a larger public meeting for the Willamette Valley settlers for the purpose of organizing committees to draft a constitution, a legal code, and elect several civil authorities, including a governor, a supreme judge with probate powers, justices of the peace, constables, an attorney general, a court clerk, a public recorder, a treasurer, road commissioners, and overseers of the poor.⁸⁰

A notice went out to the residents of the valley, including Blanchet, announcing that a public meeting was scheduled for February 18, 1841 at the Methodist Mission. Although Francis N. Blanchet was opposed to the organization of a formal settler government dominated by Americans, he grudgingly attended the meeting in order to help represent the

⁷⁸ Blanchet to Demers, February 11, 1841.

⁷⁹ Josiah L. Parrish, "Anecdotes of Intercourse with the Indians," P-A 4, .BAN, 97-98. For the 1842 statistics on the Ewing Young Estate, see Elijah White, *Census of Persons Living South of the Columbia, 1842*, Appendix 6.

⁸⁰ David C. Duniway and Neil R. Riggs, eds. "The Oregon Archives," *OHQ* 60: 2 (July 1959), 216-217.

interests of the French-Indian community. Blanchet wrote to his colleague Modeste Demers that he went to the meeting expecting to be verbally “attacked” by the Methodists.⁸¹

In writing the history of the development of a provisional government in Oregon, historians have tended to present the views and actions of Francis N. Blanchet as representing the views of the French-Indian community at large. In the histories written by the early pioneer chroniclers, the French Canadians are usually portrayed as an undifferentiated block largely opposing the formation of a compact in keeping with the supposed anti-American views of HBC officials and Father Blanchet.⁸² However, these interpretations have overlooked the history of cooperative community efforts and debates in French Prairie—even after the arrival of Blanchet added tensions to the relationship between the French-Indian community and the Methodist missionaries. Although there is no direct evidence from the ordinary French Canadian settlers themselves, their actions noted in the records and memoirs of American settlers, Methodist missionaries, and Father Blanchet himself, reveal a more complex colonial society at the time of the Ewing Young Estate debate. In fact, there were various factors that both linked and separated several factions within the larger settler society, which was comprised of the French-Indian families, the Methodist missionaries and their supporters, and the non-aligned or independent Americans such as Ewing Young.⁸³

The February 18 meeting at the Methodist Mission opened with tension between the ministers and Blanchet when the priest drew attention to the fact that the French Canadian

⁸¹ Blanchet to Demers, February 11, 1841. Although this letter is dated February 11th, this was in fact the date Blanchet started the long missive. He completed it on February 23rd and dispatched it sometime later.

⁸² For a concise review of this long-standing historiography, see Robert Loewenberg, “Creating,” 13-15. Loewenberg identifies this interpretive tradition with Francis Fuller Victor, the ghostwriter of H.H. Bancroft’s two volume *History of Oregon* (1886). Victor relied on William H. Gray’s flawed, bombastic denunciation of what he perceived as Roman Catholic and HBC conspiracies to snatch Oregon from the United States. See William H. Gray, *A History of Oregon, 1792-1849* (Portland: Harris & Holman, 1870).

⁸³ Loewenberg, “Creating,” 14-15.

Catholic settlers were not represented on the committee which had met on February 17th (which he describes as the "notification committee"). He questioned the legality of the assembly until it could be "declared competent," apparently by support from the Catholic community as well as the other American settlers. Although Blanchet does not specifically mention if such public approval was given by those assembled, it apparently was because the meeting proceeded to tackle the probate of Young's estate and the other issues raised by the Methodist. Over the course of the meeting, David Leslie was elected chairman of the committee of the whole, with Sidney Smith and Gustavas Hines as secretaries. The motions of the previous February 17 meeting were re-introduced (Blanchet mentions twelve motions) and debated, as well as a proposal concerning who should serve in the planned civil position.⁸⁴

According to Blanchet, the original list of individuals the Methodists put forward to fill the positions was rejected by the assembly, including a number of non-aligned Americans. As a result, a new list of compromise candidates was drawn up. At that point, Blanchet felt that organizational efforts were moving too fast. In order to have time to consider all the Methodist proposals and to confer with HBC Chief Factor John McLoughlin, Blanchet proposed postponing the election of officers until the first Tuesday in June, except for the positions of sheriff, supreme judge, and constable, and the committee members charged with drafting a constitution. According to Blanchet, the non-aligned Americans supported his position and agreed to his proposal in an effort to prevent the Methodist group from dominating all of the administrative position.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Blanchet to Demers, February 11, 1841.

⁸⁵ Blanchet to Demers, February 11, 1841.

Years later, Methodist missionary Josiah Parrish viewed the situation differently. He did not see a split amongst the Methodist and non-aligned Americans, but rather a near conspiracy by HBC officials, namely McLoughlin, to control the French Canadian settlers through Blanchet. In his 1878 interview with Hubert Bancroft and Asabel Bush, Parrish noted that the "priest I have no doubt was instructed by John McLoughlin to tell them not to participate in this matter. They were of another nation." Parrish also noted that he believed McLoughlin held a threat of expulsion over the French Canadians formerly employed with the company: if they did not behave he would ship them back to Canada. Thus, as interpreted by Parrish, the French Canadians who had participated in meetings about forming a compact were freemen independent of the company.⁸⁶

In seeking to placate Blanchet, the Methodist group proposed that he be given the position of presiding official over the assembly. However, Blanchet declined in order to retain his ability to address the assembly on his own terms. In his address, the priest noted the progress the assembly had made, but he also drew attention to the civil authority of HBC Chief Factor John McLoughlin, and questioned whether the actions of the Willamette settlers to create a separate government might be seen as a criticism of McLoughlin. David Leslie responded that given the increase in the number of settlers, a more formalized system of government was required to meet the needs of the people. However, Blanchet voiced his concerns that there was not such a great need and that he still questioned the authority of the officials who had judged Jean Baptiste Perrault a month before.⁸⁷

The assembly finally agreed on a compromise position. Ira L. Babcock was selected as supreme judge with probate powers; George Le Breton as court clerk and public recorder,

⁸⁶ Parrish, 76.

⁸⁷ Blanchet to Demers, February 11, 1841.

William Johnson as high sheriff, and long-timer settlers Xavier Laderoute, Pierre Bellique, and William McCarty as constables. Another group also agreed to serve on a committee to draft a constitution and a legal code. Francis N. Blanchet would serve as head of committee, accompanied by Jason Lee, David Dompierre, Gustavus Hines, André Chalifou, Robert Moore, Josiah Parrish, Etienne Lucier, and William Johnson. The assembly agreed to meet at the Catholic mission on the first Tuesday in June to continue the work of the committee.⁸⁸

On June 1, 1841, the settlers met for a second meeting to consider the work of the committee charged with drafting a constitution and legal code. As chairman of the committee, Blanchet reported that the committee had not met to complete the work because of a lack of time and "other reasons." Blanchet took responsibility for this failure and expressed his view that additional work was in fact not needed. Blanchet asked to be excused from his position on the committee, which the assembly agreed. The assembly promptly elected William Bailey to take Blanchet's place and asked the committee to meet in early August to prepare a report for the next assembly meeting, which they scheduled for the first Monday in October. The assembly also agreed to consult with HBC Chief Factor John McLoughlin and with U. S. envoy Lieutenant Charles Wilkes for their views on the formation of a civil government in the settlement.⁸⁹ Wilkes visited the Willamette settlers the next week, the second week of June 1841. Afterwards, he expressed his view to Blanchet, the Methodists, and the American settlers that a provisional government was not needed at the

⁸⁸ Duniway and Riggs, 217-218.

⁸⁹ Duniway and Riggs, 218-219; Francis N. Blanchet, 1841 Willamette Mission Report, Blanchet Collection, APOA.

time due to both the small size of the colony and the uncertainty about the future territorial status of Oregon.⁹⁰

Following the visit of Lieutenant Wilkes in the summer of 1841, efforts to establish a more formal civil government in the Willamette Valley lost momentum. Wilkes' own lack of support for the project coupled with that of Father Blanchet both played significant roles in deflating the movement. Other contributing factors included the tensions between religious and non-religious factions amongst the American population, and an absence of sustained support from the settlers themselves. This waning of support for an organizing effort was a consequence of timing and community needs. Given labor and time constraints the settlers faced during the summer and fall harvest seasons, they had more immediate concerns at home. Indeed, since the mid- 1830s, public assemblies and cooperative action had been organized in response to specific community needs, such probating the estate of Ewing Young and the trial of Jean Baptiste Perrault. With the probate judge selected, as well as civil officials to fill law enforcement positions, most settlers did not support the creation of an onerous a civil administration, one that would tax both their labors and property.⁹¹

Two years later in the spring of 1843, the need for coordinated community action in response to predatory attacks on livestock prompted the Willamette Valley male settlers, both American and French Canadian, to once again address the question of civil governance. With the expansion of the settler population, wolf attacks on the settlers' livestock had become a major concern. In February and March, the settlers called a series of "Wolf

⁹⁰ Charles Wilkes, *Narratives of the United States Exploring Expedition*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1845), 353-353; Blanchet, 1841 Willamette Report.

⁹¹ According to Wilkes the fact that additional officers and expenditures were not needed in the colony was an important factor in the waning of the organizing efforts. He quoted a settler by the name of "Johnson," a former HBC fur trapper, who told Wilkes "that they yet lived in the bush, and let all so right, there was no necessity for laws, lawyers, or magistrates." Wilkes, *Narrative*, 349.

