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Date 21 June 1993
ABSTRACT

This dissertation begins in 1821, when the Hudson's Bay Company took over the Columbia Department from the North West Company, which since 1813 had exported a single commodity (peltries) from the watersheds of two great rivers (the upper Fraser and lower Columbia) to two markets (London and Canton). This fur trade appeared at first so unpromising that the Hudson's Bay Company considered abandoning the lower Columbia region in 1821. Instead of doing so, between 1821 and 1843, the Hudson's Bay Company consolidated its operations in the Columbia Department through the application of a number of venerable commercial policies of the Canadian fur trade. The company extended its fur trading activities to all the major rivers of the region, from the Taku in the north to the Sacramento in the south. To support this massive trade extension the company developed large-scale provision trades in agricultural produce and salmon on the lower Columbia and Fraser rivers. Environmental and cultural conditions favoured these developments. The company also took advantage of the possibility of seaborne transport to develop markets at Oahu (Hawaii), Yerba Buena (San Francisco), and Sitka. To these places the company exported, on its Pacific fleet of ships, a range of country produce from the west coast, especially lumber and salmon. By 1843 the company had developed a new regional economy based on local commodities and Pacific markets; fur continued to be sent to London on an annual vessel. These new exports, and this new regional economy, depended on Native labour in addition to a permanent non-Native workforce of about 600. The company in several places colonized the Native economy and redirected its produce to foreign markets. In 1843 the trade in fur remained—despite the emergence of profitable new export trades—the company's major source of profit from the Columbia Department. The dissertation ends in 1843 when, fearing the possibility of an unfavourable boundary
settlement, the company established Fort Victoria to serve as new departmental headquarters, at the same time inaugurating a considerable northward realignment of company activities on the Pacific. At this new post the fur trade would be a minor activity; company officials intended to develop a wide range of resources on Vancouver Island, all of them involving the hiring of Native workers. Increasingly, with the help of Native labour and trade, the company embarked on policies of resource development and extension of commerce on the coast, while the interior districts produced only fur. Difficulties of transport and distance from market prevented similar developments in the company's districts east of the Rocky Mountains.
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Elizabeth Lees would have been happy at this moment and I dedicate this to her memory.
INTRODUCTION

From the advantages the country possesses it bids fair to have an extensive commerce, on advantageous terms, with many parts of the Pacific. It is well calculated to produce the following staple commodities—furs, salted beef and pork, fish, grain, flour, wool, hides, tallow, timber and coals; and in return for these—sugars, coffee, and other tropical productions, may be obtained at the Sandwich Islands.

John Dunn, 1844

Besides carrying on the fur trade, the Hudson’s Bay Company raised horses, horned cattle, sheep and other farm stock. They had large farms in different parts of the country, had grist mills, tanneries, fisheries, etc., and exported flour, grain, beef, pork and butter to the Russian settlements in Alaska, lumber and fish to the Sandwich Islands, and hides and wool to England, from what is now the province of British Columbia.

Joseph William McKay, 1897

You can see it all here. It’s all going out. The timber, the grain, the coal, the sulphur... We are a dispossessed people, and we are rendered into poverty.

Lillooet Chief Saul Terry on the Vancouver waterfront, September 1987.

This is a study in environmental adaptation and commercial strategy. It concerns the period 1821 to 1843, when the Hudson’s Bay Company dominated the non-Native economic life of the Pacific coast and cordilleran interior of North America—the region known to the company as the Columbia Department. On the Pacific, fur traders encountered and

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responded to a new world of natural abundance and commercial opportunity. This study concerns the origin, impetus, and extent of economic development in the Columbia Department in these years, the markets for which exports were destined, forms of labour upon which exports depended, the origins and process of economic diversification, the formation of a distinctive regional economy within the company’s westernmost territories, and the implications of this new order for the Native people of the region. Through its trade in fur the company tied this region and its produce to London, the world centre of commerce and finance; through its exports of salmon, lumber, and flour, it connected the region to Pacific markets. This study, then, concerns the whole range of commercial activities undertaken by the company in the Columbia Department.

Environmental, cultural, and historical differences influenced the company’s experience on the Pacific coast. East of the Rockies, on Hudson Bay and in Rupert’s Land, constrained by a hostile climate, great distances, and limitations of transport, the Hudson’s Bay Company could export only fur. On the west coast the company became, in the 1830s, a general trading and resource development company. This transformation was directed by fur traders like Governor George Simpson, who demanded that farming and Native provision trades carry the burden of all other economic activity west of the Rocky Mountains; John McLoughlin, who conceived export trades in salmon and lumber, tested new markets for Columbia produce, and decided on Oahu as the most promising market; and James Douglas

who, after the late 1830s, managed the fur, salmon, lumber, and agricultural branches of the business. They were well aware of the larger commercial potential of the region. In 1822 the London Governor and Committee of the company referred to "the possibility of bringing other articles as well as Peltries to a profitable market," and Simpson in 1824 referred to the need to look beyond "the mere trafficking with Indians" on the Pacific. Archibald McDonald of Fort Langley referred in 1831 to "the prospect of curing salmon at this place, as an additional source of Returns," and in 1840 Douglas speculated on the need to extend the company's views "beyond the mere traffic of peltries." For general adaptation for commerce," fur trader John Dunn wrote in the same year, the Columbia Department could "scarcely be surpassed by any country in the world. . . . It is, in a word, chiefly valuable for trade."

Had it not been for its diverse commercial potential the company might have abandoned the lower Columbia region after 1821. The place offered a wide commercial opportunity that the maritime fur traders and the North West Company had not grasped. The fur traders, of course, did not leave their considerable experience behind them when they crossed the Rockies. The company applied a set of venerable commercial strategies, developed gradually in the fur trade to the east of the Rockies, and aimed at maximizing

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5Governor and Committee (hereafter G&C) to Haldane and Cameron, 4 September 1822, in R. Harvey Fleming, ed., Minutes of Council Northern Department of Rupert's land, 1821-31, with an introduction by H. A. Innis (Toronto: The Champlain Society for the Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1940), p. 335 (Hereafter HBRS 3); Simpson to Andrew Colvile, 9 August 1824, HBRS 3, pp. 243-44.

6McDonald to Governor and Council, Northern Department, 10 February 1831, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA) D.4/125, f0s. 62-63; Douglas to McLoughlin, 1 October 1840, HBCA B.223/b/28, f0s. 77-79.

7Dunn, Oregon, p. 203.
profit and dealing with commercial competition: promoting traders able to develop new sources of profit; locating new forms of country produce either through the Indian trade or through agricultural development; extending the fur trade to new, untapped, regions; selectively overhunting competitive regions to evict competitors; and, wherever possible, locating new markets for new exports. Many of these strategies were applied boldly on the lower Columbia River between 1812 and 1821 by the North West Company, but this company lost money in its Columbia trade. After 1821 the well-capitalized Hudson’s Bay Company applied these strategies to the diverse commercial potential of the whole Pacific coast with impressive results. The company embarked on a massive trade extension followed up by vigorous policies of economic diversification and resource development aimed explicitly at turning to profit the natural abundance of the coast. By 1835 the company had extended the fur trade to the entire region through a combination of a strong naval presence and an extensive inland trade, causing American traders to vacate both the North West Coast and much of the southern interior.

These commercial policies were united on the Pacific coast with a larger British Pacific trading scheme devised in the late eighteenth century by Alexander Dalrymple and Alexander Mackenzie. This ambitious scheme entailed, originally, the creation of an all-British Pacific commerce uniting the capital, commodities, and expertise of the East India Company.

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8I have retained the original spelling "North West Coast" for greater veracity (it was often abbreviated to "N.W. Coast," never "Northwest") and to avoid confusion with at least three other places: the "Northwest," the ethnographic "Northwest Coast," and the "Pacific Northwest." Fur traders referred to the region north and west of the Great Lakes as the Northwest; the Northwest Coast ethnographic region is the coastline, including some interior territory, between modern California and Alaska; the American Pacific Northwest includes the states of Washington and Oregon. The ethnographic Northwest Coast is a much larger region than the Hudson’s Bay Company’s North West Coast; the American Pacific Northwest is a much smaller region, and both contain much interior territory, whereas the North West Coast did not. See Chapter Five.
and Hudson's Bay companies. Fur and fish from the Pacific coast were to have been marketed in China through a united British mercantile effort. In the early nineteenth century this scheme was promoted most vigourously by the North West and Hudson’s Bay companies. Before 1821 the North West Company put in place a variation of this scheme, in which fur from the Columbia was marketed in Canton by American merchants, but this scheme failed owing to the mainly poor quality of Columbia pelts and high commission fees charged by the American intermediary. The Hudson’s Bay Company’s variation on this theme was more successful: the company established an agency in Honolulu in 1833 where country produce from the Columbia Department, together with English manufactured goods, were sold wholesale and retail.

The political status of the Columbia Department was undecided throughout this period: until the Oregon Treaty of 1846 British and American merchants had the same rights and privileges, but the company knew that its commercial policies bore great geopolitical promise: that is, a British commercial monopoly in the region would bolster Britain’s territorial and political claim.⁹ This competitive urgency, combined with the company’s legal monopoly of what contemporaries called the "Indian Trade," promoted a general commerce. (This de jure monopoly applied to the company’s British rivals only, but the company earned a de facto monopoly over foreign merchants as well). Between 1821 and 1843 the Native people of the Pacific coast provided fur, salmon, and general provisions as well as much of the labour necessary for the development of new export trades.

Between 1821 and 1843 a regional economy emerged on the west coast, tied by finance to London, by precedent and personnel to Rupert’s Land and the St. Lawrence River

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⁹John S. Galbraith, The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957).
valley, separated from Rupert's Land by labour, export, and market conditions, and based increasingly on exports to Pacific markets such as Hawaii. By 1843 the Hudson's Bay Company on the Pacific was as much a resource development company in pursuit of new commercial opportunities as a fur export company. The Pacific coast offered a commercial opportunity not available in Rupert's Land until the railway era.

The thesis begins with a discussion of the commercial strategies formulated by the Canadian and British fur trades. This is followed by a discussion of the factors that militated against the commercial development of Rupert's Land during the Simpson era (1820-1860) and permitted such developments on the Pacific coast. After this is a chapter on the extension of British commerce to the Pacific coast before 1821; this includes a cross-section of the region as the North West Company left it. This is followed by a chapter on the striking natural abundance found by fur traders on the Pacific and the basic cultural differences noted by fur traders. The main body of the thesis (chapters five through nine) is devoted to a discussion of the extension of the fur trade throughout the Columbia Department and the beginnings of export trades to Pacific markets from this region. This is followed by a chapter on the Native contribution to the company's profitable Columbia enterprise and the company's impact on Native exchange and labour. Following this is a chapter on the decision to abandon the Columbia River depot in favour of Fort Victoria. The construction of Fort Victoria in 1843 signalled the end of the southern, Columbia-based regional economy and the start of the northern regional economy centred on Fort Victoria. This year, 1843, ended one commercial era and started another; the year 1846, by contrast, was important politically. A cross-section of the region in 1843 constitutes the conclusion.

To get at the economic base of the company's activities I have relied on the company's country correspondence, that is, correspondence generated within the department
that provides the basic history of new export trades and the reasons for their establishment. Volumes three, four, six, and seven of the Hudson's Bay Record Society series, edited by E.E. Rich and with introductions by Harold Innis and W. Kaye Lamb, contain invaluable country correspondence. I have also relied on George Simpson's published and unpublished correspondence relating to his three visits to the department and on the scattered and fragmentary records of the Oahu agency.

Historiographically this study fills a void. In the last two decades, two historical geographers, James R. Gibson and Arthur J. Ray, have worked to the north, south, east, and west of the Columbia Department. Ray's work is set in Rupert's Land and elsewhere east of the Rockies, while Gibson has dealt systematically with the Russian and American maritime fur trades to the north and west, and with the Hudson's Bay Company's farms in the southern part of the Columbia Department. Two historians, John S. Galbraith and Robin A. Fisher, have written about the company's frontier policies and Native-European relations in this region. These valuable works have left largely untouched the economic

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history and commercial geography of the Hudson’s Bay Company in the Columbia Department.\footnote{With the exception of James R. Gibson, "A Diverse Economy: The Columbia Department of the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1821-1846," \textit{Columbia} (Summer 1991), pp. 28-31.}
CHAPTER 1

COMMERCIAL STRATEGIES OF THE CONTINENTAL FUR TRADE

The number of goods produced in a north temperate climate in an area dominated by Pre-Cambrian formations, to be obtained with little difficulty in sufficient quantity and disposed of satisfactorily in the home market under prevailing transport conditions, was limited.

H. A. Innis, 1930.

The commercial opportunity encountered on the Pacific coast after 1821 required the application of the expertise and capital of a well-financed and professional entity like the Hudson’s Bay Company. This opportunity awaited, specifically, the application of the spatial and commercial strategies of the continental fur trade. The west coast fur trade was the final extension of a commercial tradition of continental scale that dated back to the seventeenth century in what is now Canada. The divergent economy of the Hudson’s Bay Company in the Columbia Department originated, in large part, in profit-making and cost-cutting measures worked out regionally to the east of the Rockies and applied here in different circumstances.