Meetings” at various locations in the valley to deal with the threat. They agreed on a series of measures designed to pay bounties to local farmers, and even local Kalapuyans, for wolf pelts, with the aim of reducing the predator population. A group of Americans were also determined to renew efforts to establish a provisional government. On May 2, 1843 a larger group of some 100 Americans and French Canadians met at Champoege to debate the formation of such government, the writing of a civil code, and the election of civil authorities. On that date a majority of those present voted by *viva voce* for the formation of a community organization. Although there was notable opposition from most of the French Canadian settlers, at least seven, Pierre Bellique, François Bernier, David Dompierre, Joseph Gervais, Xavier Laderoute, Étienne Lucier, and François Xavier Matthieu, voted to join with the Americans and form a local government.⁹² In the final tally, the Americans held a small numerical advantage of some ten to twelve votes. At additional meetings in June and July, the settlers voted on specific motions for the creation of an organic law for the colony, selected officers who would oversee the enforcement of the law, and the collection of taxes.⁹³

Historians have customarily interpreted French Canadians’ opposition to the formation of civil government on May 2, 1843 in largely nationalist terms.⁹⁴ In this they have followed the standard mythology crafted by the American pioneer chroniclers who, unlike the French Canadians, left numerous accounts of their “triumphant” struggle to wrest the Oregon Country from the grip of the British Empire, and its representative, the Hudson’s Bay Company. Several of the individuals most active in agitating for a provisional government,

⁹² Robert Newell, *Oregon Herald*, December 9, 1866, cited in Russell B. Thomas, “Truth and Fiction of the Champoege Meeting,” *OHQ* 30:3 (September 1929), 224. Robert Newell was present at the Champoege meeting and had written the articles in the *Oregon Herald* to refute the narrative of William H. Gray, who was widely criticized by early Oregon settlers following the publication of his *History of Oregon* in 1870.

⁹³ Duniway & Riggs, 221-272. See also the memoirs of François Xavier Matthieu in Lyman, “Matthieu,” 90-99; and Parrish, 99-100.

⁹⁴ The most recent reiteration of this interpretation can be seen in Dorothy Nafus Morrison, *Outpost: John McLoughlin and the Far Northwest* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1999).

notably Robert Shortress and William H. Gray, harbored a particularly strong antipathy for the Hudson's Bay Company. From their perspective, opposition to the American settlers' plans coming from former fur trade laborers was suspect. They interpreted the French Canadians' opposition, or lack of support, as a pro-British, anti-American stance. They believed the French Canadians simply followed the instructions they presumably received from HBC Chief Factor John McLoughlin and Oregon Mission vicar, Francis N. Blanchet. There was also a decidedly anti-Catholic position on the part of some of the Americans leading the organizing efforts.⁹⁵

However, this interpretation is inconsistent with the history of social relations between the French-Indian community and the American settlers. It also overlooks the religious, cultural, and class differences separating the French Canadians from the Anglo-Celtic HBC officer corps, and their status as second-class citizens in Canada. Additionally, this interpretation erases tensions that existed within the French-Indian community itself. It is more accurate to attribute the French Canadians' reluctance to join the local government movement to a number of different factors. Although the documentary record on the French Canadians position in 1843 is limited (Blanchet makes only a brief reference to organizing efforts in his letters that year), a handful of other sources do provide some additional clues about its nature. François Xavier Matthieu and a few American chroniclers noted that the French Canadians who did support the organization of a provisional government in 1843 were the leading members of the community. Matthieu was a new arrival, but he had quickly become a prominent figure because he was educated, literate, and familiar with the United States political culture. Other probable supporters, Gervais, Bellique, Lucier, and Laderoute,

⁹⁵ For William H. Gray's anti-British, anti-HBC, and anti-Catholic views and his conspiracy theories relating to the organization of the provisional government, see his *A History of Oregon*, 279-81. Josiah Parrish expressed similar views in his 1878 interview with Hubert Bancroft.

were long-time residents with large land holdings. For ten years they had taken a lead role in participating with the American Methodists and other settlers in community projects. Given the belief that the Willamette Valley would come under American jurisdiction, they would have been motivated by a desire to continue their cooperation, and thereby have a voice in the developing colonial society.⁹⁶

As for the larger group of Canadians who opposed the 1843 organizing efforts, we can glean a sense of their views from a letter written in 1844 by a group who identified themselves as being "Canadian citizens, settlers of the Willamette." The signatories, Solomon Smith, Joseph Gervais, Francis Renay, Charles Pickett, and S.M. Holderness, apparently produced the address in collaboration with Francis Blanchet, since the original was written in French. The tone of the address suggests the signatories presented themselves as representatives for the larger group of French Canadian settlers. They expressed a willingness to participate in the creation of institutions for the benefit of the community at large. However, they voiced concerns about equitable representation, substantial government expenses requiring a heavy tax burden, bureaucracy, the issuance of land titles that may not be legal when the international boundary is established, legal "trickery," and respect for the customs of the French Canadians and the local Indians.⁹⁷

Based on the Organic Laws of 1844 and 1845—which recognized equal rights for male citizens from the United States and Great Britain and theoretically sanctioned the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which recognized the pre-existing land title of the region's

⁹⁶ Lyman, "Matthieu," 94. This is how Matthieu remembered his reasons for voting for the formation of a government. Josiah Parrish remembered that one man, "Gervais Laderoute" voted with the majority. Joseph Gervais and Xavier Laderoute were two different people. Parrish, 76-77.

⁹⁷ Frien, P. J., trans., "Address" [of the Canadian Settlers of the Willamette Valley], *OHQ* 13:4 (December 1912): 338-343. Although the letter is undated, the writers refer to "the measure of that nature passed last year by a part of the people," which would place it in 1844.

indigenous inhabitants—the French Canadians did eventually reach a compromise with their American neighbors.⁹⁸ François Xavier Matthieu remembered that the French Canadians later gave their support to the provisional government. He also noted that he was elected a constable, and later justice of peace, by the majority of the settlers. Indeed, HBC officials John McLoughlin and James Douglas also eventually joined the provisional government in order to have a voice in matters affecting the settler community. Like the French Prairie settlers, McLoughlin and Douglas proved to be more practice than either idealistic or nationalistic in the final instance.

In the three years immediately preceding the mass migration of Anglo-American settlers to the Oregon Country, the French-Indian Catholic families with continuing ties to the British HBC continued to pursue a middle course in their relationships with the local Kalapuyans and their American Protestant neighbors. They did so in spite of the anti-Catholic, anti-British sentiment amongst some segments of the American population, and in the face of a strong anti-Methodist stance on the part of their local Catholic authority, Francis N. Blanchet.

When visiting the community during this period of the early 1840s French traveler de Mofras wrote about their strong sense of ethnic superiority, which appears to have been as robust as that of the in-coming American settlers. The documentary record of the period attests to the French-Indian settlers' desire to preserve their community and customs while also cooperating with the American settlers on local initiatives, such as judiciary cases and debates about the creation of a provisional government. While most of the French Canadians initially voiced their opposition to the proposed government, they later sought to find a

⁹⁸ Duniway and Riggs, 273-280; Matthew P. Deady, *The Organic and Other Laws of Oregon, 1845-1864* (Portland: Henry L. Pittock, 1866), 58-65, 80-83.

compromise when faced with their minority status. Seen in this light, the French Canadians' participation in community debates about the formation of a local government, and their early opposition to it was not so much a nationalistic position, as represented by pioneer chroniclers and earlier historians, but rather it was an expression of their concern about local issues. The 1844 address of the Canadian settlers to the now dominant American settlers detailed the French-speakers concerns about what form the provisional government would take, how heavy a tax burden it would impose, and whether it would protect their rights and those of their Indian wives, and bi-cultural children.

Due to their long-term presence in the Willamette Valley, and their generally positive, long-standing ties with the other various settlers groups, the French Canadian male settlers were able to negotiate a more favorable position as reflected in the provisions of the Organic Laws of 1844 and 1845. Nonetheless, 1843 marked a significant turning point for the French Prairie settlement, and for the Oregon Country as a whole. The migration of nearly a thousand of American overlanders that year started a process of dramatic social change in the region. Because of their demographic dominance, the American settlers heightened conflicts with Natives over land and natural resources, they hastened the introduction of additional infectious diseases, with further population losses for the Kalapuyans, and they began implementing social policies based on American notions of white supremacy. White supremacist ideology prevailed in the Midwest from whence the majority of the new emigrants hailed. These changes marked the beginning of the end of an earlier heterogeneous, and more accommodating colonial society, one in which demographic realities in the Willamette Valley had left no group dominant over the other. Within a decade, the Anglo-American settlers were actively pushing for the removal of all Native groups east

of the Cascades, and forced the French-Indian settler to face difficult choices about their allegiances in periods of armed conflict between Natives and newcomers. This is the very point at which most American historical narratives on the region begin.

CONCLUSION

While visiting French-Indian families in the Willamette Valley during the late summer of 1851, French envoy Pierre de Saint Amant remarked on their "complete lack of concern for what happens in the rest of the world."¹ Moreover, Saint Amant believed the settlers' sole preoccupation extending beyond their local community was uncertainty about future land surveys required by the federal Oregon Donation Land Claim Act of 1850. However, the Frenchman later noted that external forces were then putting pressure on the small bi-cultural community, including land speculation by incoming Americans, indebtedness, and the lure of the California Gold Rush.

These external pressures were emblematic of larger socio-economic changes occurring in the Pacific Northwest, and particularly western Oregon, during the mid-nineteenth century. The international boundary of 1846, coupled with the mass migration of thousands of American emigrants, solidified American territorial claims and political dominance south of the forty-ninth parallel. Infectious disease epidemics, disruptions to traditional subsistence practices, and the social dislocations resulting from the overland migrations eventually led to Whitman Mission Tragedy of 1847 and the so-called Cayuse War, which in turn finally prompted Congress to establish a territorial government for Oregon in August 1848. The ensuing decade witnessed even more deadly conflagrations between the region's indigenous peoples and Americans following local and national government expansion, and the entrenchment of a settler society throughout the region. This later colonial period was additionally marked by the dispossession and removal of Indian

¹ Saint Amant, 170.

groups onto reservations, and the legal codification of the ideologies of white supremacy and racial exclusion.