A useful starting place remains Innis’s The Fur Trade in Canada (1930), which contains a discussion of the strategies fur trade companies used to maximise profits and minimise costs. This book offers an explanation of economic growth in fur trade areas and an account of the emergence of distinctive regional economies in those parts of North

America dominated by the fur trade. This explanation revolves around a basic awareness of the natural resources of a given area, of the role of Native labour and expertise, of the importance of internal provisions in the fur trade, of the appearance of export commodities other than furs, and of the rise of markets other than London. That Innis remains the authority on these strategies reflects the regionalized state of Canadian fur trade scholarship: not a single scholarly study has since appeared dealing with the nineteenth century Canadian fur trade from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The Fur Trade in Canada contains an extensive discussion of the solutions devised by the trading companies to counter the continual expense of a landward enterprise operating on a geographically extended and, ultimately a continental, scale. Innis called these the "various devices" with which fur trade companies "solved the problem of overhead costs." In fact they were commercial strategies or policies. Innis conceptualized the fur trade as a business that encountered and engendered problems for which fur trade companies had evolved a set of solutions. Expensive and remote systems of transport, personnel, and food supply had to be arranged as the fur trade expanded into the interior of the continent. "The extension of the trade across the northern half of the continent and the transportation of furs and goods over great distances involved the elaboration of an extensive organization of transport, of personnel, and of food supply," he wrote.

The expenses associated with such organization confronted both the St. Lawrence and Hudson Bay trading systems, and discussions of strategies aimed at lessening them occupy substantial sections of Innis's book. Early in New France "the problem of the fur trade

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2Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 142.

3Ibid., p. 389.
became one of organizing the transport of supplies and furs over increasingly greater distances.\textsuperscript{4} Two centuries later the Hudson's Bay Company confronted the same problem, and Innis's analysis was unchanged: "The great problem of the Hudson's Bay Company was the large number of men, spreading out in the interior, high cost of transport, and large quantities of supplies."\textsuperscript{5} In times of emergency or retrenchment, such as in the ten years after the 1821 merger, these strategies could be enshrined as corporate policy. As strategies or policies they were elements of a distinctive corporate culture ideally adapted to fur trade territory.

Nowhere in \textit{The Fur Trade in Canada} does Innis present these ideas in a summary form.\textsuperscript{6} Rather, he wove his ideas repeatedly and insistently through his text. In his terms, the principal adaptative strategies of the Canadian fur trade were:

1. exploring new regions in search of furs ("extending the trade");
2. applying policies of overhunting or fur conservation;
3. devising both fixed (official) and variable (unofficial) standards of trade;
4. borrowing aspects of the material culture of the Native people;
5. devising forms of transportation suitable to cold climates, to the goods being transported, to immense distances, and to river travel;
6. searching for internal supplies of food ("provisions" or "country produce");
7. producing local implements;
8. searching for export commodities other than fur;

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 6.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., p. 164.

\textsuperscript{6}Later, Innis wrote the introduction to the Hudson Bay Record Society's publication of the minutes of the Northern Council of Rupert's Land. These minutes were published in 1940, a decade after \textit{The Fur Trade in Canada}. This gave Innis the chance to revisit the ideas he had introduced ten years earlier and to confirm his earlier analysis: he saw that Simpson, faced with a top-heavy and superfluous workforce, enshrined the old cost-cutting strategies of the fur trade as official policies. Strategies woven through the text in \textit{The Fur Trade in Canada} are presented lucidly in the Minutes as policies. In a telling expression, Innis referred to these policies collectively as Simpson's "armoury." HBRS 3, p.
using inexpensive local labour;
encouraging traders' self-reliance and initiative.

These tactics were applied wherever the fur trade operated. Yet different solutions suited different regions: some, for example, adopted a fixed standard of trade; other, competitive, regions adopted a variable standard. Some grew European crops to provide provisions, others traded pemmican, others wildfowl, others salmon. Different regional applications of these corporate strategies promoted the emergence of distinctive regional economies within fur trade territory. Some districts exported nothing but fur; others exported practically no fur.

(1) For Innis, the fur trade evolved in response to the presence of an unknown quantity of valuable fur in a northerly environment of unknown extent. Innis estimated the aboriginal beaver population of North America at ten million. The habits and habitat of the beaver, Innis wrote, strongly influenced the spatial expansion of the fur trade:

The early history of the fur trade is essentially a history of the trade in beaver fur. The beaver was found in large numbers throughout the northern half of North America. The better grades of fur came from the more northerly forested regions of North America and were obtained during the winter season when the fur was prime. A vast north temperate climate was a prerequisite to an extensive development of the trade. The animal was not highly reproductive and it was not a migrant. Its destruction in any locality necessitated the movement of hunters to new areas.

The east coast maritime and Appalachian environments were not fur-rich and their Native populations, Innis wrote, largely depended on fishing and agriculture. The Saguenay River, however, led to the Canadian Shield, an ideal habitat for fur-bearing mammals and

\[7\] Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, p. 4.

\[8\] Ibid., pp. 387-8.
inhabited by peoples for whom "hunting was the predominant occupation." Beaver from southerly regions was found to be uniformly inferior to the northern fur. "Fur trade development on a large scale assumes a vast territory drained by great rivers such as characterize the north temperate climate and a [Native] population [adapted] to a hunting economy." The discovery of new and increasingly distant fur regions gave the fur trade its momentum. The search for furs propelled this trade across the areas that became western and northern Canada amid growing competition between the Hudson Bay and Montreal-based fur traders.

Innis pointed out that the "decreasing supply of furs in older districts" resulted in a constant search for new and profitable territory. "The exhaustion of the beaver fields and the necessity of moving to new areas were of fundamental importance." This search for new furs manifested itself in attempts to expand or extend the fur trade; "exploration and penetration to new areas" resulted, with a subsequent demand for new sources of provisions. This strategy worked on a large scale—for example in the exploration of much of the Hudson Bay drainage by Montreal traders between 1713 and 1763, and in the North West Company's explorations west of the Rockies between 1793 and 1821.

"Mackenzie's expeditions successfully mapped out the northern fur fields and provided for a

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10Ibid., p. 9.
11Ibid., p. 263.
12Ibid., p. 187.
13Ibid., p. 110.
14Ibid., p. 263.
15Ibid., p. 259.
rapid extension of trade." It also worked on a regional scale, as in the dozens of explorations conducted by the Hudson’s Bay Company in the Columbia Department after 1821. The term "extending the trade" referred to the company’s invasion of a new territory. These explorations carried the potential of uncovering new sources of provisions, and exports other than furs.

(2) After the 1821 merger, Innis wrote, "steps were taken to nurse the beaver supply in territories that had been exhausted in the period of competition." Conservation policies worked best in protected (what Innis called "monopolistic") or non-competitive areas such as existed around the Bay in the eighteenth century, or in much of the Northern Department after 1821. Conservation could be achieved by encouraging Indians to hunt the "cheaper and more abundant fur-bearing animals" such as muskrat and small furs while allowing the more valuable species to "recruit." Nonetheless the fur trade showed a "persistent decline" over the first half of the nineteenth century, owing in part to more effective trapping methods (e.g. steel traps) and an increase in the number of trappers. This decline made exploration and alternate sources of wealth all the more important. Innis also touched on the opposite of conservation: the purposeful creation—by overhunting—of "fur deserts" in frontier regions such as the Columbia Department’s Snake River. With both strategies,

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16Ibid., p. 201.
17Ibid., p. 325-6.
18Ibid., p. 327.
19Ibid., p. 332.
20Ibid., p. 206. The company’s competitive hunting and trapping strategies ("frontier policies") along its American, Canadian, and Russian frontiers after 1821 are the subject of Galbraith, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, passim and especially pp. 10-12; 24-174.
the fur traders displayed an ability to control and regulate natural resources—a skill they put
to use also in the provision and export trades.

(3) Adaptations were necessary in finance and accounting. As early as 1695 the
Hudson’s Bay Company established a fixed standard of trade (that is, a uniform price list for
furs) at all its posts in order to prevent Native people from bargaining at neighbouring
Hudson’s Bay Company posts. A variable standard of trade (known as the overplus) was
introduced in competitive regions; it allowed an individual trader to raise or lower fur prices
above the fixed standard so as to better the competition from Montreal-based traders or
Americans. The purpose of such trade standards was to standardize fur prices and keep them
at a minimum, though practices such as gift-giving, which came to be expected by Native
peoples, entered the system and persisted. In the nineteenth century the Hudson’s Bay
Company instituted a centralized accounting system based at York Factory, and also a
standard of trade known as Made Beaver.

(4) As the fur trade expanded it adapted to regionally-specific aspects of the material
culture of Native people. Innis used the expression "cultural traits" to refer to Native
cultural adaptations which were, in turn, borrowed or adapted by the fur trade. As Innis
put it, fur traders encountered the "cultural traits of peoples who [had] already worked out a

21 Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, pp. 139-42.

22 Ibid., pp. 318-20. Innis’s observations have been followed up by Ray, Indians in the Fur
Trade and by Ray and Freeman, ‘Give Us Good Measure.

23 Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, pp. 9, 12, 13. As synonyms Innis used the expressions
"cultural features" and "social heritage" (pp. 13, 383). The term "cultural trait" is still in use
among archaeologists. See R. Cole Harris, ed., Historical Atlas of Canada, Volume 1 (Toronto:
University of Toronto Press, 1987), plates 7-9.
civilization suitable to the new environment."^{24} The most important borrowings from the Native world were practical techniques of survival and transport. The fur trade economy incorporated the snowshoe, the toboggan, the packline, the birch bark canoe, and skin and bark shelters as well as a number foods, such as pemmican, wild rice, and corn. Innis stressed the dependence of the fur traders on the Native economies they encountered:

[C]ultural traits of the Indians were important factors. On the St Lawrence the agricultural developments of the Indians in the growth of Indian corn proved of fundamental importance to the prosecution of the trade over wide areas. In Hudson Bay agricultural development was limited, and exploration and penetration of the interior without a supply of Indian corn was practically impossible. The Company was dependent on the Indians, especially at Forts Nelson and Churchill, to make their canoes in the interior, and to obtain their food supply by hunting on their way to the Bay. Without a supply of food adaptable to transportation in canoes, and without a supply of birch bark, penetration to the interior was undertaken with difficulty and chiefly through dependence on the Indians.^{25}

Borrowing from the Native world was a practical necessity and, at times, a strategy of survival.

(5) Innis devoted great attention to transportation, one of the costliest aspects of the fur trade's operations. He was preoccupied with the high overhead costs of distance, and with the strategies fur traders devised to reduce them. Early in the fur trade the birch bark canoe was borrowed from Native cultures and "modified to suit the demands of the trade."^{26} Innis wrote that the canoe was essential "for rapid and certain transportation of the more valuable and lighter commodities into the country."^{27} Other forms of transport

^{24}Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 383.

^{25}Ibid., p. 143.

^{26}Ibid., p. 389.

^{27}Ibid., p. 213.
examined by Innis included York Boats, snow shoes, toboggans, Red River carts, horses, and dogs.

Eventually a distinctive vocabulary evolved around fur trade transport. "Advance depots" were established along the North West Company's main trunk line at Rainy Lake (Lac la Pluie) and at Fort Chipewyan.28 Efficient overland express routes were developed both by the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, "by which information on the activities of various districts could be immediately forwarded to headquarters and by which orders from headquarters could be dispatched to the districts."29 Express systems went by such names as the "Winter Express," "Athabasca and English River Express," and "Columbia Express."30 These routes became so elaborate and essential that in about 1798 Mackenzie estimated that "expenses of transportation equalled one-half the total adventure of the [North West] Company. . ."31 Extended transport systems also required an efficient provision supply: "The elaborate transportation system necessary to carry on the trade from Grand Portage to the interior and to Athabasca required a highly developed organization for the supply of provisions."32

(6) Strategies aimed at procuring inexpensive domestic provisions were an enduring requirement of the fur trade. Innis referred to all forms of food, whatever their origin, by the contemporary word "provisions." In the broadest sense, provisions were either imported

28Ibid., p. 231.
29Ibid., p. 316.
30Ibid., p. 245.
31Ibid., p. 242.
32Ibid., p. 231.
from Europe or were obtained locally ("country produce"). European imports do not concern us here; they did not influence the development of the regional economies of the fur trade, and barely figure in Innis's work. Country produce was of two varieties: indigenous foods procured from the Native or Métis economies, and introduced livestock, cereals, vegetables, and fruits raised at the posts. Both were important aspects of "the policy of self-sufficiency" so consistently implemented by the Hudson's Bay Company. Self-sufficiency entailed a reliance on native foodstuffs, a reliance on introduced agriculture, or both, depending on circumstances.

According to Innis, the major forms of country produce obtained in the Native trade were mammals (especially caribou, deer, buffalo, moose, rabbit, and hares and their by-products such as pemmican, tallow, and grease); birds (e.g. geese, swans, and partridges); fish (e.g. whitefish, and salmon); as well as Indian corn, wild rice, salt, and seal and whale oil. Pemmican, wild rice, and whitefish were the most important country provisions east of the Rocky Mountains. Pemmican was produced mainly by Plains peoples; wild rice came from the region between Fort William and Bas de la Rivière (at the south end of Lake Winnipeg); whitefish habitat ranged widely from Sault St Marie to Prince of Wales and Albany Forts to the lakes of the Saskatchewan District. A subsistence economy based on such provisions underlay both the fur and export trades.