While large-scale armed conflicts erupted in southern Oregon and the Plateau region following organized Indian resistance to Euro-American settlement and mining operations, armed clashes in the Willamette Valley were rare, limited to engagements between American settlers and Klickitat and Klamath groups then moving in and out of the valley. However, tensions did develop between Kalapuyans pursuing their traditional subsistence rounds and American settlers seeking to limit the Indians' movements and transform their prime gathering sites into grazing areas and farmland. These problems motivated the American colonists and their territorial representatives to pressure federal officials to resettle all the Willamette Valley groups (Kalapuyans, Upper Chinookans, and Molala) away from the valley's fertile agricultural zones, preferably east of the Cascades. In the early 1850s, the remaining Kalapuyan, Chinookan, and Molala bands signed a series of treaties with federal officials that allowed them to reserve a small land base in western Oregon. They were soon resettled on the Grand Ronde Reservation, located in present-day western Yamhill County.

For the French-Indian families in French Prairie, the future held several possibilities as the ethnic conflicts in the region intensified. With relatives on both sides of the Indian-settler wars of the 1850s, and the question of their American citizenship in the balance, many second-generation French-Indian men elected to fight on the American side. These men and their families progressively sought a place within the dominant Euro-American society and remained in French Prairie. Others chose to join their Native kin on the Grand Ronde Reservation, located in western Oregon, or the Umatilla Reservation, located in eastern Oregon. A third group followed yet another route, either migrating to the various mining

fields in California, Southern Oregon, and Idaho, or to more remote areas such as Douglas country, where individuals of Indian and French Canadian ancestry might face less direct prejudice.²

Although the Oregon Donation Land Claim Act of 1850 permitted land grants to Indian women married to Euro-American settlers or "American half-breeds," Oregon lawmakers enacted legislation limiting full citizenship rights throughout the 1840s and 1850s. Both provisional and territorial statutes restricted suffrage to white men, and when delegates met in the constitutional convention of 1857, they voted to enshrine this principle of white male suffrage in the proposed state constitution. In January 1859, French Canadian and American settlers from French Prairie petitioned the territorial legislature to enact civil rights legislation for "half-breed Indians," namely the settlers' children and grandchildren. The settlers were particularly concerned that their offspring be allowed to vote and testify in court. Although there was some limited debate on the issue, the legislature ultimately declined to act on the matter. When Oregon finally achieved statehood in February 1859, it was the only free state with a constitution that contained a Negro exclusion clause forbidding free blacks from residing in its territory.

Given the dramatic socio-economic changes that occurred in the Pacific Northwest during the 1840s and 1850s, this later colonial period, which debuted with the beginning of large-scale American emigration in 1843, stands as a contrast to the earlier colonial period of fur trading and small-scale agricultural settlement (1810s-1843). The present study of French

² For an in-depth study of several generations of one French-Indian family in Oregon from the early colonial period through the early twentieth century, see Melinda Marie Jetté, "'Ordinary Lives': Three Generations of a French-Indian Family in Oregon, 1827-1931," (M.A. thesis, Université Laval, 1996). I discuss the question of identity and generational memory more fully in "Les Jetté de l'Orégon: A la recherche d'une mémoire identitaire," in *Visions et visages de la Franco-Amérique*, edited by Dean Louder, Jean Morisset, and Eric Waddell (Sillery, Quebec: Les éditions du Septentrion, 2002), 67-86.

Prairie brings these distinctions into sharper relief by offering a more complex picture of inter- and intra-ethnic relations and the dynamics of social change in the Willamette Valley prior to American re-settlement. At differing periods, social relations in French Prairie were marked by tension, miscommunication, mutual self-interest, cooperation, and genuine compassion. Armed conflict was rare in this period because the French-Indian families generally sought a common ground in relations with their neighbors, both Native and Euro-American. Drawing on their experience in the fur trade, as well their connections with both aboriginal and Euro-American cultures, the French Prairie settlers tried to negotiate a middle course within the contexts of competing forces, especially at times when cross-cultural tensions were high. As a result, the early colonial history of Oregon was neither marked by irresolvable ethnic conflict nor unilateral Anglo-American dominance.

These conclusions, drawn from a local case study, challenge traditional Anglo-centric interpretations from both the United States and Canada that have emphasized either the role of Americans or the Hudson's Bay Company in the colonization of Oregon. The notion of French Prairie as a "hearth of the crossed races," as a locale where people of differing ethnicities sought to bridge their cultural difference even as they sometimes clashed over common interests, recalls Peggy Pascoe's reference to western history as a "cultural crossroads," and Richard White's vision of "middle ground" in the Great Lakes region.³ All three of these concepts are attempts to re-imagine the dynamics of cross-cultural relations and social change following Euro-American colonization in various contact zones or "frontiers" within North America. French Prairie proved to be just such a unique site, an area

³ Peggy Pascoe, "Western Women at the Cultural Crossroads," in *Trails: Toward a New Western History*, edited by Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner, and Charles E. Rankin. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 46.

of extensive, long-term interactions between the indigenous Kalapuyans, fur trappers and their bi-cultural families, and later, Christian missionaries and American settlers.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Ahantchuyuk/French Prairie area, like the rest of the upper Willamette Valley was an oak savannah complex owing to its mild climate, and alluvial landscape, and the ancient landscape management practice of regular firing pursued by the Kalapuyans. While this practice meshed well with the Kalapuyans' complex subsistence round, it helped maintain an environment that was also highly prized by the first fur traders—Scots, English, French Canadians, Americans, and Iroquois—to visit the valley in the 1810s. Although the Pacific Fur Company, and later the North West Company, established trading posts in the Ahantchuyuk/French Prairie area, the initial years of fur trader-Kalapuyan relations were not always harmonious due to misunderstandings caused by cultural differences. A major problem resulted from differing notions about resource use and ownership rights. Viewing the Willamette Valley as unclaimed territory open for exploitation, the fur traders practiced little restraint in trapping and hunting, oblivious of the effects of their activities on the Kalapuyans' subsistence round. Escalating tensions led to a conflict at Willamette Falls in 1816-17. Relying on regional alliances and a strategic geographic position, the resident Upper Chinookans and their allies were able to dictate an oral treaty with the NWC traders in 1817. The treaty created a mechanism for resolving conflicts between the two groups through recognition of both local Native legal principles and the importance of the fur trade within the region.

While the early decades of intercultural contact in the Willamette Valley have generally been overlooked by Canadian and American historians, this was a crucial period for what was to follow. The free trappers and engagés who worked for the North West

Company, and later the Hudson's Bay Company, spent several decades camping seasonally in the valley. Over this period, they developed social, economic, and extended kin ties with the Kalapuyans (primarily through their marriage with related Chinookan peoples). In this way, the fur trappers became incorporated into pre-existing aboriginal exchange networks. While the role of the fur trappers' Indian wives remains largely undocumented, they clearly played a role in this process. Thus, when a number of the bi-cultural French-Indian couples wished to establish a permanent settlement in the Ahantchuyuk/French Prairie area in the late 1820s, they were able to garner the support of the local Kalapuyans.

Social relations in the Ahantchuyuk/French Prairie area underwent a significant change in the 1830s following the outbreak of intermittent fever (malaria) in 1831. The subsequent decimation of the Kalapuyan groups throughout the valley greatly limited their ability to resist increased colonization of their territories in the ensuing years. The local French-Indian families were far less affected by the disease due to their own acquired immunity and their access to medical treatment at Fort Vancouver. As a result, the French-Indian population steadily increased while the local Kalapuyan population dramatically declined throughout the 1830s and 1840s. However, despite this demographic shift, the settlers maintained their connections to the local Ahantchuyuk Kalapuyan band at Champoege and provided assistance to the group in times of distress. This practice of offering assistance to the Kalapuyans continued through the 1840s as demonstrated by the number of Natives who were cared for in French-Indian homes. Additionally, the settlers supported the burial of Kalapuyans in the local Catholic cemetery that was established at the St. Paul mission in the late 1830s.

One of the most salient characteristics of this nascent French-Indian community—and one heretofore largely unrecognized—was its members' strong interest in social welfare. It was for this reason that the French Canadian men, likely in consultation with their Indian wives, petitioned Bishop Provencher in Red River for French Canadian Catholic missionaries. The French Canadians desired spiritual and educational opportunities for their children and the creation of a local parish, an important social institution they had known in Lower Canada. Given these values, the families demonstrated openness to the American Methodists, the first missionaries to the Columbia Region. Upon their arrival, the French-Indian families worked cooperatively with the Methodists, and the few American then settled in the valley, on several community initiatives. Thus, the roots of the movement for a community government, which later took form in the early 1840s, actually debuted during the mid-1830s through the community initiatives pursued by the various settler groups.

The arrival of French Canadian Catholic missionaries in the fall of 1838 proved beneficial to the French-Indian community while also creating challenges to the ecumenical spirit present in the Willamette Valley. On one hand, the erection of a Catholic mission provided the community with a literate leader able to advocate on the settlers' behalf as well as a local gathering place for educational and religious activities. On the other hand, Father Francis Blanchet attempted to disrupt the long-standing relations between the French-Indian settlers and the American Methodists. Although the settlers re-directed their support for religious and educational programs to the Catholic mission, they also sought to retain a social dialogue with the Methodists and the few American settlers, as demonstrated by their willingness to sign the Edwards Memorial of 1838 and to support two public trials for Jean Baptiste Perrault. Seen from this perspective, the French-Indian families retained a distinct

sense of their own local interests, and actively pursued those interests in their relations with Father Blanchet, the Methodists, and the incoming Americans.

Traditional interpretations of the French Canadians' opposition to the formation of a provisional government in the early 1840s have cast their position in highly nationalistic terms. According to these commonly held assumptions, the French Canadians sought to uphold the pro-British position of the Hudson's Bay Company on direction from Chief Factor McLoughlin and Father Blanchet. However, this study has shown that there was a long history of cooperation between the French Canadians and their American neighbors in the Willamette Valley, both settlers and Methodist missionaries. Time and again, the French Canadians sought to chart a middle course between various competing interests. They maintained good relations with HBC officials, while also assisting and socializing with their neighbors, attending public meetings and debates, and signing petitions to the U.S. Congress penned by local Americans. Since most Euro-Americans in the Columbia region believed the Willamette Valley would eventually become American territory, the French Canadians pursued this middle course in order to safeguard their own interests, namely their land holdings in French Prairie.

During the early 1840s, the French Canadian male settlers actively and consistently participated in the local political culture by attending debates regarding the organization of a community government, meetings that were held at Champoege, the Methodist mission, and the home of Joseph Gervais. As a group, they largely supported only a limited governmental structure. This view stemmed from their negative experience with the Townsend Memorial of 1839, because they had been misled by the Americans circulating the petition, and which had harmed their relationships with HBC officials. On a more practical level, the French

Canadians were not unlike rural people from Lower Canada who were wary of the bureaucratic and taxation burdens imposed by a more complex governmental apparatus. Moreover, they had successfully managed local problems in previous years, and they were understandably concerned about losing this control of their own affairs. Nevertheless, approximately a half dozen of the leading French Canadians did eventually join with their American neighbors to form a provisional government in May 1843. The remaining French Canadians were later able to achieve a compromise with their American neighbors due to their long-standing influence and presence in the valley, and their position as a large majority block with a large land base.

In the fall of 1843, nearly 900 American emigrants arrived in the Oregon Country after the long, arduous overland trek from Missouri. For generations of Americans these Oregon Trail pioneers came to symbolize the triumphant expansion of the American republic into the Far West. Indeed, the overlanders and their descendants became the chroniclers of a historical interpretation that placed the mid-nineteenth American settlers at the center of Pacific Northwest history. However, the story of American dominance in the mid-nineteenth century was preceded by thirty years of intercultural contact between Native and newcomers. This earlier colonial period shaped the society and culture, which greeted the American overlanders upon their arrival in Oregon. This case study of one bi-cultural community during those first thirty years of contact demonstrates that far from an empty Edenic landscape, the Willamette Valley was the scene of a complex, heterogeneous colonial society.

While the bi-cultural French-Indian families sought a middle course in their relations with all their various neighbors and contributed to cross-cultural communication, their very

presence also ultimately contributed to the Euro-American colonization of the Pacific Northwest. By establishing the first farming and husbandry operations in the Willamette Valley in the late 1820s, the French-Indian families initiated a process of social and ecological change that was accelerated following the overland migrations. This re-examination of Oregon history through a local case study of French Prairie thus contributes to a revisionist interpretation of Pacific Northwest history. It also contributes to larger discussions of contact zones (or frontiers), demonstrating not only the early multi-ethnic character of the Pacific Northwest, but also the historic connections between the British North American fur trade, the French Canadian diaspora, and the Anglo-American colonization of Oregon in the 1840s.

Appendix 1. Pacific Fur Company Personnel in the Columbia Region, 1811-1814

Name	Capacity	Nationality (Ethnicity)	Transport
Partners:			
John Clarke	Partner	Canadian	Beaver
Ramsey Crooks	Partner	American	overland
Wilson Price Hunt	Partner	American	overland
Alexander McKay	Partner	Canadian	Tonquin
Duncan MacDougall	Partner	Canadian	Tonquin
Donald McKenzie	Partner	Canadian	overland
Robert McClellan	Partner	American	overland
David Stuart	Partner	Canadian	Tonquin
Robert Stuart	Partner	Canadian	Tonquin
Clerks:			
Benjamin Clapp	Clerk	American?	Beaver
Ross Cox	Clerk	Irish	Beaver
Russel Farnham	Clerk	American	Tonquin
Gabriel Franchere	Clerk	French Canadian	Tonquin
John Cook Halsey	Clerk	American	Beaver
Paul Denis Jeremie	Clerk & Labourer	French Canadian	Tonquin
James Lewis	Clerk	American	Tonquin
Charles A. Nicoll	Clerk	American?	Beaver
Thomas McKay	Clerk	Canadian	Tonquin
Donald McGillis	Clerk	Canadian	Tonquin
Donald McLennon	Clerk	Canadian	Tonquin
William Wallace Matthews	Clerk	American	Tonquin
Ovid Montigny	Clerk	French Canadian	Tonquin
Francois B. Pillet [Payette]	Clerk	French Canadian	Tonquin
John Reid	Clerk	Irish	overland
Alexander Ross	Clerk	Canadian	Tonquin
Alfred Seton	Clerk	American	Beaver
William Wallace	Clerk	Canadian	Tonquin
Artisans/Laborers/Voyageurs			
Job Aitken	Master of Shallop	Scottish	Tonquin
Joseph Aston	Sailor & Workman	American?	Beaver?
Micajah Baker	Blacksmith/Free Hunter	American	Beaver

Devant refers to the bowsman of the fur brigade canoe; *gouvernail* to the steersmen; and *milieu* to the middle paddler.

Appendix 1. Pacific Fur Company Personnel in the Columbia Region, 1811-1814

Name	Capacity	Nationality (Ethnicity)	Transport
George Bell	Cooper	American	Tonquin
Antoine Belleau	Baker & Milieu	French Canadian	Beaver?
Jean Baptiste Belleau	Milieu	French Canadian	Tonquin
Charles Boucher	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Brazile Brousseau	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Pierre Brugiere	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Louis Brule	Gouvernail	French Canadian	Tonquin
William Cannon [Canning]	Millwright	American	overland
Guillaume Cardinal dit Le Roux	Voyageur	French Canadian	overland
Alexander Carson	Gunsmith	American	overland
George Cone	Milieu & Sawyer	French Canadian	overland
Joseph Cotte	Gouvernail	French Canadian	overland
Edward Cox	Laborer	Hawaiian?	Tonquin
Daniel	Laborer	American	Beaver
Francois Ducharquette	Voyageur	French Canadian & African	overland
Joseph Delauney	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Pierre Delauney	Hunter	French & Native	overland
Jean Baptiste Dubreuil	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Jean Baptiste Delorme	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Louis Denille	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Pierre Dorion [Jr.]	Interpreter	French Canadian & Sioux	overland
Louis Dufresne	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
John Day	Hunter	American	overland
Prisque Felix	Gouvernail	French Canadian	overland
Moses Flanagan	Bookbinder	American	Beaver
Jean Baptiste Gardepied	Devant & Hunter	French & Creek	overland
Joseph Gervais	Milieu & Hunter	French Canadian	overland
Morise Guerin	Milieu	French Canadian	Beaver?
Harry	Blacksmith & Milieu	Hawaiian	Tonquin
Jacques Harteau	Free Hunter?	French Canadian?	
John Hobough	Free Hunter	American	overland
Francois William Hodgins	Blacksmith & Milieu	Canadian	overland
Charles Jacquette	Milieu	French Canadian	overland

Devant refers to the bowsman of the fur brigade canoe; *gouvernail* to the steersmen; and *milieu* to the middle paddler.

Appendix 1. Pacific Fur Company Personnel in the Columbia Region, 1811-1814

Name	Capacity	Nationality (Ethnicity)	Transport
Benjamin Jones	Hunter	American	overland
Johann Kaster	Laborer	Russian	Tonquin
William Karimou	Ship Carpenter	Hawaiian	Tonquin
James Keemoo	Laborer	Hawaiian	Tonquin
Francois Landrie	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Joseph Landrie	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Charles Lassier	Gouvernail	French Canadian?	Beaver?
Louis Laliberte	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Jean Baptiste Labonte	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Louis Labonte	Carpenter	French Canadian	overland
LaChapelier, Andre	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Jacques Lafantasia	Milieu	French Canadian	Tonquin
Michel Laframboise	Milieu	French Canadian	Tonquin
Michel Lanson [Sansou]	Voyageur	French Canadian	overland
Ignace Roy Lapanse	Voyageur	French Canadian	Tonquin
Basil Roy Lapanse	Voyageur	French Canadian	Tonquin
Olivier Roy Lapanse	Voyageur	French Canadian	Tonquin
Joseph Lapiere	Milieu	French Canadian	Tonquin
Louis LaValle	Gouvernail	French Canadian	Tonquin
Francois Leclerc	Voyageur	French Canadian	overland
Giles Leclerc	Laborer	French Canadian	overland
Alexis LeCompte	Milieu	French Canadian	Tonquin
John Little	Boat Builder	American	overland
Etienne Lussier	Hunter	French Canadian	Beaver
Alexis Macon	Milieu	French Canadian?	overland
Francois Martial	Milieu & Sawyer	French Canadian	Beaver?
Richard Milligan	Tailor	American	overland
George Naaco	Silversmith	Hawaiian	Beaver
Joseph Nadeau	Voyageur	French Canadian	Tonquin
Jean Baptiste Ouvre	Milieu	French Canadian	Tonquin
Peter Pahia	Laborer	Hawaiian	overland
Dick Paow	Laborer	Hawaiian	Tonquin
John Patterson	Laborer	American	Tonquin
			Beaver

Devant refers to the bowsman of the fur brigade canoe; *gouvernail* to the steersmen; and *milieu* to the middle paddler.