Both the Hudson Bay and St Lawrence traders experienced varying degrees of dependence on Native provisions. "Supplies for the Bay were limited as far as possible," Innis wrote, "and the personnel in the Bay were urged to develop an economy enabling them to live off the country. Lack of agricultural development made inevitable a dependence on

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33Ibid., pp. 134, 299.
hunting and fishing, and in turn on Indian experience." Native foodstuffs were especially important in distant, newly-opened districts. La Vérendrye at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers in 1738 had exhorted Indians to "hunt well, to bring provisions to the French posts." By the late eighteenth century, fish, game, and wild rice supported the North West Company's inland trading posts, and in 1808 a Northwester wrote,

They [Native people at interior posts] alone supply all the food on which the Company's servants subsist; without which they would be compelled to abandon three fourths of the country, and all the valuable part of the trade. The sole employment of these Indians, is to kill the large animals with which their country abounds; to select particular parts of their flesh and tallow; and prepare it in the usual manner and deposit it at the posts where the Company's servants will find it. . . .

Over the years Montreal-based traders established what Innis referred to variously as "supply posts," "provision posts," "advance depots," and "agricultural depots" at Michilimackinac, Sault St. Marie, Green Bay, Detroit, Kaministiquia, Rainy Lake (Lac la Pluie), Bas de la Rivière, Fort Espérance, Fort Epinette, Grand Portage, and Winnipeg House. Some posts were little more than provisioning centres. Much of the region between Sault St. Marie and Bas de la Rivière produced food for the North West Company.

Fur traders introduced agriculture in part to lessen their dependence on food obtained from Native people. "The dangers of dependence on a supply of food from the country were evident," Innis wrote in an especially significant passage: "a warm autumn was the occasion for the loss of quantities of frozen fish and meat. Fluctuations in the supply of game were frequent. But these dangers were in themselves a spur to greater activities in developing

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34Ibid., p. 131.
35Ibid., p. 93.
36Ibid., p. 236.
He referred repeatedly to the traders' need to grow crops and raise livestock. Radisson and Groseilliers encouraged the growing of corn in the Great Lakes region "so that longer journeys to the colony could be undertaken." Every bushel of potatoes grown at a Hudson's Bay Company post lessened the reliance on imported English food and on Native provisions. In the early nineteenth century, the company sent out a five-part set of instructions about the siting of new posts. They were to be established beyond reach of inundation; in the vicinity of firewood and wood for buildings; near a good harbour for boats; near a good summer and winter fishery; and if possible where the soil was good. Innis argued that this policy virtually guaranteed the spread of agriculture across the continent, albeit at "convenient intervals" and in "suitable territory."

Innis enumerated a large number of European cereals and crops found in fur trading territory. Principal crops were barley, beans, cabbage, oats, peas, potatoes, turnips, and wheat; livestock included cattle, horses, oxen, poultry, sheep, and swine. Secondary agricultural products included beef, bread, butter, cheese, eggs, flour, milk, pork, ham, and tallow. European crops and livestock were raised wherever possible, and especially at supply and agricultural depots south of the Canadian Shield. In the early nineteenth century, Red River "with its favourable climate became the chief source of agricultural products." With declining numbers of buffalo, the principal source of pemmican, flour became a more

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37Ibid., p. 133.
38Ibid., p. 36.
39Ibid., 305-6.
41Ibid., p. 303.
important export from Red River. Experimental farms were established at Red River with the aim, in part, of increasing the supply of provisions to neighbouring districts.

Agriculture, begun as a local measure of necessity and economy, became in the end a trans-continental phenomenon. Innis noted the introduction of potatoes at such far-flung locations as Bas de la Rivière, Red River, Fort Simpson (Mackenzie River), Fort Resolution, Fort Halkett, Fort Liard, and Fort Vancouver:

The extension of the fur trade was supported at convenient intervals by agricultural development as in the lower St. Lawrence basin, in southeastern Ontario, and areas centring about Detroit, and in Michilimackinac and Lake Michigan territory, in the west at Red River, though the buffalo were more important in the plains area in the beginning, and eventually in Peace River. On the Pacific coast an agricultural base was established on the Columbia.

(7) An important cost-cutting adaptive strategy was the production of country-made goods for daily use at the posts and for trade. The object was self-sufficiency: every item that could be made in the country saved the expense of importing the manufactured equivalent. Leather goods such as parchment, pack cords, babiche, snowshoe line, sinew, tracking shoes, tents, and snares were made in districts where leather was abundant (e.g. the Saskatchewan District), and distributed where leather was scarce (e.g. New Caledonia). An extensive internal trade also developed around such items as boats, canoes, canoe timbers, gum, portage slings, and barrel components. The North West Company sawmill at Sault St. Marie provided the Lake Superior posts with plank and spars. Blacksmiths at York Factory produced such "country made articles" as axes, ironwork, spears, pots, pans, and kettles.

42Ibid.

43Ibid., p. 389. See Gibson, Farming the Frontier.

44Ibid., p. 305.
Innis, who knew first-hand the privations of travel on northern rivers, had a keen appreciation for thriftiness. "Economy was enforced in all departments," he wrote; "Old tracking line or bale cords were used for buoy lines, for trout lines, and for mending nets. Sugar kegs were made into water buckets. Old boats were burned for the nails."45

(8) Innis also noted that the Hudson’s Bay Company engaged in a constant search for exports. The company’s ships carried cargoes of "heavy and bulky trading goods and supplies" that they exchanged at the bayside posts for cargoes of light furs for the London market. This meant that "large quantities of ballast were necessary for the return voyage."46 Attempts to increase the bulk of the return cargo resulted in experiments in whaling and mining. Earlier, French traders had opened a lead mine in "the west."47 In the eighteenth century "new lines of trade" were encouraged by the Hudson’s Bay Company in such commodities as deer horns, rabbit skins, quills, feathers, walrus tusks, swan and goose skins, salt salmon, seal and whale oil, buffalo robes, and castor oil.48 Early in the nineteenth century, bears’ grease, wood, hemp, flax, and caviar were also considered as exports. Lumber and salmon exports were also made from the west coast to the Sandwich Islands, though here Innis provides no detail.49 "Experiments were constantly made in the development of new lines of trade."50

46Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 130.
47Ibid., p. 111.
48Ibid., p. 131.
49Ibid., p. 308.
50Ibid.
(9) These associated trades required a large, diverse supply of labour. The "personnel problem" of the fur trade resulted from the expense and difficulty of retaining an occupationally diverse workforce. Native people constituted a local and usually accessible source of furs, provisions, and general labour. Posts generally had a number of "homeguard Indians" whose job was to provide the post with fish and game. Iroquois, known as the best beaver hunters in North America, were attached to posts across the continent. Native people hunted and worked in numerous other capacities. As hunters, fishermen, and journeymen they solved "the problem of reducing overhead." Innis noted that after 1821 Natives and Métis were hired as voyageurs to transport goods between Red River and York Factory. "Native labour was encouraged." The use of relatively inexpensive Native labour was a cost-cutting strategy.

Specific tasks in the fur trade's non-Native workforce were assigned loosely on the basis of origin or ethnicity. French Canadians were thought by the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company to be superior as canoemen, axemen, and hunters, because they were "accustomed to pioneer conditions." The Hudson's Bay Company hired educated Englishmen and Scotsmen as apprentice clerks and skilled labourers on more highly-paid long-term contracts. Educated mixed blood men from Red River were hired as

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51 Ibid., p. 133.
52 Ibid., pp. 310, 312.
53 Ibid, p. 312.
54 Innis overlooked the role of Native women in the provision, transport, and fur trades. For an introduction see Sylvia Van Kirk, Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society 1670-1870 (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980), pp. 53-73.
postmasters or as apprentice clerks; they (like Native people) were also hired for temporary or seasonal work and on short contracts. "The burden of overhead was materially reduced through hiring temporary employees rather than a permanent force throughout the year."56

The Hudson’s Bay Company paid labourers at the low rate of £17 a year, compared to an average annual income of £360 for chief traders in the mid-nineteenth century. The transport and provision systems required a large labouring corps. In 1798, for example, the North West Company employed 1,257 men; in 1805 this had risen to 1,610, in addition to over 1000 "dependent" women and children, a factor which posed an additional expense, especially after the merger of 1821 when George Simpson decided that it would be "prudent and economical" to have these women and children removed to Red River.57 This veritable clearing of Rupert’s Land had the effect of tripling the population of Red River Colony in the summers of 1822 and 1823. "The development of Red River settlement was an immediate solution [to] the reduction of personnel."58

(10) The North West Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company encouraged and promoted traders who were self-reliant, shrewd, and energetic. The North West Company, especially, was noted for its "efficient and energetic personnel" willing to "encourage a new branch of trade and innovations."59 Innis wrote that "the trade stressed individual initiative, resource, and general freedom from restraint."60 The North West Company and later the

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56Ibid., p. 309.
57Ibid., p. 288.
58Ibid., p. 289.
59Ibid., pp. 205, 323.
60Ibid., p. 115.
Hudson’s Bay Company’s corporate structure recognized the importance of its most senior wintering partners by paying them a dividend—a percentage of total profits. The earnings of a high-ranking fur trader were tied to the total earnings of the fur trade. The "school of the fur trade" produced such capable businessmen as Donald Smith, later Lord Strathcona, and a host of less well-known nineteenth-century businessmen.

In sum, Innis held that the fur trade had recourse to a number of strategies to reduce the high overhead cost of transportation, personnel, and provision. These were the methods by which provisions were obtained, costs were reduced, export trades were developed, and, inadvertently, regional economies were created. Such strategies had been applied, sporadically or consistently, for almost two centuries before the fur trade reached the west coast. High overhead costs, a result of the expansionist nature of the fur trade, were persistent. The principal solutions were recurrent and replicative: they shifted their location and their details as the companies extended their operations to new parts of the continent. Provisioning strategies, for example, were adaptable to very different environments. That the fur trade moved through and operated successfully in such different regions as Rupert’s Land and the Pacific coast suggests a diverse and adaptable commercial expertise. After the merger of 1821 these strategies were formalised and elevated by Simpson to the status of continental policies. The Columbia Department makes an ideal case study of such policies because it was spatially distinct and because its departmental records are separate. Every

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61Ibid., p. 397.

62See Innis’s introduction to HBRS 3. Similarly Galbraith, whose book deals mainly with the company’s competitive hunting strategies along its Canadian, American, and Russian frontiers after 1821, remarks that these "frontier policies" were "highly systematized after 1821, and they constituted a factor in the territorial expansion of the Hudson’s Bay Company which involved it in boundary controversies with Russia and the United States." Galbraith, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, p. 10.
business letter and journal generated by the company on the west coast contains reference to one or more of these strategies, and any attempt to explain economic change must consider them.63

Although Innis is often interpreted as ignoring the internal economy and the Native people at the expense of staple or export trades, his text shows a clear understanding of the role of Native economies in the fur trade and in the strategies of survival. The bulk of his book, in fact, is profoundly inward-looking and has little to do with the staples theory introduced in his conclusion.65 An analysis of the fur trade in North America reveals, beyond the interregional trade in furs, a series of distinct and specialized regional economies grafted onto Native economies. For example, pemmican was the staple food of Native people and fur traders in Rupert's Land; salmon was the staple of both groups on the west coast. The development of country produce, country-made trade goods, and new branches of

63As elements of a distinctive corporate culture these strategies do not apply with any consistency to the maritime fur trade of the North West Coast which, like the cod fishery on the east coast, was "maritime and stationary," whereas the fur trade was "continental" and "expansionistic." Harris, "European Beginnings," (1985), p. 143. C.f. Watkins: "[W]ith fur came the life of the habitant and the vision of a centralized transcontinental economy; with cod, parochialism and a commitment to the sea." M. H. Watkins, "A Staple Theory of Economic Growth," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science 29 (1963), pp. 141-58; p. 154.

64E.g. Mel Watkins, "The Staple Theory Revisited," in Bruce W. Hodgins and Robert J. D. Page, eds., Canadian History Since Confederation (Georgetown, Ontario: Irwin, Dorsey, 1979), pp. 573-598; p. 585. Allan Greer argues that the staples thesis has put a "stranglehold" over Canadian economic history, "has led to an excessive preoccupation with the outflow of Colonial products," and has resulted in an "outward looking" and "external approach." Allan Greer, Peasant, Lord, and Merchant: Rural Society in Three Quebec Parishes 1774-1840 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 172.