Appendix 1. Pacific Fur Company Personnel in the Columbia Region, 1811-1814

Name	Capacity	Nationality (Ethnicity)	Transport
Francois Payette	Milieu	French Canadian	Beaver?
Joseph [Archibald] Pelton*	mentally ill	French Canadian	overland
Antoine Pepin	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Guillaume [William] Perreault	Apprentice Boy	French Canadian	Tonquin
Perry	Laborer	American	Beaver
Jean Baptiste Pillon	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Antoine Plante	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Louis Pion	Carpenter	French Canadian?	Beaver?
Paul Poar	Laborer	Hawaiian	Tonquin
Jack Powrowie	Laborer	Hawaiian	Tonquin
Bob Pookarakara	Laborer	Hawaiian	Tonquin
John Reveneau	Laborer	American	Beaver
Jacob Reznor	Free Hunter	American	overland
Francois Robert	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Edward Robinson	Free Hunter	American	overland
Augustin Roussel	Blacksmith	French Canadian	Tonquin
Benjamin Roussel	Shoemaker	French Canadian	Tonquin
Olivier Roy	Milieu	French Canadian?	Beaver?
Henry Spicer	Laborer	American	Beaver
Joseph St. Amant	Voyageur	French Canadian	overland
Louis St. Michel	Gouvernail	French Canadian	overland
Toby Too	Laborer	Hawaiian	Tonquin
John Travers	Laborer	American	Beaver
Francois Trepagnier	Milieu	French Canadian	overland
Jean Baptiste Turcotte	Gouvernail	French Canadian	overland
Thoms Tuana	Laboruer	Hawaiian	Tonquin
Andre Valle	Voyageur	French Canadian	overland
Henry Willetts	Laborer	American	Beaver
William Wilson	Cooper	American?	Beaver?
*Joseph Pelton was a mentally ill fur trader living with the Snake Indians (Paiute or Shoshone). He was brought to Fort Astoria by the overland party in 1812.			
Sources: Franchere, <i>Journal</i> ; Irving, <i>Astoria</i> ; Jones, <i>Annals</i> ; Porter, <i>Astor</i> ; Porter, "Roll." Rollins, <i>Discovery</i> ; Ronda, <i>Astoria</i> ; Seton, <i>Astorian</i> ; HBCA, F.4/61, folios 6-7.			

Devant refers to the bowsman of the fur brigade canoe; *gouvernail* to the steersmen; and *milieu* to the middle paddler.

Appendix 2. The First Astorian to the Willamette Valley

Researchers have previously concluded that PFC partner Robert Stuart led the first Astorian party to reconnoiter the Willamette Valley above the falls, a party that departed Astoria on December 5, 1811.¹ This conclusion is based upon just one source, clerk Gabriel Franchère's *published* journal of the PFC enterprise. However, as W. Kaye Lamb notes in the introductory remarks to his authoritative edition, the manuscript used as the source for the published editions in French and English is not the original diary that Franchère kept in Astoria since that original was lost. The recent publication of the Fort Astoria log and the journal of clerk Alfred Seton, both previously unpublished, provide compelling evidence that the first group of Euro-Americans to venture into the Willamette Valley above the falls was in fact Donald McKenzie's expedition, which left Astoria on March 31, 1812 and returned on May 11, 1812.² Additional sources documenting the Astorian enterprise lend credence to this conclusion: these include the narratives of partner Robert Stuart and the memoirs of clerk William Wallace Matthews.³

Gabriel Franchère's manuscript lists the Cowlitz River, not the Willamette River, as the destination for Robert Stuart's party that departed on December 5, 1811. It is the printed editions in French and English that list the Willamette as the objective. The passage from Franchère manuscript reads as follows:

¹ See W. Kaye Lamb's footnote #1, page 96 in Gabriel Franchère, *Journal of a Voyage on the North West Coast of North America during the Years 1811, 1812, 1813, and 1814*, edited by W. Kaye Lamb, translated by Wessie Tipping Lamb (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1969), 96; Fred S. Perrine, "Early Days on the Willamette," *OHQ* 15:4 (Dec. 24), 303; H. H. Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast*, vol. 2, (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Co., 1884), 177.

² Alfred Seton, *Astorian Adventure: The Journal of Alfred Seton, 1811-1813*, edited by Robert F. Jones (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993); and Robert F. Jones, ed., *Annals of Astoria: The Headquarters Log of the Pacific Fur Company on the Columbia River, 1811-1813* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999). Robert Carlton Clark makes no mention of the Stuart or Mackenzie parties, see his *History of the Willamette Valley*, vol. 1 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Co., 1929), 135-136.

³ Philip Ashton Rollins, *The Discovery of the Oregon Trail: Robert Stuart's Narratives of His Overland trip Eastward from Astorian 1812-13* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935); Jesse S. Douglas, ed., "Matthews' Adventures on the Columbia: A Pacific Fur Company Document," *OHQ* 40:2 (June, 1939): 105-148. John Langdon Sullivan, a civil engineer with the U.S. government's Board of Engineers for Internal Improvements recorded William Wallace Matthew's memoirs in 1824. Matthew's memoirs as recorded by Sullivan are contained in the Papers of the Board of Engineers for Internal Improvements for 1824-1826 at the National Archives in Washington D.C. Sullivan used Matthews' memoirs to prepare a undelivered report addressed to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, dated December 24, 1824.

On the 5th of December [1811], having procured a guide, Mr. R. Stuart accompanied by Messrs' Pillet, McGillis and R. Bruguier (the latter as a hunter) and a few men left to go up to the Cowilitzk River to investigate whether a post in this area would be profitable.

In the footnote to this passage, Lamb has written that Cowlitz River is rendered as the "Willamette River in the printed text, and it is evident that Willamette was meant."⁴ Lamb's conclusion that Franchère meant to write "Willamette," may be correct, but Franchère's memory appears to have been faulty. Lamb's conclusion cannot be corroborated by any other source. There is no additional information on this party in Franchère's text, and Robert Stuart's own narrative, which recounts his overland return from Astoria to St. Louis in the summer of 1812, does not begin until June 29, 1812.

The Fort Astoria log, kept by partner Duncan McDougall, substantiates the original passage in the Franchère manuscript in which Franchère identifies the Cowlitz watershed as the destination for Robert Stuart's party. The notation for December 5, 1811 reads:

About Noon Mr. Robert Stuart left the Fort, accompanied by Messrs. McGillis, Farnham & Brugier, the Carpenter [Michel Laframboise], Joseph Lapierre, George & Peter (Two Sandwich Islanders). Messrs. McGillis, Pillet & Bruguier, Lapierre & the two Sandwich Islanders were to proceed up the Cowlitz, with Mr. Stuart & the others to remain on board the *Shallop* [the *Dolly*].⁵

The riverboat *Dolly*, probably manned by Russell Farnham and Michel Laframboise, returned on December 26th with "a cargo of Timber," likely from the Cowlitz River basin.⁶ Robert Stuart and some men from the original party returned to Fort Astoria on January 26, 1812, "having left Mr. Bruguier, Joseph Lapierre & Peter Pahia (a Canaka) hunting Beaver."⁷ Here it is important to note that the Cowlitz River Valley was familiar to the Astorians since they had sent trapping and hunting parties there on at least two previous occasions, April 4, 1811 and June 16, 1811. In addition, the geography of the Cowlitz River basin was amenable to the use of the *Dolly* because that the river does not present a barrier such as the falls on the Willamette. Since the Cowlitz was known to the men and was much closer in proximity to Fort Astoria, it is not unreasonable that Robert Stuart's foray there lasted but one month and that he would leave a small party of three men to continue trapping in the area.

⁴ Franchère, 96.

⁵ Jones, 62.

⁶ Jones, 65.

⁷ Jones, 69.

In Robert Stuart's overland narratives he devoted a short section to the Willamette Valley for the day that his party was encamped at the mouth of the Willamette on their ascent of the Columbia in the summer of 1812.⁸ A close reading of the passage would indicate that Stuart recorded what Donald McKenzie reported about the Willamette Valley. On July 3, 1812, Stuart wrote in his journal that above the falls the Willamette River:

soon after expands to about the same Width as below the Falls and continues so for a great distance till passing a number of tributary streams, it becomes perceptibly reduced in size, when Mr. Mackenzie was obliged to relinquish his enterprise, on account of some sickness among his men.⁹

Here Stuart, whom Franchère supposedly identified as the first partner to explore the Willamette Valley, associated this very exploration to his colleague, Donald McKenzie. Alfred Seton writing in August 1813 from the Willamette Valley, stated that "Mr. McKenzie was the first person of our party who explored & penetrated about 500 miles up it [the Willamette River]."¹⁰ Alexander Ross, writing in the 1840s, also identified Donald McKenzie as the first Astorian to visit the valley, noting that Mackenzie's purpose was exploration, "seeing the Indians, and studying the topography of the country, than for the purpose of procuring beaver."¹¹

In his narrative, Robert Stuart includes some remarks on the indigenous people along the Willamette River. He uses the term "Cathlapoo-yas" for the Kalapuyans.¹² However, his description of the Native geography about the Willamette Falls is faulty. He places the "Cath-lath-las," the Upper Chinookan Clackamas, amongst the upper Willamette valley population, when in fact, they lived along the Clackamas River, which flows into the Willamette River a few miles below the falls. Since few travelers who visited Willamette Falls and the Willamette Valley made such obvious errors in their reports about the Native

⁸ Robert Stuart's narratives were the journal of his overland return to Montreal, which begins on June 29, 1812, and his travel memoranda, written some time after his return to the East. Philip Aston Rollins discusses the differences between the two narratives in his foreword to Stuart, cvii-cxii. Rollins included the additional passages from the later travel memoranda in *The Discovery of the Oregon Trail*. Kenneth A. Spaulding edited a separate edition of the travel memoranda: *On the Oregon Trail: Robert Stuart's Journey of Discovery* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953).

⁹ Stuart, 32.

¹⁰ Seton, 121.

¹¹ Ross, *Adventures*, 229.

¹² Stuart, 33.

geography, Stuart's mistaken reporting further draws doubt upon the hypothesis that he traveled to the Willamette Valley; more likely he learned about it from Donald McKenzie.

Given the weight of evidence supporting Donald McKenzie's 1812 expedition as the first Euro-American foray into the Willamette Valley, one must address the question as to why historians have long held that Robert Stuart led the first party into the valley in the winter of 1811. I surmise that this perception first developed in the nineteenth century following the publication of Franchère's narrative in French (1820) and in English translation (1854). The editors of these volumes misread Franchère's manuscript and the error was repeated in later editions, including W. Kaye Lamb authoritative edition published in 1969. They may have interpreted Franchère's "Cowlisk" valley as the Willamette Valley because of the later attractiveness of the Willamette Valley for Euro-American colonization. This error has been repeated because the pre-colonial history of the Willamette Valley, and especially the early relations between the Kalapuyans and the fur traders, has not been a salient feature in Pacific Northwest historiography. As a result, there has been limited critical analysis of these early sources on the Willamette Valley.

In a similar vein, scholars have tended to overlook the factual errors and "historical fictions" contained in the published fur trade narratives for the Columbia region.¹³ While the Fort Astoria logbook and the journals of Gabriel Franchère, Alfred Seton, Robert Stuart, and Alexander Henry the Younger, appear to be more reliable sources as they are originals (or copies of originals) recorded at the time, the narratives of clerks Ross Cox and Alexander Ross highlight the historical inaccuracies they contain. These inaccuracies are partially due to the dynamics of memory, since both men produced their narratives years after the events in question.¹⁴ Of equal importance is the nature of nineteenth-century travel literature itself. The purpose of travel narratives was to perform well in the burgeoning print market by providing readers with an engaging, dramatic account of some hitherto untold adventure. And if the

¹³ H. Lloyd Keith, "Adventure Narrative as History: Alexander Ross and *The Fur Hunters of the Far West*," Paper presented before the Pacific Northwest History Conference, April 25-26, 2004; H. Lloyd Keith, "The Historical Fictions of Ross Cox," Unpublished manuscript, November 1986.

¹⁴ Norman M. Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (New York: Verso), 14-16; Patrick H. Hutton, *History and as Art of Memory* (Hanover, VT: University Press of New England, 1993), 7; Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (New York: Verso, 1994), vii-x.

writing of a particular adventurer lacked flare or contravened Victorian standard of propriety, editors would step in to reshape the narrative, making it acceptable to the reading public.¹⁵

Tricks of memory, personal idiosyncrasies, and the dictates of the marketplace all combined in the works of Ross Cox and Alexander Ross, resulting in narratives noteworthy for their factual errors, distortions, and misremembered, even imaginary, incidents. H. Lloyd Keith has observed that although Cox and Ross most likely did not intend to mislead readers or fabricate historical events, it is perhaps best to view the works of the two chroniclers as standing "somewhere between history and fiction."¹⁶ Cox's *The Columbia River* (1831) and Ross' *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River* (1849) and *Fur Hunters of the Far West* (1855) must therefore be rigorously compared with all other extant sources in the interests of historical accuracy.¹⁷

McKenzie himself left no record of his experiences in the Willamette Valley. In a lecture given at the Kingston [Ontario] Historical Society in 1919, L. J. Burpee quoted an unnamed source that Donald McKenzie "had a great aversion to writing." Cecil W. Mackenzie, grandson of Donald McKenzie and author of *Donald Mackenzie: King of the Northwest*, affirms that Donald McKenzie left no personal writings. Cecil Mackenzie also quotes a story recorded by Ernest Cawcroft (and apparently current in the McKenzie family) that Donald McKenzie's second wife and widow, Adelgonde Humbert Droz, burned a manuscript containing McKenzie's memoirs because "that writing did not add to the amiability of a man of deed."¹⁸

¹⁵ I.S. Maclaren, "Paul Kane and the Authorship of *A Wandering Artist*, in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, edited by Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens, and R.C. Macleod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001), 225-243. See also Percy G. Adams' classic study of European travel literature, *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660-1800*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1980).

¹⁶ Keith, "Adventure," 12; Keith, "Historical," 18-19.

¹⁷ Ross Cox, *The Columbia River*, edited by Edgar I. Stewart and Jane R. Stewart (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957); Alexander Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River, 1810-1813*, with a new introduction by William G. Robbins. (1904; rpt; Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2000); Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West*, edited by Kenneth A. Spaulding (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956).

¹⁸ L. J. Burpee, "A Forgotten Adventure of the Fur Trade," *Queen's Quarterly* 26:4 (April-June 1919): 365; Cecil W. Mackenzie, *Donald Mackenzie: King of the Northwest* (Los Angeles: Ivan Beach, 1937); Ernest Cawcroft, "Donald Mackenzie: King of the Northwest," *Canadian Magazine* 50 (Nov. 1917-April 1918): 347. Jack Ericson, archivist at the Daniel A. Reed Library, SUNY-Fredonia, confirms that no Donald McKenzie manuscripts are known to exist. Both Ernest Cawcroft and Cecil Mackenzie employed the alternative spelling of Donald McKenzie's surname.

Appendix 3. NWC Personnel Data for the Columbia Region, 1814-1820

	1814	1815	1816	1817	1818	1819	1820
Total including Owhyhees & Iroquois	157	168	156	223	237	254	239
Deduct Owhyhees	14	17	17	64	61	56	38
Total Whites & Iroquois	143	151	139	159	176	198	201
Deduct those classed as Iroquois & Abenaks	11	33	38	45	49	65	66
Total Whites Including Proprietors &c &c	132	118	101	114	127	133	135

Notes:

- 11 Iroquois deserted to Snakes
- 5 Sent to New Caledonia with 2 Whites & 2 Owhyhees
- 2 ditto sent across with 5 Whites are not included in total of 1820

Source: Memoranda Book of James Keith, 48.

Appendix 4. Individuals Admitted to the Methodist Mission, 1834-1838

Indian Name	English	When Adm.	Gender	Age	Tribes	When died or left
Sintwa	John Mark	Nov. 7, 1834	M	10	Calapooya	Left Oct. 27, 1835
Kyeatah	Lucy Hedding	Nov. 16, 1834	F	12	Calapooya	Died Oct. 5, 1836
Chilapoos	Charles Moorehead	Nov. 29, 1834	M	12	Calapooya	Absconded April 19, 1836
Kenoteesh		April 26, 1835	M	15	Silelah	Died Aug. 19, 1835
Kokallah		April 26, 1835	M	lad	Tillamook	Taken away June 17, 1835
Lassees	Ann Webster	Aug. 29, 1835	F	10	Calapooya	Died April 28, 1837
	Isabel [S.] Denton	Oct. 18, 1835	F		Iroquois	Died Oct. 12, 1837*
	Joseph Shangarati	Oct. 18, 1835	M		Iroquois	
	Nicholas Shangarati	Oct. 18, 1835	M	8	Iroquois	Died Nov. 27, 1835
	Mary Sargent	Oct. 18, 1835	F		Yamhill	
Kartoosh	David Tucker	Oct. 18, 1835	M		Unknown	Absconded March 31, 1836
Marlooaah	Amos Amsden	Oct. 18, 1835	M		Unknown	Absconded March 31, 1836
Sookta	Solomon Greene	Oct. 18, 1835	M	30	Unknown	Died Dec. 13, 1835
	Sophie Carpenter	Sept. 8, 1835	F	3	Unknown	Died Dec. 14, 1835
	William Brooks	Nov. 9, 1835	M	9	halfbreed	
Klytes	Ozro Morrill	Nov. 9, 1835	M	youth	Chinook	
	Antoine Bingham	Nov. 12, 1835	M	youth	Chinook	
Kohucha	Thomas Adams	March 1, 1836	M		Willamette	
	Charles Cohania	March 5, 1836	M		Willamette	
Tapal	Harriet Newell	June 7, 1836	F		Halfbreed	
Siahhen	Wilbur Fiske	July 16, 1836	M		Chinook	
Wislahowitka	B. J. Hall	July 16, 1836	M		Cayuse	
Toa yahnu	Elijah Hedding	Aug. 13, 1836	M		Cayuse	
Tomanasulta	Osman Baker	Aug. 13, 1836	M		Walla Walla	
Welaptulekt	John Lindsay	Sept. 6, 1836	M	adult	Cayuse	Left March 17, 1837
	James Charponka	Sept. 6, 1836	M	youth	Cayuse	Left March 17, 1837
Tshecooitsh	Clarissa Perkins	Sept. 6, 1836	F	9	Cayuse	Died March 23, 1837
	Samuel Champa	Sept. 6, 1836	M	1	Cayuse	Died March 15, 1837
	Samson Wilder	Oct. 28, 1836	M		Chasta	
Cleekatuck	Jess Lee	Nov. 26, 1836	M		Walla Walla	
	Thomas Peka	Nov. 28, 1836	M		Halfbreed	
	Mary Ann B.	Jan. 4, 1837	F		halfbreed	
Wattiat	Mary Hawkhurst	Jan. 17, 1837	F		Yamhill	Married Feb. 25, 1837
	William A. Slacum	Jan. 29, 1837	M		Willamette	

Appendix 4. Individuals Admitted to the Methodist Mission, 1834-1838

Indian Name	English	When Adm.	Gender	Age	Tribe	When died or left
	Frances McKay	March 13, 1837	F		Half blood	
	Henry Pool	April 8, 1837	M		Yamhill	
	Sarah Stevens	April 8, 1837	F		Yamhill	
	Sally Soule	June 16, 1837	F		Yamhill	
	David Kilburn	July 17, 1837	M		Yamhill	
	Francis Hale	Sept. 6, 1837	M		Iroquois-Chinook	
	Angelica Carpentier	Oct. 22, 1837	F		9 Half blood	
	Jared Perkins	Dec. 11, 1837	M		Yamhill	
	Emeline Davis	Jan. 2, 1838	F		Yamhill	
	Nathaniel Bangs	Jan. 17, 1838	M		Yamhill	
	Ann Webster	Feb. 3, 1838	F		Yamhill	
	Joshua Newhall	Feb. 20, 1838	M		Willamette Falls	
	Enoch Mudge	March 13, 1838	M		Tualatin	
	Oliver Howe	May 5, 1838	M		Walla Walla	
	Luther Town	June 20, 1838	M		Klikitat	
	Isaac Rich	June 20, 1838	M		Klikitat	
	Albert Brown	June 20, 1838	M		Klikitat	

*Isabel Shanagarati married John Denton on March 7, 1845. See Mission Record Book, 263.