65Innis was interested in the effect of staple development on colonial development: on colonial economic, social, and political patterns, configurations, and mentalities. Thus, though his staple theory was based largely on an analysis of the pre-colonial fur trades, it has little heuristic value to the study of the fur trade itself, and to my knowledge no one has ever done a staples analysis of a fur trade region. Innis's inspiration to fur trade scholars (Ray and Gibson among them) is his grasp of the mechanics of the fur trade itself.
export required an intimate knowledge of the natural resources and economic potential of a specific region. Native people possessed this knowledge and supplied it to fur traders.\(^\text{66}\)

As it moved to new regions the fur trade applied its commercial strategies to local resources, Native labour conditions, and available markets. In effect, the strategies elaborated by Innis were adaptations that allowed fur traders to take advantage of the natural resources of a given area by deploying both Native and imported labour. The Canadian fur trade evolved a series of directed commercial strategies that were essentially economic adaptations to a new environment. These strategies permitted the fur trade economy to operate on a transcontinental scale more than half a century before the national economies of Canada and the United States; the sheer vastness and isolation of Simpson's domain made the adoption of uniform commercial policies of crucial importance. Fur traders, who for want of a better term referred to the company's entire territory as "the Country," were well aware of the vast scale of their business (See Map 1). In 1843, for example, Simpson referred to a story that had "been such a source of pleasantry throughout the Country (from the Atlantic to the Pacific—from the shores of Labrador to the Polar Sea). . . ."\(^\text{67}\) No politician in the Canadian colonies or the United States could yet make such a territorial claim.

Innis examined the Columbia Department only cursorily. He appears to have run out of steam at the Rockies, in the process omitting from his discussion the enormous contrasts between the harsh climate of the Bay and Rupert's Land and the abundance found by

\(^{66}\)"We have not yet realized that the Indian and his cultures were fundamental to the growth of Canadian [economic] institutions." Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 392.

\(^{67}\)Simpson to Hargrave, 20 December 1843, Hargrave Papers, NAC. "Because of the persistent need to expand into new hunting areas, the fur trade was responsible for the vast geographic expansion of both economic activity and political jurisdiction. The beginning of a transcontinental economy, albeit tenuous, was established." William L. Marr and Donald G. Paterson, Canada: An Economic History (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980), p. 61.
Map 1. Hudson's Bay Company Territory, 1830 (After Arrowsmith).
furtraders on the west coast. In Rupert’s Land, where the climate was severe, transport problems severe, and isolation from markets profound, the fur trade could hardly diversify. A penurious environment and isolated location placed severe checks on commercial development. The company’s ambitions were sharply circumscribed in ways that, by inference, they would not be on the Pacific coast. Disadvantages in climate and location prevented the development of resources known to exist in the interior. Without a railway or reliable winter road the company had no way of developing the resources of Rupert’s Land beyond the trade in furs and other light and valuable animal products like isinglass and castor oil. The company’s experience on Hudson Bay and at Red River contrasts starkly with its experience on the west coast, where the climate was conducive to agricultural undertakings, markets were close at hand, year-round ocean-borne transport was possible, resources were plentiful, and a large Native population was available for trade and work.

The rest of this chapter is devoted to a discussion of the natural factors that prohibited the commercial development of Rupert’s Land before the railway era.

The British government’s Royal Charter of 1670 had given the Hudson’s Bay Company the right to develop the resources of Hudson Bay and the rivers that drained into it. The government granted the company the trade in furs and "other considerable commodities:"

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68 Rupert’s Land was the "core" of the company’s domain, "a vaguely defined territory of approximately 1,400,000 square miles granted to the Company by Charles II in the charter of 1670." Galbraith, Hudson’s Bay Company, p. 3.
[The Fishing of all sortes of ffish Whales Sturgions and all other Royal ffishes in the Seas Bayes Islettes and Rivers within the premisses and the ffish therein taken together with the Royalty of the Sea upon the Coastes and the lymittes aforesaid And all Mynes Royall as well discovered as not discovered of Gold Silver Gemms and pretious Stones to bee found or discovered. . . .

The Crown also gave the company the "entire Trade and Trafficke" with the Native people of Rupert's Land. These and other privileges were confirmed and extended by parliament for the next two centuries. Such privileges were common to English companies formed in the seventeenth century by men hoping to capitalize on broad new commercial opportunities overseas.

The charter, then, applied beyond the trade in furs. The profit-motive, generally applied, was the company's raison d'être. In law and practice the Hudson's Bay Company was a trading company with an interest in natural resources, but it would take one hundred and fifty years and the merger with the North West Company for the company to take full advantage of the scope of its charter. What is impressive is the variety of

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70 "The men who formed such companies were seldom philanthropists; they speculated their money, and they hoped for a return on their speculation." E. E. Rich, "The Colony of Rupert's Land," The Beaver 309:1 (Summer 1978), pp. 4-12; p. 5.

71 "The history of commercial rule is well known to the world; the object of that rule, wherever established, or by whomsoever exercised, is gain. In our intercourse with the natives of [North] America no other object is discernable, no other object is thought of, no other object was allowed." W. S. Wallace, ed., John McLean's Notes of a twenty-five years' service in the Hudson's Bay Territory (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1932. (hereafter McLean, Notes).

72 On a practical level this was seen in the company's links with the Royal Society of London; six of the eighteen adventurers of 1670 were fellows of the society. The society tested the commercial possibilities of such exports as buffalo hides and swan skins. R. P. Stearns, "The Royal Society and the Company," The Beaver, 276 (June 1945), pp. 8-13; the company later maintained a small museum of natural history in London. Hammond, "Marketing Wildlife," p. 15.
"Comodityes besides Furres" examined soon after 1670: the company considered exports of a range of commodities including walrus teeth, minerals, whale oil, turpentine, potash, and maple sugar, but by the early eighteenth century the fur trade had emerged as the sole substantial export. Every year company labourers at York Factory collected and stored stones which, because fur was so much lighter than incoming trade goods, ballasted the homeward ship.

The bay presented many constraints to resource development, the most important of which were the climate and the uncertainty and scarcity of local sources of food. "At York Factory," an unsympathetic journalist wrote, "the ice does not break up till July, and the soil is never thawed more than six inches down. The hottest fire does not prevent the room being coated with ice three inches thick; the wind raises the cheek into blisters; and long icicles depend from the eyelashes." From its beginnings in 1670 in the bay's barren and inhospitable environment, the Hudson's Bay Company could only import food from England or obtain it through the Native trade. Hudson Bay was, an early fur trader wrote, "a Very

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76 "Let one take up a good map, and glance over the vast sweep of continent north of the 49th parallel of latitude. Over the whole dreary extent of the Hudson's Bay Company's dominions, more than three millions of miles square, he will observe numberless dots. These are trading forts, cast down amid swamps, rocks, and marshes. . . . The whole looks, it is said, 'like the fag end of the world,' swamps, rocks, treeless wastes, lakes, and ponds mixed up in interminable confusion." Weekly Register, 5 September 1849, in HBCA cutting books.
uncertain place for the English men’s living.” Large quantities of English food and Indian provisions were always required, and a late seventeenth century attempt to grow corn from Virginia failed. Wheat would not grow on the bay owing to a low summer temperature. To avoid scurvy a great effort was made to grow herbs, vegetables, and cereal crops to supplement the lime and orange juices imported from England. Nonetheless, Moodie writes, garden produce “contributed an almost negligible portion of the total volume of foodstuffs required on the Bay.” Greens, anti-scorbutic spruce beer (made by boiling the green leaf buds of fir trees), and native berries like cranberries were vital to the fur traders’ health. English dandelions were introduced and thrived; at Churchill they “made most excellent sallad to our roast geese.”

Hudson Bay was free of ice only for a month or two of the year, and in much of the north permafrost prevented the cultivation of all but potatoes and a few vegetable crops.

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77 Rich, HBC, Vol 1, p. 541.
78 Ibid., p. 177.
The very severe winter of 1715-16 combined with the non-arrival of the English ship forced the company to locate local provisions. Fortunately the region contained a "perdigious Variety of fowls" which a fur trader described in 1749 as "Extrodinary good Eating fresh or Salt . . . the chief of our Diet." Large-scale shoots took place every spring and fall at Churchill, Albany, and York, when tens of thousands of geese, partridges, and swans were shot and preserved for winter use. As many as 90,000 partridges were eaten at a single post in a single winter. Productive fisheries were also established at Albany, Moose, Rupert River, and Churchill, and by the 1750s an internal provisioning policy had been worked out in which the barren Eastmain posts received fowl and fish from the west side posts and from those at the bottom of the Bay, as well as English provisions such as flour.

The Hudson's Bay Company's provisions of fish and fowl allowed it to extend its trade inland from the bay in the late eighteenth century, but because these provisions were no match for those developed by the French fur traders to the south and east, the company promoted the formation of the Selkirk Colony at Red River in 1811 as a centre of.

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agricultural and pemmican production for the inland fur trade. Difficulties with this new enterprise were legion. As early as 1815 a group of North-westers, in response to Selkirk's Advertisement and Prospectus, offered a perceptive analysis of Red River's disadvantages. They made the following points, the accuracy of which would be borne out by subsequent events:

That the communications by Canada and Hudson's Bay are impracticable for the purposes of commerce;

That there is no market for grain or provisions of any sort;

That only one article, viz., wool, can be pointed out capable of paying transport;

That this article may not succeed, on account of the wolves, the soil, and climate;

That the difficulty of communication will prevent the colonists from receiving any supplies, unless at enormous expense. 

Political struggles between the Selkirk colonists and the North-westers, disastrous floods, and grasshopper infestations beset the colony's first decade of existence; Lord Selkirk's governor Alexander Macdonnell was known as the "Grasshopper Governor" for the plagues of "locusts" that attacked crops of wheat, barley, and potatoes. Red River historian Alexander Ross summarized the results of the 1819 locust swarm as follows:

Along the river they were to be found in heaps, like sea-weed, and might be shovelled with a spade. It is impossible to describe, adequately, the desolation thus caused. Every vegetable substance was either eaten up or stripped to the bare stalk; the leaves of the bushes, the bark of the trees, shared the same fate; and the grain

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89 For an introduction to the company's agricultural difficulties at Red River see Gibson, Farming the Frontier, pp. 9-14.

vanished as fast as it appeared above ground, leaving no hope either of 'seed to the
sower, or bread to the eater.' 91

Despite these early setbacks, by the 1820s agricultural crops and pemmican were
produced successfully at Red River for the colonists and the company's expanding provision
and transport needs. 92 However, it was an enormous step from producing country produce
for the provision trade to locating marketable exports at Red River which, after 1821, was
Simpson's plan. Simpson put into use several venerable fur trade strategies to save money
and increase profits. His attempt to conserve beaver in regions that had been overhunted
prior to the merger is one well-known strategy. 93 Less well-known, but of long-term
significance, was Simpson's continent-wide search for new export commodities.

Simpson's search for new exports took him first to Red River and then to the rest of
the Northern Department. In 1828 he wrote that if Red River continued to prosper it would
soon "present a field for other pursuits and branches of Trade" in addition to the provision
trade, and a decade later he warned that "without an export of some description it is
impossible [that] a growing Settlement can prosper." 94 In the end, however, Simpson's
attempts to locate marketable exports at Red River failed because so few country provisions


92 See Innis in HBRS 3, pp. xxxviii-xxxix.

93 See e.g. Morton, A History, pp. 697-98 and A. J. Ray, "Some Conservation Schemes of
the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-50: An Examination of the Problems of Resource
Management in the Fur Trade," Journal of Historical Geography 1 (1975), pp. 49-68.

94 Simpson to G&C, 10 July 1828, quoted in Alvin C. Gluek, "Industrial Experiments in the
Wilderness: a Sidelight in the Business History of the Hudson's Bay Company," The Business
History Review, 32:4 (Winter 1958), pp. 423-433; p. 425; Simpson to G&C, 7 March 1838,
quoted in Alvin C. Gluek, Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian Northwest
could become export trades under prevailing transport conditions. Successful export commodities had to be plentiful, easily transportable, of high value, and of low weight to overcome Red River's isolation from the Bay. Only animal pelts met all the criteria. At Red River Simpson tried buffalo wool, buffalo tongues, buffalo hides, sheep's wool, cattle hides and tallow, flax, and hemp; but of these only buffalo hides and tongues became successful export trades. The history of these failed non-fur exports provides an instructive counterpoint to contemporary successes on the west coast.

The first came in 1820 when the company entered into an agreement with John Pritchard, Lord Selkirk's agent, to export buffalo wool and hides from the Saskatchewan district to the woolen mills of England. Pritchard thought that this wool would form "a most lucrative and extensive branch of trade." "Buffalo wool" was the fine hair that was combed loose during the dressing of hides. Pritchard and his associates set up the Buffalo Wool Company, a joint-stock concern capitalized at £2000, sent skilled managers and workers to the colony from Britain, and planned a tannery for Red River. Simpson made it clear that he would not have permitted the formation of the company. "Mr Pritchard and his Buffalo Wool concern make a great noise," he told the Governor and Committee; "he is a wild visionary speculative creature without a particle of solidity and but a moderate share of judgement." The Wool Company collapsed in the late 1820s, leaving the Hudson's Bay

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95"The planned and purposeful production of a marketable staple was necessary, and Simpson, having once decided that a [staple] was necessary if the colony was to survive, made endless (and often costly) attempts to foster such products." Rich, HBC, Vol. 3, p. 508.