Sources: Willamette Mission Record Book (1834-1838), *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest*

Appendix 5. Willamette Valley Settlers Listed in Slacum's Census, 1837

Name	When Begun	Acres Enclosed	Acres Cultivated	Wheat Crop Bushels	Horses	Hogs	Houses	Misc.	Remarks
J. B. McRoy [Deportes McKay]	1831	69	35	556	33	22	3		Good
Andre Longtre [Longtain]	1835	45	24	400	3	33	2		Good
Charles Plante	1835	60	60	800	12	14	2		Good
Charles Rondeu [Rondeau]	1836	24	24	200	9	10	1		Good
Louis Fourier [Forcier]	1835	34	34	540	9	10	1		Good
Joseph Gervais	1832	125	65	1,000	19	55	3	1 grist mill	Good
Xavier Delarout[e]	1834	36	36	350	11	35	2		Good
Joseph Delor[d]	1832	28	28	280	11	28	2		Good
E. [Amable] Arquette	1833	80	50	600	5	31	2		Good
J.B. Perrault [Perrault]	1832	80	60	500	4	20	3		Good
Etienne Lucia [Etienne Lucier]	1832	70	45	740	21	45	4	1 grist mill	Good
Pierre Bellique	1833	50	45	700	9	28	2		Good
Frederick Depau [Pierre Depot?]*	1833	40	35	500	8	39	2		Good
Ewing Young	1835	29	29	240	79 & 2 mules	30	2	1 distillery	Good
Lawrence Carmichael (1)									
William Johnson	1834	45	25	300	2	14	2		Good
Jas. A. Neil & Thos J. Hubbard (2)	1836	200	15	70	9	13	1	1 blacksmith's shop	
W. Canning, miller, millwright (3)									
Solomon H. Smith									
Winslow Anderson									
Charles Roe, carpenter									
Elisha Ezekiel, wheelwright									
John Hord, carpenter									
Webley Hawkshurst, carpenter									
John Turner									
William Bailey, [doctor]									
Calvin Ebbets [Tibbets], stone mason									
John Rowling									
George Gay									

Notes:

*The above thirteen are all Canadians, and have been in the employ of the HBC.

(1) Works on shares with Young

(2) Besides the crop of wheat, each of the above five have a large quantity of barely, oats, peas, and potatotes sufficient for their support.

(3) 300 lbs. sterling in the hands of the UBC.

[Note: Louis Labonte and Andre Picard are not listed by Slacum.]

Source:

Slacum's Report on Oregon, 1837.

Appendix 6. Elijah White's Census of Setters in the Oregon Country, 1842

Name of Head	Males 18+	Females 18+	Children 18+	Acres	Bushels wheat	Bushels grain	Horses	Neat stock	[Location]
1 McKay [McKay], Thos.	3	1	4	130	900	500	83	221	
2 Remick, Thos.	1						4		
3 Moss, S. W.	1			50			3	12	
4 Newell[], R.	1	1	4	35	315	200	15	36	
5 Everts [Ebberts], Geo.	1	11	3	45	800	60	16	33	
6 Wilkins	1	1	2	partnership with Everts					
7 Black	1	1					23	8	
8 Owen, R.	1	1	1		90	16	10	9	
9 Baldro, Wm.	1	1	3	20			5	3	
10 Waggoner, P.	1	1	4	12	90	30	11	14	
11 Williams	1	1	5	10	40	10	3	15	
12 Meek, Jsph	1	1	3	40	800	50	13	90	
13 Doughty, Wm.	1	1	3	Partner with Meek above					
14 Meek, Steph	1								
15 Brown	1						2	Just arrived	
16 Walker, C.M.	1	1	2		200	12	1	Just arrived	
17 Blair, Wm.	1			8	64		5	20	
18 Phlett [Flett], Jas.	1	1	5	10	15		1		
19 Phlett [Flett], David	1	1	5	10	15		8		
20 Phlett [Flett], John	1	1	2	Three Brothers late from Red River					
21 Clarke, A.	1	1		25	200	36	10	20	
22 Smith, A.T.	1	1		Partner with Clarke					
23 Johnson, Wm.	1					Just arrived	3	4	
24 Spencer	1	1	5			Late from R.R	1		
25 Tibbetts, C.	1				300		15	41	
26 Griffin, T. J.	1	1	1	40	60	400	7	9	
27 Obeshaw [Aubichon], A	2	2	5	50	300	400	15	19	
28 Shortress, Robt.	1			40	650	100	11	27	
29 Crawford, M.	1					Just arrived	1	4	
20 Coombs, E.	1					Just arrived	1		
21 Pomeroy, D.	1					Just arrived			
22 White, E.	1								
23 McLaughlin, J.	1	1		180	500	335	13	23	
Subtotals	36	22	53	625	5324	2149	305	638	
Running totals									
Source: Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1842-1880. Oregon Superintendency, 1842-1853. RG 75. NARA.									

Notes: Acres = acres under improvement.

Location is Willamette Valley unless otherwise noted.

Appendix 6. Elijah White's Census of Setters in the Oregon Country, 1842

Name of Head	Males 18+	Females 18+	Children 18+	Acres	Bushels wheat	Bushels grain	Horses	Neat stock	Location
24 Labonte, Sen, L.	1	1	1	200	430	430	22	26	
25 Labonte, Jr, L.	1				27	9			
26 Oneil, J.A.	1	Eight years in country			83	562	16	120	
27 Parrish, J.L.	1	1	2						
28 Lacourse, P.	1	1	7	30	351	130	14	9	
29 Masteau [Masta], A.	1	1	1	70	650	82	11	8	
30 Lee, D.	1	1	2	12					Wascopam [OR]
31 Brewer, A. B.	1	1	1	12	80	420	3	42	Wascopam [OR]
32 Perkins, H.K.	1	1	3						Wascopam [OR]
33 Bilake	1	1	4	75	610	392	24	29	Wascopam [OR]
34 Gregevaeu [Gregoire], A	1	1	6	50	250	75	30	19	
35 Lucia [Lucier], E.	1	3	4	100	350	264	56	66	
36 Bernia [Bernier], F	1	1					4		
37 Placea [Laferte], M	1	1	5	60	250	17	18	6	
38 Howard, J.	1	1		80	520	110	40	12	
39 Williams, R.	1	1	3	15	24		3	3	
40 Fercia [Forcier], L.	1	1	5	100	124	135	40	12	
41 Argett [Arquette], A.	1	1	4	120	44	143	25	101	
42 Deloir [Delard], J.	2	1	3	44	406	270	41	35	
43 Matt [Matte], J.	1	1					4		
44 Cooke, A.	1		70		600	15	19	30	
45 Fletcher, F.	1		Partner with Cooke						
46 Davia, A. J.	1	Late arrived					3		
47 LaBomberd, J.	1						3		
48 Abernathy [Abernethy], G.	1	1	2				3	14	
49 Johnson, Wm.	1	1	2	35	300	98	11	12	
50 Howard, S.H.	1	1	4	25	25	557	10	14	
51 Frost, J. H.	1	1	1				7	18	
52 Gere, G.H.	1								
53 Branard, P.	1								
54 Taylor, L.	1	1							
55 Raymond, H.H.	1	1	1					2	
56 Holman, J.	1	1	1	100			20	45	
Subtotals	34	27	62	1331	5729	3695	466	658	
Runnings totals	70	49	115	1956	11053	5844	771	1296	

Notes: Acres = acres under improvement.

Location is Willamette Valley unless otherwise noted.

Appendix 6. Elijah White's Census of Setters in the Oregon Country, 1842

Name of Head	Males 18+	Females 18+	Children 18+	Acres	Bushels wheat	Bushels grain	Horses	Neat stock	[Location]
57 Hines, G.	1	1	1				6	11	
58 Waller, A. F.	1	1	3				3	7	
59 Willson, Wm. H.	1	1					7	2	
60 Robb	1						2		
61 Morrison, J. L.	1						3	2	
62 McLaddon, J.	1			40			1	2	
63 Judson, L.	1	1	4	11		150	20	18	
64 Gray, Wm. H.	1	1	3	29	350	412	12	44	
65 Smith, Sidney	1						15	75	
66 McCary, Rich	1	1	2						
67 Smith, A. D.	2	2	4				8	18	
68 Copeland, A.	1						1		
69 Rodger, C.	0	0							
70 More, R.	1								
71 Hubbard, T. J.	1	1	1	60	350	75	5	62	
72 Williams, B.	1	1	2				12	15	
73 Campo, Charles	1	1	4	35	400	105	8	5	
74 McCarty, Wm.	1	0	0	70	400	75	8	6.5	
75 LeBreton, Geo. W.	1			5			5	20	
76 Obeshaw [Aubichon], B.	1	1		100	500	315	9	11	
77 Bellamy, Geo. W.	1						2		
78 Turnham, J.	1	1	1				1		
79 Force, Jas.	1						3	2	
80 Force, John	1						4		
81 Davis, Saml	1						2		
82 Weston, D.	1								
83 Barnham	1						1		
82 Beers, A.	1	1	5				70	60	
83 Gay, Geo.	1	1	4	60	300	55	25	17	
84 Horrigan, J.	1	1	2	30	150	52	8	5	
85 Turner, W. J.	1	1	1	60	300	65	12	12	
Subtotals	33	17	38	520	2750	1804	259	346 1/2	
Running totals	103	66	153	2476	13803	7648	1030	1692 1/2	

Notes: Acres = acres under improvement.

Location is Willamette Valley unless otherwise noted.

Appendix 6. Elijah White's Census of Settlers in the Oregon Country, 1842

Name of Head	Males 18+	Females 18+	Children 18+	Acres	Bushels wheat	Bushels grain	Horses	Neat stock	[Location]
86 Hastings, Esqr	1						2		
87 Pomeroy	1	1	5				6		
88 Perry, Wm.	1	1	1				3		
89 Trass	1	1	1				4		
90 Bennuit, John	2	2	4				10	12	
91 Hedspath	1						1		
92 Brown	2	1	4				11		
93 Girtman	1	1	1				2		
94 Sommer, Owen	1	1	2				6	10	
95 Shaddon	1	1	5				8	5	
96 Gibbs	1						2		
97 Burns, H.	1						2		
98 Dobenbish, J.	1						1		
99 Dera, J.	1						1		
100 Paul, F.	1						1		
101 McKey, Chas.	1	1	5				3	5	
102 Carter, Wm.	1	1	1				2	3	
103 Hogshaust, Wm.	1	1	2	30	150	80	8	18	
104 Anderson, John	1	1			125	50	10	5	
105 Edmunds, J.	1	1	2	30	100	60	3	4	
106 Ekin, Rich	1						9		
107 Bates, Jas.	1						2	16	
108 Fifer	1								
109 Gervail[s], J.	2	2	5	125	1000	1050	75	27	
110 Laddyroot [Laderoute], X	1	1	4	125	500	700	35	21	
111 Larison, J.	1	1	1			2	3	12	
112 Campbell, H.	1	1	2			4	13		
113 Lee, J.	1		1				25	100	
114 Babcock, J. L.	1	1	2				20	12	
115 Revit [Rivet], Joseph	1	1	3	80	400	210	50	11	
116 Blanchet, F. N.	1								
117 Willison, E. R.	1						2		
118 Cooke, Aaron	1						2		
Subtotals	36	21	51	390	2275	2152	313	274	
Running totals	139	87	204	2866	16078	9860	1343	1966 1/2	

Notes: Acres = acres under improvement.

Location is Willamette Valley unless otherwise noted.

Appendix 6. Elijah White's Census of Setters in the Oregon Country, 1842

Name of Head	Males 18+	Females 18+	Children 18+	Acres	Bushels wheat	Bushels grain	Horses	Neat stock	[Location]
119 Hathaway, Felix	1	1	0				2	31.5	
120 Bailey, William	1	1		absent			0	14	
121 Rowe [Roe], Charles	2	2	1	85	300	60	9	9	
122 Longtain, Andrew	1	1	3	100	300	180	25	15	
123 Charlo, A.	1	1	3	100	300	180	25	15	
124 Per[jault, John B.	1	1		90	400	150	40	20	
125 LaFrombais [Laframboise], M.	1	1	3	70	150	80	21	147	
126 Johnson, J.	1				150	80	3	5	
127 Catholic Church Farm	3		4	150	400	280	24	20	
128 Rivet, Frances & Antonio	2	2	3	70	400	180	51	15	
129 Duboy [Dubois], John B.	1	1	4	30	250	120	12	12	
130 Young, Ewing (estate of)				75	150		400	600	
131 Servong [Servant], Pierre	1	1	3	50	100	45	5	3	
132 Despan [Despard], J. F.	1	1	6	75	200	145	16	40	
133 Quantile & Beavoir	2	1	3	50	400	100	14	30	
134 Charlefou [Chalifou], A.	1	1	3	50	450	150	19	18	
135 Chamberlain, A.	1	1	2	30			2	1	
136 Pechet [Piette], J. B.	1	1	5	50	400	190	9	2	
137 Levoise, Francis	1	1	7	200	500	430	12	20	
138 Paro, Joseph	1	1	5				4	3	
139 Bernia, Toosang	1	1	4	30	100	50	9	4	
140 Burnia, Joseph	2	1	2	50	300	130	20	12	
141 Tenishaw, Peter	1	1		80	500	80	8	5	
142 DuBarr, O.	1	1	1	40			20	5	
143 Poiter, Charles	2			40	700		7	9	
144 Reausho, Eustace	1	1		30			3	7	
145 LaChapelle, Andrew	1	1	1	36	150	75	4	2	
146 Vevette, Francis	1	1	2	40	200	45	8	4	
147 Pegnaw [Picard], Andrew	1	1	3	60	700	200	8	13	
Subtotals	36	28	68	1691	7750	2925	778	1679 [1/5]	
Running totals	175	115	272	4557	23828	12785	2131	3046	

Notes: Acres = acres under improvement.

Location is Willamette Valley unless otherwise noted.

Appendix 6. Elijah White's Census of Settlers in the Oregon Country, 1842

Name of Head	Males 18+	Females 18+	Children 18+	Acres	Bushels wheat	Bushels grain	Horses	Neat stock	[Location]
148 Degear [Deguire], Baptiste	1	1	1	25	200	52	4	3	
149 Donpierre, David	1	1	4	40	500	40	4	3	
150 Orsaw, Louis	1	1	4	80	600	160	18	14	
151 Gota [Gautier], Pierre	1						5		
152 Bossu, Baptiste	1	1	3	40			5	1	
153 Vandoli [Vandal?], F.	1	1	3	30	500	290	9	7	
154 Hofstetter, J.				75			6	1	
155 LeRoi, P.	1	1	3	50	300	65	10	16	
156 DeBois, J.	1	1	2	50	300	65	9	5	
157 Gervis, J.	1	1		30			2		
158 Jock, Francis	1	1	5	30	120	60	4	1	
159 DuCharra [Ducharme], B.	1	1	1	50	200	95	7	4	
160 Saunders, John	1	1	4	50	300	80	2	2	
161 Law, Moses	1	1		40	100	70	7	6	
162 Snekal [Senecal], J.	1	1		40	150	65	12	2	
163 Remmo [Raymond?], J.	1			30	200	45	12		
164 Gale, Joseph	1	1	2				2	2	
165 Kernan, John	1							17	
166 Vandercott, J.	1						7	3	
167 Depau [Depot], Pierre	1	1	3	100	300	110	29	32	
168 LeFontese [Lafantasie], C.	1	1	1	40			1	10	
169 Montane, Nicholas	3	2	2	47	300	55	31	17	
170 Garvis, Francis	1	1	5	30	150	50	5		
171 Manard [Menard], Pierre	1	1	2	30			4		
172 Umperville, Pierre J.	1	1	10	20			10	1	
173 Bonerfaw [Bonenfant], A.	1	1	2	45	200	10	10	3	
174 Rondo [Rondeau], Charles	1	1	4	60	500	190	50	20	
175 Deporte[s] [McKay], J. B.	1	1	3	60	500	190	50	20	
176 Larogue [Laroque], Pierre	2	2	6	70	300	100	6		
177 David, George	1			30			3	3	
Subtotals	33	26	70	1182	5720	2712	292	190	
Running totals	208	141	342	5739	29548	15497	2423	3236	

Notes: Acres = acres under improvement.

Location is Willamette Valley unless otherwise noted.

Appendix 6. Elijah White's Census of Settlers in the Oregon Country, 1842

Name of Head	Males 18+	Females 18+	Children 18+	Acres	Bushels wheat	Bushels grain	Horses	Neat stock	[Location]
178 Laroison, John	1	1	1				3	12	
179 Plant[e], Charles	1		2	100	400	160	12	11	
180 Grongraw, John	1	1	7	90	200	100	20	5	
181 Moisaung [Moisan], Thomas	1	1		50	100	30	6		
182 LaPratt, P.	2	2	3	80	150	100	13	6	
183 Gervais, David				50					
184 Topan [Toupin], John B.	4	3	5	70	400	60	36	10	
185 Gobar [Gobin], John B.							6		
186 Methodist Mission Farm				236	1500	1290	61	42	
187 Mills, M. M. [Meth. Mission]				45	100	100	1	10	
188 School, M. M. [Meth. Mission]	1	1		5		50	21	400	
189 Barnaby, Joseph	1	1	4	45	200	35	10	7	
190 Eubare, Joseph	1	1	5	20			7	7	
191 Despon, Champine	1	1	4	50	300	80	16	12	
192 Townner, Aron	1						5	2	
193 Matthew, A.	1						2	2	
194 Olley, J. (Estate of)		1				25	1	9	
195 Baker & Anderson	2	2	3	60	500	90	10	12	
196 Leslie, David and	1	1	3	Abroad on a visit			10	120	
197 Roberts, C. (Estate of)									
198 Thompson, William	1	1	3	50	150	75	10	5	
199 Washington, George	1	2		30	150	55	15	7	
200 Evans, J.	1						3		
201 Hewit, A.	1						2		
202 Jones, J.	1						2		
203 Coates, Calvin	1						3		
204 Ritner, A.	1						3		
205 John, James	1						2	2	
206 King	1						3		
207 Johnson, J.	1						6	5	
208 Wharfield, J. (Estate of)		1					40	70	
209 Gieger, William	1						14	3	
Subtotals	30	20	40	981	4150	2250	343	754	
Running totals	238	161	382	6720	33698	17747	2766	3990	

Notes: Acres = acres under improvement.

Location is Willamette Valley unless otherwise noted.

Appendix 6. Elijah White's Census of Settlers in the Oregon Country, 1842

Name of Head	Males 18+	Females 18+	Children 18+	Acres	Bushels wheat	Bushels grain	Horses	Neat stock	Location
210 Sutton, William	1						3		Lapwai [ID]
211 Spalding, H. H.	1	1	2						Wailaptu [WA]
212 Whitman, Marcus	1	1	2	halfbreed children adopted into family					Lapwai [ID]
213 Craig, William	1	1	4				10		
214 Conner, James	1	1	2				3		
215 Carlo	1						3		
216 Walker, E.	1	1	2						Tshimakian [WA]
217 Littlejohn, J. B.	1	1	1						
218 Eells, Cushing	1	1	1						Tshimakian [WA]
219 Brown, Mrs. Mary		2					1		
220 Munger, Mrs.		1	1				1	1	
217 Copper, James F.	1						3		
218 Am B. C. F. Mission						450	70	110	
219 Demers, Rev. Mr.	1								Vancouver [WA]
220 Langlois, Rev. Mr.	1								
Subtotals	12	10	15	50	0	450	94	111	
Sum total	250	171	397	6770	33698	18197	2860	4101	
[Total settler population: Willamette Valley & Columbia Plateau, 818]									
[Settler population: Willamette Valley, 791]									

Settlement at Cowlitz, North of the Columbia River of 13 Canadian Families under the charge at this time of Rev. Mr. Boldu consisting of 60 souls [,] the number of their stock &c unknown.

From the best information which can be obtained the H B Comp. West of the Rocky Mountains raised in 1842

in possession

10 000 Bushels of Wheat

10 000 lbs of Butter

7 000 head of Sheep

2 000 head of Cows

2 000 head of Horses

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D. Personal Communication

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