96Pritchard is quoted in Morton, A History of the Canadian West, p. 662. See also "Agreement with John Pritchard and others trading together under the firm of The Buffalo Wool Company. 17 May 1820," HBCA and Ralph Hedlin, "Reluctant Beginnings of Western Commerce," The Beaver (Summer 1959).

97Quoted in Leechman, "Garden Seeds," p. 35.
Company with a debt of £4,500, and having exported only 5,000 lbs of buffalo wool to London. It cost two pounds ten shillings to produce a yard of wool at Red River that fetched only four shillings and sixpence in London.98 The Wool Company’s capitalists lost their entire investment. "I see our grand Joint Stock Company has fallen to the ground," observed an unimpressed Archibald McDonald of Fort Langley in 1831.99 A major reason for the company’s failure arose from the difficulty and expense of extracting the course outer hairs from the very fine wool. This prompted English manufacturers to reject the product, and explains why the Hudson’s Bay Company did not subsequently export buffalo wool on its own account.100

After the failure of the buffalo wool scheme Simpson decided to market buffalo tongues and hides through the company’s established exchange systems, transport networks, and markets. The losses incurred by the quixotic Buffalo Wool Company pale in comparison with the company’s valuable export trades in buffalo tongues and hides. "Buffalo Tongues cost little or nothing so that whatever they fetch is so much gain," Simpson wrote in his candid style.101 In 1822 he estimated that 10,000 tongues a year might be sent to

98Hedlin, "Reluctant Beginnings."

99Archibald McDonald to John McLeod, 20 February 1831, McLeod Papers, NAC.


101Quoted in HBRS 3, p. xxvi.
Buffalo tongues became a large export to London only in the 1840s, as did buffalo robes in the next decade.

The hide of the buffalo, fur trader Robert Ballantyne wrote in 1848, "when dressed on one side and the hair left on the other, is called a robe. Great numbers are sent to Canada, where they are used for sleigh wrappers in winter. In the Indian country they are often used instead of blankets." Their great demand in Canada resulted in suggestions in 1812 and 1821 that the Hudson’s Bay Company begin direct sailings between Hudson Bay and Montreal, but this never happened. Instead, bales of robes were sent from Red River or the Saskatchewan district to York Factory and thence to London, whence they were sent back across the Atlantic for sale at Montreal. By the 1850s between ten and twenty thousand buffalo robes were sold annually in Montreal in this fashion. Buffalo, then, provided the company with the staple food of its provision trade in the form of pemmican and lucrative export trades in tongues and robes.

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102 Buffalo Tongues we are led to understand are in great demand in London. . . a Sample of 500 is now forwarded by way of experiment and if a recipe for the cure of them was handed to us I have no doubt but we could improve in the present mode." Simpson to G&C, 1 September 1822, HBCA D.4/85. Tongues were soaked in cold water for twenty to thirty hours, boiled, and cured with salt. Leechman, "Comodityes besides Furres," p. 46.

103 Ballantyne is quoted in Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 307. Buffalo robes had been used by fur traders since the seventeenth century. From Red River they were sent as far as Mackenzie River. Innis, pp. 27, 303, 305.

104 Ibid., pp. 163, 290.

105 The 1850 shipment of around 10,000 robes "appears to be the largest sum ever received for that article in one season." Simpson to Hargrave, 18 June 1850, Hargrave Papers, NAC; Simpson to Barclay, 6 September 1851, HBCA A.12/5 fo. 513. The Great Eastern transported the 1851 shipment of 9,869 robes to Montreal where they fetched £11,700, "the most advantageous we have yet made of this article." Simpson to Barclay, 13 September 1852, HBCA A.12/6 fo. 208. The 1855 shipment totalled 10,000 robes; that of 1857 was 18-20,000. Simpson to W.G. Smith, 6 August 1855, HBCA A.12/7 fo. 511; Simpson to G&C, 30 June 1857, HBCA A.12/8 fo. 500.
Simpson’s attempts to develop export trades in agricultural commodities at Red River also failed dismally. He established three experimental farms to test the raising of European crops and livestock. The first, opened in 1830, was to rear sheep and prepare tallow, wool, hemp, and flax for the English market. For its first four years it was in charge of James McMillan, previously of Fort Langley, but he turned out to be an "indifferent" farmer; the farm was sold in 1836, and the company accepted a nominal loss of £3,500.106

Simpson also encouraged the Red River settlers to grow hemp and flax, fibrous plants used in the manufacture of rope and canvas, for export to English factories.107 Flax, he wrote in 1832, was a promising "article of export, for which the soil and climate are found to be very favourable."108 A flax mill was erected at Red River in 1833 amid great expectations of success.109 Flax and hemp took root in Red River, but as Ralph Hedlin writes, "steeping, beating, and hackling, necessary steps for the removal of the fibres from the coarse stems, was too much of a challenge."110 Neither flax nor hemp proved exportable even though premiums were offered to settlers to grow flax and make linen and

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108Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1832, HBCA A.12/1 fos. 418-478; 422.

109"We are glad to learn that Mr Logan has erected a Flax Mill and that the Settlers are turning their attention to that branch of Agriculture (for which we understand the Soil & Climate of Red River are favourable), as we think that Flax may at no very distant period be made a considerable article of Export from the Colony. . . . We are desirous of encouraging the Settlers, and are anxious to promote the interests of the Colony, therefore we authorize you to purchase all the Marketable dressed Flax that may be offered for sale. . . ." G&C to Simpson, 5 March 1834, HBCA D.5/4, fos. 67-73; fos. 70d-71.

110Hedlin, "Reluctant Beginnings."
woolen cloth. By 1839 the attempt had failed, and in the end only a few hundred yards of coarse sheeting was manufactured.

Simpson returned to the joint-stock company as offering the best hope of developing Red River export trades in sheep and cattle hides, tallow, and wool. The first such enterprise was the Assiniboia Wool Company, established in about 1832 and capitalized at £6,000. It was to export sheep's wool and tallow from Red River to London. Some sheep were sent from England, and in 1833 1,665 sheep were bought in Kentucky and herded overland to Red River. The four-month return journey was a disaster: all but 200 of the sheep died from spear-grass (or needlegrass) and blow fly infections, rattlesnake bites, and wounds caused by lameness. "All the men could do was cut their throats and move on." The survivors suffered from severe cold and wolves at Red River, and by the mid 1830s the company was extinct. Innis concluded that the losses suffered by the wool company were in part "a tribute to Simpson's imaginative enthusiasm and his lack of appreciation of practical problems." "Red River is like a Lybian tyger," Simpson

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111 "The country is well adapted for the growth of Flax, but the people do not understand its cultivation, and cannot be made to apply themselves to the labour of weeding, so that as yet, a sufficient quantity has not yet been raised to make it an object of the inhabitants to set a Flax mill in operation." Simpson to G&C, 8 July 1839, HBCA D.4/106 fo. 24; [Edward Ermatinger], "Notes on the Liverpool Financial Reform Association's tract entitled 'The Hudson's Bay Company versus Magna Charta and the British People,'" 15 September 1857, Ms., Ermatinger Papers, NAC, p. 104.

112 Hedlin, "Reluctant Beginnings."


115 Innis, introduction to HBRS 3.
confessed; "the more we try to tame it, the more savage it becomes; so it is with Red River; for every step I try to bring it forward disappointment drives it back two."\textsuperscript{116}

The Red River Tallow Company fared little better. Tallow, rendered from animal fat, was an ingredient of soap and candles and was used as axle-grease in London carriages.\textsuperscript{117} As early as 1822 the Governor and Committee had directed its employees to procure tallow owing to the decline of the British whale fisheries.\textsuperscript{118} "In the course of last season," Simpson wrote in 1832, "I drew up a scheme by which it was proposed to form a Joint Stock association, to be styled the 'Red River Tallow Trade,' for the purpose of breeding Cattle for their tallow and hides, as articles of export."\textsuperscript{119} Capitalized at a modest £1,000, by the spring of 1832 the company tended a herd of 472 cattle at Red River. Almost immediately predation by wolves was a problem, and in 1833 the Governor and Committee sent Simpson "two ounces of Strychnine," considered "the most powerful agent for destroying wild animals (it is used in the East Indies for killing Tigers and Leopards) . . . three or four grains are a sufficient dose for a full grown beast. . . ."\textsuperscript{120} Yet in the first winter 111 cattle were lost to the cold, wolves, and malnutrition, and in 1834 the remaining cattle were auctioned to settlers and the company was wound up.\textsuperscript{121} The Tallow Company,  

\textsuperscript{116}Simpson (n.d.) is quoted in Hedlin, "Reluctant Beginnings," p. 9.  
\textsuperscript{117}"The coal burnt under the boiler vanishes without leaving a trace; so, too, the tallow with which the axles of wheels are greased." Karl Marx, Capital. A Critique of Political Economy Vol. 1 (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1906), p. 226.  
\textsuperscript{119}Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1832, HBCA A.12/1 fos. 418-476; fo. 422.  
\textsuperscript{120}G&C to Simpson, 7 June 1833, quoted in Hammond, "Marketing Wildlife," p. 17.  
\textsuperscript{121}Ross, The Red River Settlement, p. 150; Glazebrook, Hargrave Correspondence, p. 159; Morton, A History, pp. 641-643; Rich, Vol. 3, pp. 509-513; Hedlin, "Reluctant Beginnings."
the Buffalo Wool Company, and the Assiniboia Wool Company passed away "leaving nothing but their names and debts," according to J. J. Hargrave.\textsuperscript{122} No rearrangement of fur trade capital could overcome Red River’s natural disadvantages.

Simpson had done all he could to make these export trades a success. To offset the colony’s isolation he built a "Winter Road" between York Factory and Red River via Norway House and Lake Winnipeg—a distance of 300 miles as the crow flies.\textsuperscript{123} In 1812 the Earl of Selkirk had planned to use horses and caribou to carry the colony’s grain over the frozen ground of winter.\textsuperscript{124} Simpson resurrected the idea of a winter or "haul" road in about 1822, citing the success of such roads in Russia and Scandinavia. In the first winter he used dogs as a source of motive power, but found them unfit for the work. He then decided that caribou would do a better job. "With proper training, I think they may supercede the use of dogs."\textsuperscript{125} By the summer of 1828 he had decided to employ oxen to

\textsuperscript{122}Hargrave, \textit{Red River}, p. 179.

\textsuperscript{123}From York Factory to Red River Colony . . . this road ran up the Hayes River to the mouth of the Deer River, up Deer and Fox Rivers to Fort Daer, south of which it ran straight across country for about eighty miles to Oxford House, crossing Deer Lake and a string of about thirteen small lakes on the way. In its later stages it was cut out as a straight wide road through the forest, on which oxen and horses could be used." HBRS 1, p. 426. "Sketch of the Route between York Factory and Red River Settlement &c Fall 1827" is at HBCA B.235/a/10-11. See also Richard I. Ruggles, \textit{A Country So Interesting. The Hudson’s Bay Company and Two Centuries of Mapping, 1670-1870} (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991), plate 39.


\textsuperscript{125}Hedlin, "Reluctant Beginnings." On the Northern Council’s actions see HBRS 3, pp. 210-11, 242, 261-62, 280, 364, 392, 459.
draw the produce over the frozen ground in large sleds, and ordered the construction of feed
and rest shelters every eleven miles on the route.126

Problems were numerous. Oxen suffered from a high mortality rate owing to the
extreme cold, they were useless in the deep snows of winter, an adequate supply of feed
could not be procured, and goods sent on the road often arrived late and in damaged
condition. Simpson estimated that the road would pay its costs only if the colony produced
at least 300 tons of export commodities a year. This condition was never met, even after
Simpson reduced his estimate to 100 tons. In 1830 he admitted defeat: "Such a mass of
confusion as never fell under my observation now presents itself," he wrote regarding the
winter road.127

In the end the company opted for more reliable forms of water communication.
Simpson improved the York Factory-Fort Garry mainline, consisting of portages, York
boats, and other water-craft; a summer route free of many of the problems of the overland
winter route.128 This route carried furs, personnel and mail, imported and country
provisions, and the few non-fur exports Red River was able to produce.

The reasons for the failure of Red River's agricultural export industries are clearly
understood and stand as a valuable counterpoint to Columbia Department export trades.
Wolves preyed on unfenced cattle and sheep. Floods, weeds, grasshoppers, mosquitoes,
horseflies (known at Red River as "Bull-dogs"), and destructive flocks of birds destroyed


128Ibid.
crops and harassed livestock. Farming techniques and crops suitable to a harsh climate had not yet been devised. Red River winters were too cold to permit the raising of sheep and cattle on a commercial scale without great expenditure on feed, fuel, and shelter. Finally, the settlement was chronically isolated from potential markets and without the hope of bulk transport. Edward Ermatinger was careful not to blame the settlers at Red River for the failure of these industries. He blamed the colony's inland location. "The Settlers," he wrote, "are not so much to blame for their apathy in neglecting those branches of trade. It was feared, and perhaps justly, that the cost of transporting such bulky produce to market would render trade in them unremunerative." James Douglas was aware of all this. In his "Notes Respecting Red River" of 1835 he made the following memo:


The colony's greatest commercial disadvantage was its inland location. "Red River," fur trader George Gladman wrote in 1842, "has I suspect seen the acme of its prosperous days—its advancement, that there can be little doubt that many of its present inhabitants will migrate annually to Columbia. . . ." In 1846 Robert Clouston observed that "the most

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129 Leechman, "Garden Seeds," p. 34; Riegert, From Arsenic to DDT, pp. 23-28.


132 George Gladman to Edward Ermatinger, 5 August 1842, Ermatinger Papers, NAC.
sanguine cannot expect that this tiny Colony can ever have a large export trade; Nature has interposed barriers which nothing less than a convulsion of nature will overcome." "The Colony," he continued, "is unfortunately so isolated in the depth of the wilderness and so difficult of access either by land or by water, that the exportation of but very few of its products will pay the exporter. The route from York is an extremely difficult navigation—the rivers being shallow and full of rapids that only flat bottomed boats can ascend from the coast."

Similar views were held by those unconnected with the company. In 1847 the Wisconsin Herald, for example, editorialized as follows:

Our readers are aware that there is an isolated settlement of several thousand inhabitants in a high latitude of British North America, known as the "Selkirk Settlement." Cut off from the commerce of the world, they rely entirely upon their own resources, their farms, their flocks and fishing for support—being a community, so to speak, of Robinson Crusoes. Their crops having failed the last two seasons, they have been forced to break out of the wilds again, and seek food in the Markets of the great brawling world.

Similarly, in 1857 Edward Ermatinger wrote that Red River's real disadvantage resulted from its being "shut up in the middle of the continent without markets," while Rupert's Land as a whole was "cut off from access to the rest of the world, on three sides by desert & frozen seas & on the fourth by a hostile nation."

The real "incubus" which has opposed progress at Red River, is its remote inland situation. It is the most central settlement in North America, equi-distant from the Atlantic & Pacific, the Gulf of Mexico & the Arctic Sea. It is surrounded on every side by an untamed wilderness of hundreds of miles in extent. With all their energy

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134 Wisconsin Herald, 15 September 1847, quoted in The Beaver, 1:4 (January 1921), p. 3.
the Americans have no such remote & isolated location. The remote settlements of Canada pine & languish under a similar incubus;—The Sault Ste Marie, though finely situated between the two great Lakes, Huron & Superior, is merely a collection of poor hovels; while at the ancient city of Quebec, Settlement has not extended 20 miles northward into the primeval forest.\footnote{35Edward Ermatinger, The Hudson’s Bay Territories: A Series of Letters on this Important Question (Toronto: Maclean, Thomas & Co., 1858), p. 20; Ermatinger, "Notes," pp. 96; 111. For similar conclusions see Gluek, "Industrial Experiments," p. 423.}

A similar climate and similar constaints prevailed in the rest of the Northern Department. One traveller wrote that Mackenzie River was so cold "that axes tempered specially can alone be used for splitting and cutting wood, ordinary ones breaking as though made of glass."\footnote{136John Keast Lord, "American Furs: How Trapped and Traded," Eclectic Magazine (April 1866), pp. 445-52; 446. In 1822 Simpson told the Governor and Committee that "Coarse Iron works such as Hatchets, Beaver Traps, Ice Chisels &c we find can be manufactured at this place [York Factory] on much lower terms than in England, we have therefore Indented for very few, our Blacksmiths understand the temper required for this climate, better than the English Tradesmen can do. . . . " Simpson to G&C, 1 September 1822, quoted in HBRS 3, p. 377.} From time to time the company considered the export of minerals from various places in the Northern Department, but these attempts were thwarted by distance. In 1825 the "Gentlemen in Mackenzies River District" were asked "to encourage the Indians to procure Rock Crystal . . . as an additional article of export to the Returns of the Country." Some of this crystal was auctioned in London in 1827, but it thereafter disappears from view.\footnote{137HBRS 3, p. 131; HBCA A. 54/51, 1827 (London auction notice).} This fate befell the "Drumheller coal" located in the Edmonton district and examined by Simpson in 1841, but this resource was not developed until long after Simpson’s era.\footnote{138H. H. Harris, "First Discovery of Coal in Western Canada," The Beaver 6:2 (March 1926), p. 70.} In 1852 Simpson forwarded to London a sample of graphite found on the Yukon River. "If it be of pure quality," he wrote, "the collection of it may be an object
deserving of attention. . . . "139 And in 1857 Simpson sent a box of Lake of the Woods soap stone to London. "Our carpenters use it for shaping their tools," he said, "and report that its quality is equal to that of the imported stones. . . . We are unacquainted with the market value of such material and shall be glad to receive a report upon it from some competent authority. If it be thought worth while to test its value in the English market on a larger scale, we could without material expense or inconvenience ship a few hundred weights of it next season."140 Rock Crystal, graphite, coal, and soapstone were not exported owing to the great distances involved.

Established provisions, usually those obtained in an existing Indian trade, stood the best chance of becoming export trades. Isinglass, for example, offered hope of mercantile development. Obtained from the float bladders of sturgeon, isinglass was a waxy, semi-transparent, gelatin-like substance with a wrinkled appearance used in making glues and jellies, and for clarifying alcoholic beverages. Its emergence as a major export during Simpson’s era reflected the company’s "invasion" of sturgeon habitat, which extended from the St. Lawrence to the North Saskatchewan River. During Simpson’s governorship, isinglass exports to London increased from less than one hundred pounds a year to between two and three thousand, about half of which came from the Rainy Lake district.141

Timber from the coast of Hudson Bay seemed a likely export. Since early in the eighteenth century the company had used local timber for furniture, boards, masts, and

139Simpson to Barclay, 1 November 1852, HBCA A.12/6 fo. 427.

140Simpson to G&C, 30 June 1857, HBCA A.12/8 fo. 500.

firewood. Occasionally lumber was sent to England on the annual ship, but the company did not contemplate a lumber export trade until the Napoleonic wars, when Britain was cut off simultaneously from Baltic timber markets and continental fur markets. This, combined with a hope of providing a return cargo for the Red River immigrant ships, prompted the company's timber venture trade between 1809 and 1817. In 1809 the company sent a lumberman, Alexander Christie, to Moose Factory with orders to establish a timber export business. With a gang of men and a series of pit-saws, Christie produced squared timber, masts, and other lumber for the English market, and in 1814 he erected on an island in the Moose River a steam-powered sawmill. Despite difficulties in erecting the mill, in cutting and preparing timber, and with unusually cold weather, several shiploads of timber were sent to London in 1814 and 1815. By this time, however, the peace in Europe had led to the recovery of the continental fur market, and the project had suffered from distance from market; mechanical problems, lack of suitable transport, and winter freezeup. "Attended with heavy expense," the project was abandoned in 1817; the steam engine and sawmill were dismantled and returned to England.

Similar climatic problems plagued attempts to develop export trades in whale oil and minerals on Hudson Bay. In 1753 the company had established a whale fishery at Little

142Tim Ball, "Timber: Adventurers at the Bay Struggled to Stay Warm," The Beaver 67:2 (March 1987), pp. 45-56.

143David R. Dyck, "The Company Diversifies. Loggers at Moose Factory," The Beaver 77:1 (February-March 1991), pp. 29-34. See also Elaine Allan Mitchell, Fort Timiskaming and the Fur Trade (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 63, and HBR 3, p. 332 for mention of a later deal-cutting arrangement at the "Moose Saw mills." In May 1822 the Governor and Committee wrote that lumber prices in London would not pay the expense of this new export trade, but they asked that the sawmill be maintained "for the purpose of preparing Deals and other timber for the use of York Factory where extensive repairs are necessary." G&C to Williams and Simpson, 29 May 1822; Simpson to G&C, 25 August 1822, in HBR 3, pp. 322, 374.
Whale River on the Eastmain coast. The post was closed in the 1820s, although whale oil continued to be traded over the next few decades. Simpson instituted a large-scale white whale fishery on the Eastmain coast in 1851 instead of at the company's St. Lawrence seigneuries, where competition was intense. Simpson praised the industrial and food value of the whale. "You may fancy me over-sanguine, perhaps," Simpson continued, "but I have no hesitation in stating my opinion that, for some years to come, the porpoise fisheries of the Bay will be more valuable than the present beaver trade of the whole country." Native people, as in the company's fur and provision trades, supplied the

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145 The same species of porpoise is, at times, very numerous in the York and Moose rivers & in those on the Eastmain Coast, . . . and instead of entering on this business in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where we should be interfered with by thousands of persons endeavouring to procure a livelihood, I think we should be more likely to succeed in many parts of Hudson Bay." Simpson to G&C, n. d., quoted in Randall R. Reeves and Edward Mitchell, "Hunting Whales in the St. Lawrence," The Beaver 67:4 (August-September 1987), pp. 35-40; p. 36. See also Daniel Francis, "Whaling on the Eastmain," The Beaver 308:1 (Summer 1977), pp. 14-19; Elaine Allan Mitchell, Fort Timiskaming and the Fur Trade (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 245.

146 It is now ascertained beyond a doubt," Simpson told Archibald Barclay in August 1852, "that the white whale of Hudsons Bay is the same animal as the white porpoise of the St. Lawrence, so valuable both for its oil and leather. . . . it appears that the flesh, tongue, liver, fins and tail of the porpoise are ascertained to be grateful and nutritious food-the tongue said to resemble that of the reindeer, while the flesh is described as being very like sturgeon and the tail and fins like tripe." Simpson to Barclay, 9 August 1852, HBCA D.4/78 fo. 247. White whale oil was used in England for soap, for illuminating lighthouses, and as a machine lubricant. Its durable leather was widely used; a continuous machinery belt sixty feet long and eighteen inches wide could be cut from the skin of a single white whale. Randall R. Reeves and Edward Mitchell, "White Whale Hunting in Cumberland Sound," The Beaver 312:3 (Winter 1981), pp. 42-49.

147 Quoted in Francis, "Whaling," p. 15.
labour. After capturing as many as 1500 whales a year in the mid 1850s the catch declined to 800 in 1858, a figure which could not be improved upon. The white whale fishery of the Bay had reached its limit, the result of what one historian calls an "inhospitable climate" and the bay's "northerly geographic location," which made for a short hunting season and high expenses. The company's operation was stationary and depended on the regular arrival of the whales which would not, however, enter rivers that had been muddied by excessive rainfall.

In 1857, during the parliamentary enquiry into the Hudson's Bay Company's affairs, Simpson defended the company's whaling activities in Hudson Bay. He spoke of the difficulties of carrying on such a business in such an inhospitable environment:

The Company have been charged with neglecting the whale fisheries of Hudson Bay; but our local experience has prevented our embarking in that business. It could not be successfully carried on in seas the navigation of which is at all times impeded by ice and only practicable for eight or ten weeks of the year. . . . we have now two fisheries fairly established at the Great and Little Whale Rivers on the East Main Coast, [but] the difficulty and expense of conducting it in that distant and inhospitable region, almost destitute of resources in the means of subsistence, and entirely devoid of timber, are very serious, and will always prevent any but persons with large capital and local experience embarking on it.

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148 Native people trapped the whales at the river mouths and took them to the posts where the oil was rendered. By 1858, 120 Native families and some Eskimo families provided the labour. Francis, "Whaling," p. 18. See also Rich, HBC, Vol. 1, p. 622 and C. H. M. Gordon, "Whale Hunting in James Bay," The Beaver 3:9 (June 1923), pp. 340-341.


150 Whales became "shy and cautious" of Native hunters and avoided the river as much as possible. Francis, "Whaling," p. 19.

151 Simpson to John Shepherd, 26 January 1857, HBCA A.12/8 fos. 375-409; 406.
Simpson also defended the company’s neglect of the mineral resources of the Eastmain Coast on the grounds that insuperable obstacles prevented the working of mines "in that remote and hyperborean region." "If mining attempts in Canada had failed, he said in 1849, "what, then, would be the prospect of a mine on the East Main Coast, in the midst of a sterile and uninhabited region, with a winter of eight months duration and accessible only through Hudsons Straits, which are seldom navigable for more than two months out of the year, and never free from icebergs and floe ice at any season?"\textsuperscript{152}

Simpson’s attempts to develop export trades in the Southern and Montreal departments (Map 1) met with little success. Exports of salmon, lake trout, whitefish, cod, seal oil, seal skins, walrus teeth, whale oil, leather, feathers, and timber from Ungava Bay, Labrador, Esquimaux Bay (Hamilton Inlet), the Portneuf, Mingan, and Mille Vaches seigneuries, the King’s Posts (including Tadoussac, Godbout, Seven Islands, and Bersimis), the Lake Superior posts (Fort William, Pic Post, and Michipocoten), and the Ottawa River post (Fort Timiskaming), were aimed not as much at developing healthy new export trades as keeping Canadian and American commercial competitors away from the company’s territorial

\textsuperscript{152}[George Simpson], "Observations on Speeches in the House of Lords and House of Commons respecting the Hudson’s Bay Company, Vancouver Island, &c. &c. by Sir George Simpson," 28 March 1849, HBCA. In the previous century critics had accused the company of ignoring the bay’s economic potential, and the company had defended itself with reference to the same natural factors. See Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, Report from the Committee Appointed to Inquire into the State and Conditions of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson’s bay and the Trade Carried on There (London: 1749).
In these cases diversification was one of Simpson’s competitive frontier policies. It is significant that most exports from east of the Rockies were animal products obtained by hunting and fishing. East of the Rockies, the company continued to export skins, hides, wool, hair, feathers, fats, grease, oil, tongues, horns, teeth, tusks, musk, livers, viscera, and float bladders. All these exports were based on established Native provision trades, and none of them called into existence new transport routes or required new markets. Admittedly this was the era before synthetic fibres, fuel, and foods, but it is striking how much more diverse were the company’s exports from the west coast. None of the staple provisions of the eastern fur trade became exports during Simpson’s era, whereas salmon and other west coast provisions were exported from the Columbia and Fraser rivers from the early 1830s onward. On the west coast, the company would encounter little difficulty in getting commodities from the place of production to a suitable market.


Galbraith, Hudson’s Bay Company, pp. 24-45, provides the only summary of these ventures, by now an outdated one.
Both the Canadian and British fur traders, then, reached the Pacific coast through a region of violent extremes of temperature, of brief and hot summers, of frigid and sterile winters, and of failed export trades. In such a region fur traders learned the critical importance of secure export trades: in Saskatchewan winters, Gabriel Franchère wrote, "man has enough to do to be able to shelter himself from the inclemency of the weather." On the Pacific fur traders would not miss the winters of Hudson Bay or Rupert's Land, they would appreciate the natural abundance and the commercial opportunity, and they would appreciate the novelty of the coast.

Native cultures east and west of the Rockies reflected these basic differences. The supply of food in Rupert's Land, Morton wrote, "put an inexorable limit on the possible total of population—a total which is astonishingly small when we consider the wide area involved." Such an environment sustained only a small and dispersed population characteristic of hunting-gathering societies. In 1808, Duncan McGillivray of the North West Company estimated the total Native population of the entire region between Labrador

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155 "We must not deceive ourselves; this country, at times so delightful, does not enjoy a perpetual spring; the winter is severe; a piercing cold spreads through the atmosphere, thick snow covers the face of the earth, the ice-covered river serves only for the fishes; the trees are stripped of their foliage; the verdure of the plain has disappeared; the hills and the valleys are covered with snow; nature has lost all its beauty, and man has enough to do to be able to shelter himself from the inclemency of the weather." Franchère's Narrative, quoted in Ermatinger, The Hudson's Bay Territories, p. 7.

156 Those who came overland appreciated the novelty more than those who came directly to the coast by ship, like the maritime explorers and fur traders. Coming from more temperate climes in Spain, Britain, or the United States, they did not describe the coast with the sense of wonder expressed by the overland fur traders. All had visited more temperate places en route, none of them had actually spent a winter on Hudson Bay or Rupert’s Land—and none of them subsequently formulated economic policy for this region.

and the Rocky Mountains at 15,000.\textsuperscript{158} David Thompson noted that in "Muskrat Country," ninety-two families hunted over 22,816 miles, giving each family a hunting territory of 248 square miles.\textsuperscript{159} In 1843 the population of the Norway House District, south of Hudson Bay, was between 760 and 780, allowing Donald Ross to calculate that "each individual may be said to occupy a tract of land equal to \textit{one hundred} Square Miles." The district contained about 78,780 square miles.\textsuperscript{160}

Fur traders understood these regional variations before they wrote them down. Company botanist John Scouler was one of the first to examine the causes of these major biotic and ethnographic differences:

Several causes contribute to produce this remarkable difference between the tribes on the eastern and western sides of the mountains. The most abundant supply of game in N. America is that afforded by the buffalo, and this animal has never penetrated to the N.W. coast; at the same time, the Columbia River, Fraser's River, and the other streams on the W. side of the Mountains, abound in salmon almost to their source. The inland tribes of the N.W. regions reside chiefly on the margins of the rivers, where they live on salmon during the summer, and prepare greater quantities of the same fish for their winter supply. The produce of the chase is, therefore, with them a secondary consideration. On the E. side of the mountains no supplies of salmon can be obtained; the rivers either flow into fresh-water lakes, or, as in the case with the tributaries of the Missouri, their sources are too remote from the sea to permit of the immigrations of salmon from salt to fresh water. The habits of the eastern natives are almost as unsettled as those of the Buffalo, whose migrations bring along with them alternations of abundance and starving.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{158}McGillivray is cited in Morton, \textit{A History}, p. 365.

\textsuperscript{159}Thompson is cited in Morton, \textit{A History}, pp. 10-11.

\textsuperscript{160}"Norway House District Comparative View of Population & Surface 1843," Donald Ross Papers, BCARS.

By the 1840s the lower Columbia possessed a wide commercial base that Red River would not until the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Only after its merger with the North West Company and its discovery of favourable conditions on the Pacific coast could the Hudson’s Bay Company finally start to take full advantage of the terms of the 1670 charter. Simpson’s search for marketable commodities at Red River and the Bay resulted only in exports of buffalo robes, tongues, and whale oil worth together a fraction of the value of fur exports.

Analysis of the company’s economic activities on the Pacific must take these regional distinctions into account. Nineteenth century fur traders knew all about these regional variations in the "fur" trade. Why, Edward Ermatinger asked in 1857, was Red River languishing while American settlements on the Columbia River were thriving? Because the west coast possessed natural advantages and markets that set it apart from Red River:

The cause is that Red River, by nature, is in a great measure shut up in the middle of the continent without markets; while the Columbia, a magnificent stream, little inferior to the mighty St. Lawrence, running through the whole of the Oregon territory, affords facilities for commerce with every part of the world.

The two places have no similarity the one to the other: in climate, soil, productions, & every physical character they are entirely different. A comparison between Norway and Italy would be about the parallel case: and the writer who stated that rich wine should be produced in the North of Europe because it is in Spain & Italy would not make a more silly assertion than the writer [who] . . . states that because agricultural produce is abundantly raised in the Columbia, it might be raised equally well at Red River.162

Contrasts between the Pacific coast and Rupert’s land are legitimate. Polemical exaggeration is unnecessary. Compared with other fur trade territories in British North America, the west coast was unique in practically all respects, of which the environment was

the most basic. For example, when Northwesterner George Nelson heard of the arrival of the Red River settlers in 1812 he wrote, according to Sylvia Van Kirk, that "if the English were so keen on planting colonies they should consider the Columbia region." He had been told by the recently-returned David Thompson that there was "a country & climate . . . not inferior to many of the Spanish provinces of America" where colonists could be assured of success and of "reaping much more benefit than they will ever be able in my humble opinion to do in Red River."\(^{163}\)

The commercial developments in the Columbia Department after 1821 owed a great deal to regionally-sensitive strategies of survival and profit developed in the continental fur trade. These strategies suggest an explanation of resource development in fur trade territories premised on the fur trade's primary need for a local provision supply: in certain conditions provisions had the potential to support new export trades. In other regions this potential did not exist.

On the Pacific, continuity in fur trade policies and personnel combined with the expertise of tradesmen, seamen, engineers, millwrights, and others, helped this transformation to a general commerce occur. In a sense the competitive skills of an eighteenth century interior fur trade were married with those of a nineteenth century commercial economy. Policies devised in the continental fur trade were applied to west coast conditions favouring a diverse export base: poor-quality fur in a mild and mountainous environment, an abundant provision and resource supply, a local and inexpensive labour

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supply, Pacific market demand, and the possibility of bulky and cheap ocean transport.

None of these conditions existed with equal force in the company's other territories.

Non-fur exports were at first secondary and subsidiary to the company's Pacific fur trade; eventually this situation was reversed. This explanation contains a predictive element: the fur trade always required provisions which, if economic conditions (labour, transport, markets) permitted, would become export trades. Political and legal barriers to such trades were absent. In 1821 someone familiar with the commercial culture of the fur trade east of the Rockies could have predicted that export trades would emerge on the west coast.
CHAPTER 2

THE NORTH WEST PASSAGE BY LAND, 1719-1821

Here Spaniards and Vancouver’s boatmen scrawled
the problem that is ours and yours,
that there is no clear Strait of Anian
to lead us easy back to Europe,
that men are isled in ocean or in ice
and only joined by long endeavour to be joined.

Earle Birney, from "Pacific Door"

The company’s actions in the Columbia Department after 1821 were based on the
known and reliable commercial policies of the continental fur trade. These enabled company
employees to capture the fur trade of the region, make it self-sufficient in foodstuffs, and
embark on export trades. However, these policies were influenced as well by the larger
commercial and territorial ambitions of the Canadian and British fur traders, particularly
those held by Alexander Mackenzie and Mackenzie’s backer Alexander Dalrymple. These
men had sought a viable overland version of the North West Passage and a trade link with
the markets of the Orient. These ambitions were shared after 1821 by George Simpson, who
put in place a version of the schemes publicised by Dalrymple, Mackenzie, and the North
West Company. These schemes were united by a belief that a North West Passage, by land
or sea, would unite the the fur trade of the continent with the Pacific markets, and that
commodities (especially peltries and fish) available on the Pacific coast would be acceptable
to those markets.

The active search for such a passage was more than a century old in 1821. The first
Europeans to journey overland to what is now British Columbia came in search of the North

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West Passage to the Orient. For the Hudson’s Bay Company employees who made some of
the initial searches for the North West Passage, the discovery of a passage was of larger
significance than the mere extension of the fur trade. The British government offered a
reward for its discovery. In 1719, Hudson’s Bay Company Governor John Knight was sent
by the company to find the "Straights of Anian, and to make what Discoveries you possibly
can, and to obtain all sorts of Trade and Commerce." Knight and his ships disappeared
without a trace north of Hudson Bay, and the loss did much to keep the company landlocked
at the Bay for the next half century.

The search took on a new urgency with the loss of the American colonies, when the
British government emphasised its trade with India, China, and the Far East to compensate
for the loss of settlement and governance in North America. "The new search for an empire
of trade, rather than of governance," Rich wrote, "like the earlier version of the same theme,
toyed with visions of Far Cathay, and of a route thither." Pond, Mackenzie, and
Thompson were part of this new search for a route to the Orient, as were the government-


\[\text{Rich, HBC 1, p. 446. "The shock of Knight’s disaster directed the Committee’s interest}
away from exploration to the fur trade [and] to the establishment of a whale fishery, and to
mineral workings." Rich, HBC 1, p. 448; see also p. 565.}

\[\text{Rich, HBC, Vol. 2, pp. 131-32.}\]
sponsored voyages of exploration of Cook and Vancouver. The Americans, meanwhile, were preoccupied with domestic issues on the Atlantic seaboard.

What the British overland and maritime explorers found was not a non-existent North West Passage through the heart of the continent but the North West Coast, the natural and legitimate terminus of the search for the Northwest Passage. This new region possessed resources worthy of commercial interest. Captain Cook's men sold sea otter pelts from the coast in Canton for fabulous prices, and after the publication of Cook's journal, ships of all nationalities visited the coast for the sea otter trade. This rich natural resource and the coast's proximity to Oriental markets made it necessary to find an overland route through British territory in order to unite British commercial interests in North America and in the Pacific. The principal theorist of such a route was a geographer named Alexander Dalrymple (1737-1808). The son of a Scottish baronet, Dalrymple joined the East India Company at the age of fifteen and in 1779 became the company's hydrographer. In this capacity he learned that North American fur was finding its way from London to Russia and thence overland to China where it was sold at high prices to the benefit of Russian middlemen. Such fur, he reasoned, should instead be sent directly from the North West Coast to China through the combined efforts of the British fur companies and the East India Company, which possessed the British trade monopoly in the Orient. Dalrymple may have been influenced by the published accounts of Cook's voyage. According to James Gibson, in 1784 Captain Kames King of the Cook expedition recommended "that the East India Company dispatch two ships from Canton with iron, woollen cloth, glass and copper trinkets,

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Cook's discovery, in the 1770s, of "Cook's River" motivated Peter Pond's search for an overland route from the Athabasca region to the Pacific in the 1780s. Rich, HBC, Vol. 2, pp. 159, 120, 131.
and knives to the Northwest Coast in the early spring to trade until the autumn, which would allow it to obtain at least 250 sea-otter skins and realize a profit of more than 400 per cent." Dalrymple put this idea together with his knowledge of the British fur trade and published, in 1789, his Plans for Promoting the Fur Trade and Securing it to This Country by Uniting the Operations of the East India and the Hudson's Bay Companies. China, he wrote, was the "great mart for Furs" owing to its cold climate, but the country was "too well inhabited to afford an asylum to animals, which abound only in wastes and wilds." He reasoned that only the combined trade routes and monopolies of the Hudson's Bay and East India companies would exclude Russian middlemen from this trade and secure it to Britain.

Dalrymple devised a scheme in which an annual vessel would be sent from London to Canton, and in which a copperhulled ship from Canton would sail annually "for the NW Coast of America, to receive the Furs collected there by the Hudson's Bay Company's Agents." There, the vessel should "remain in Harbour 'till after the Equinoctial Gales, and then return to China, where she will arrive in December and be ready to come home to England, in January or February." The missing link was the region between Hudson Bay and the coast, so with the latest information obtained from the Hudson's Bay Company, he published a map in 1789 anticipating that the Saskatchewan River would become the link between Rupert's Land and the North West Coast. This was Dalrymple's overland Northwest Passage. His project for uniting the trade of the companies was scuttled, however, by the intransigence of the East India Company.7 John Meares, in 1790, made a

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6Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 23.

7Rich, HBC, Vol. 2, p. 164. On the East India Company monopoly see Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 91-2. One maritime fur trader complained that the East India and South Sea companies "without carrying on any traffic themselves, stand in the way of more adventurous merchants." Nathaniel Portlock (1789) is quoted in Gibson, Ibid., p. 25. Parliament revoked
similar proposal: he wanted to establish a "commercial communication" "forming a chain of trade between the Hudson's Bay, Canada, and the North West Coast of America," in which beaver pelts would be shipped directly to Canton from the west coast instead of overland from London to Russia.8

Dalrymple continued to wield great influence behind the scenes in London; in 1795 he was appointed the Admiralty's first chief hydrographer. "For Vancouver's voyage, as for Cook's, Alexander Dalrymple was in the centre of the web," Rich wrote, "industriously and persistently spinning plans for a route which would bring the furs of the prairies and of the North-west out to the Pacific Coast and so to the China market."9 Vancouver carried specific instructions to find an overland route for the British fur trade.10

Dalrymple's scheme, as it happened, was adopted by the Montreal fur traders. In exploration as in other activities the North West Company surpassed the Hudson's Bay Company in the late eighteenth century, sending Peter Pond to the western prairies and Alexander Mackenzie to the Arctic and Pacific oceans. Mackenzie in 1793 found the first overland route from the prairies to the Pacific. By this time Dalrymple, who was probably Mackenzie's friend, had switched his attention to the Canadian fur trade company. There

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the East India Company's monopoly of the British Indian trade in 1813 and terminated its monopoly altogether in 1834. Ibid., pp. 94, 247.

8Meares (1790) is quoted in Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 24.


were great similarities in their projects. Later, Dalrymple counselled David Thompson on an overland route.

After 1801 the principal lobbyist for an overland route to the Orient was Mackenzie, by then in London. In December of that year he published an account of his explorations, in which he assessed the implications of his and Vancouver's discoveries. He announced that he had found a practicable land passage to the Pacific Ocean, and more importantly, he set out a plan for the commercial development of the North West Coast—a plan that was not radically different from the one proposed by George Simpson twenty years later. Thus by the turn of the nineteenth century Mackenzie, backed by Dalrymple and by British maritime explorers, had conceived a plan to export pelts from British North America westward across the Pacific to Canton.

Mackenzie, like Dalrymple, envisaged a union of commercial interests in which the Hudson's Bay Company would be one of the partners. Hudson Bay, not Montreal (which was too distant), would be at one end of the line of communication; what Mackenzie understood to be the Fraser River would be at the other. In this way he hoped to open a trade between the Pacific coast and the Chinese market. A political strategist, Mackenzie hoped the government would pressure the Hudson's Bay Company to this end:

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11 Howard T. Fry, *Alexander Dalrymple (1730-1808) and the Expansion of British Overseas Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970). Another factor behind the North West Company's policies was the 1787 war between Russia and Turkey which, Rich wrote, "broke off trade-routes and led to the efforts to discover an alternative approach to China. . . . " Rich, HBC, Vol 2, p. 190.


By opening the intercourse between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and forming regular establishments through the interior, and at both extremes, as well as along the coasts and islands, the entire command of the fur trade of North America, might be obtained, from latitude 48 North to the pole, except that portion of it which the Russians have in the Pacific. To this may be added the fishing in both seas, and the markets of the four quarters of the globe. Such would be the field for commercial enterprise, and incalculable would be the produce of it, when supported by the operations of that credit and capital which Great Britain so pre-eminently possesses. . . . American adventurers . . . would instantly disappear before a well-regulated trade.\textsuperscript{15}

Mackenzie hoped that the East India Company would relax its monopoly to Britain's trade in India and China, thereby allowing the new company to operate on the Pacific.

Weeks after the publication of his book, Mackenzie transmitted to the British government a proposal entitled Preliminaries to the Establishment of a Permanent British Fishery and Trade in Furs &c on the Continent and West Coast of North America. He sought a license to form a company called "The Fishery and Fur Company" to combine the Pacific fishery with the fur trade of the interior. For this "great national object," Mackenzie wrote, he hoped to merge the North West and XY companies, and to negotiate with the Hudson's Bay, East India, and South Sea companies for licenses to operate or trade in their charter territories. He planned to open a commercial, civil, and military base at Nootka, with a subordinate post at the mouth of the Columbia and a "Sea Otter House" at 55 degrees north.\textsuperscript{16}

Although the British government did nothing about this early plan for commercial extension and colonization of the west coast of North America—even though pressed by

\textsuperscript{15}Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 417.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid, pp. 503-7. See also Morton, A History, pp. 520-22.
Dalrymple—Mackenzie's explorations and his book had a profound effect in both Canada and the United States. The North West Company went ahead with the plan on its own, building posts in New Caledonia and, within a decade, exploring the Fraser and Columbia rivers. After 1792 the North West Company embarked on an "Adventure to China" in which fur was sent directly to Canton from London with the permission of the East India Company, or indirectly via American firms to Canton, but these shipments either lost money or made little.

The North West Company's business west of the Rockies was hindered from the beginning by the great distance from Montreal and high cost of transport. Even in Rupert's Land the North West Company was at a disadvantage. William McGillivray complained that the Montreal company could not compete "against a Chartered Company, who brought their goods to the Indian Country at less than one half the Expence that ours cost us." Potential profits from New Caledonia were lost through expenses. In 1808 Duncan McGillivray wrote that "The trade as it is carried on at present beyond the mountains, instead of getting any profit, is a very considerable loss to the Company, as the furs did not pay the transport to Montreal where they were shipped." This only increased the search for a Pacific outlet; in 1811 David Thompson mapped the southern interior and reached the mouth of the

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20William McGillivray is quoted in Gluek, Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian Northwest, p. 6.

Columbia. In the same year William McGillivray outlined the North West Company’s ambitious plans for the region. The company, he said, had "commenced a project for extending their researches and trade as far as the South Sea; and have already introduced British manufactured goods on the West side of the Rocky Mountains; intending at some future period to form a general establishment for the trade of that country on the Columbia river . . . an effort of much commercial and political importance."22

Meanwhile, the expansionist Americans had responded to the Dalrymple-Mackenzie plan by showing a new political and commercial interest in the region. An American edition of Mackenzie’s book appeared in 1802, and another two in 1803; a copy was bought by U.S. President Jefferson who, as a direct result, organised the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1803.23 The book spurred direct American commercial activity in the form of Astor’s Pacific Fur Company, which was a pirated American edition of the scheme of Mackenzie and the North West Company, even to the extent that it relied almost entirely on a mercenary workforce of the Canadian fur trade. Astor planned to sell furs from the Missouri to Oriental markets—to which he had the advantage of unhindered access—and, like Mackenzie, he planned to engage in the maritime fur trade.24 Astor’s nascent operations on the Pacific were bought, however, by the expansionist North West Company in 1813 after a life of less than two years.

The North West Company, secure on the Columbia but hindered by the long transport to Montreal, lost no time in putting Mackenzie’s plan into effect. In 1813 the company

22Morton, A History, pp. 480, 484. The quotation from William McGillivray is p. 478.

23Lamb, Mackenzie, pp. 10, 35.

obtained a license from the East India Company to ship furs to Canton, but which disallowed the shipment of a return cargo from Canton, a restriction which made the venture distinctly unprofitable. Instead, the Northwesterners contracted with J. and T. H. Perkins & Company of Boston to carry furs from the Columbia to Canton and to bring return cargoes from Canton to the Russian and Spanish settlements on the coast on the North West Company’s behalf. This was because, William McGillivray said in 1816, "the Partners of the North West Company do not understand the management of ships or captains; collecting and trading skins is their real business." As E.E. Rich and Lloyd Keith point out, this scheme, although it effectively avoided the East India Company monopoly, was a commercial failure owing mainly to the poor quality of Columbia beaver and its low value in Canton. Company trader John Lee Lewes wrote in 1822 that while beaver and land otter were numerous on the lower Columbia, they were also "far inferior to those procured on the east side of the [Rocky] Mountain..." Pacific slope beaver were, Gibson notes, "inferior to those of Rupert’s Land—at least at

25Keith, "Adventure to the Columbia."


27According to Rich, "A combination of the poor quality of the Columbia beaver and the trickiness of the Canton market, had produced a series of bad sales at Canton." Rich, HBC, Vol. 3, p. 568. Keith also argues that economic not personal or managerial factors were responsible for the failure of the North West Company’s Columbia business between 1813 and 1821. "The single, most important cause contributing to the chronic fiscal morbidity of the Adventure to the Columbia was that the low quality Columbia beaver could not profitably be sold in China." "Because Columbia beaver were uniformly of an inferior quality, they brought a poor return." In the few years between 1821 beaver prices in Canton were only half those of London. Keith, "Adventure to the Columbia."

28Lewes to Simpson, 2 April 1822, quoted in Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 64.
first—partly because they were less well cured and beaten.\textsuperscript{29} The Northwesterners, then, could muster only an indifferent lot of pelts. The fabulous prices of the maritime fur trade had applied to sea otter pelts, but by 1815 the sea otter population was in a serious decline; just as seriously, the North West Company was reluctant to trade directly on the North West Coast after the destruction of Astor's \textit{Tonquin} at Clayoquot Sound in 1811. With this vessel Astor had hoped to enter the sea otter trade of the North West Coast, and its destruction left the trade in hands of the maritime fur traders. The Northwesterners' China venture was a financial calamity, losing the company about £40,000\textsuperscript{30} and contributing materially to the North West Company's financial difficulties of 1821 and its merger with the Hudson's Bay Company. This loss meant the temporary abandonment of the British hope of creating a trade link between the west coast of North America and Oriental or Pacific markets.

On 26 March 1821 the Hudson's Bay and North West companies merged, retaining the name Hudson's Bay Company, and ending a period of great competition that had not extended to the Pacific coast.\textsuperscript{31} The new company was British, well-capitalized with strong ties to the City of London and, financially, had withstood the competitive era remarkably

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., p. 331 n. 12. See also pp. 26-7.


\textsuperscript{31}For the principle of the agreement, see G&C to Williams, 26 February 1821, HBRS 3, p. 293. The best recent description of the merger is William R. Sampson, \textit{John McLoughlin's Business Correspondence, 1847-48} (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1973), pp. xxiv-xxviii. For a copy of the 26 March 1821 deed poll see [Hudson's Bay Company], \textit{Copy of the Deed Poll Under the Seal of the Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay, Bearing Date the Twenty-Sixth day of March 1821, . . .} (London: H. K. Causton, 1821); on this deed poll see also Morton, \textit{A History}, pp. 624-25.
well. The company was run from London by a governor and a board of directors known as the Governor and Committee. In North America it was supervised by departmental governors and councils. Two enormous "factories," later called departments, were created out of the vast amalgamated territory of the rival companies: the Northern and the Southern. Each possessed an administrative centre known as a depot, where furs were gathered to await shipment to London, and where English trade goods were unloaded for distribution to the interior. William Williams was put in charge of the Southern and, in March 1821, George Simpson was placed in charge of the Northern Department, which at the time included the Columbia District. These two departments dwarfed the tiny Canadian colonies to the south and east of them (Map 1).

Both men had been with the old Hudson’s Bay Company. Previously in charge of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Athabasca District, Simpson, aged thirty-four, had been a sugar-broker’s clerk in a London firm of West India merchants. Almost from the start, the

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34 Williams, like Simpson, implemented “the usual austerity measures” such as reducing salaries and personnel and eliminating redundant posts. Mitchell, Fort Timiskaming, p. 119. Before 1821 the North West Company had referred to its administrative units as departments and the Hudson’s Bay Company to its as its districts; after 1821 the area west of the Rockies was known as the Columbia Department though officially it was the Columbia District of the Northern Department.

Governor and Committee placed a high degree of confidence in Simpson. "Sir George Simpson's rule is more absolute than that of any governor under the British crown," his critic John McLean wrote in 1845, that "his influence with the committee enables him to carry into effect any measure he may recommend." Simpson also dominated the Northern Council of Rupert's Land, the orders of which were "considered the statutes of the land."

In December 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company received political sanction to operate west of the Rockies when the government awarded it the exclusive British license of trading with the Native people.

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Northern Department was Simpson's training ground. In his trying winter in Athabasca (1820-21) he gained practical experience in the economies of the fur trade, learned the central importance of country produce, and agitated for the abolition of waste and extravagance in favour of an "OEconomical system." E. E. Rich, ed., *George Simpson's Journal of Occurences in the Athabasca Department and Report 1820-21* (Toronto: Champlain Society for the Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1938) (HBRS 1), pp. 61; see also pp. 99, 101, 102, 314. On Simpson's early career see Ibid., pp. 466-67. In 1826 Simpson replaced Williams as governor of the Southern Department, out of which the Montreal Department was subsequently formed. In 1839 he received the official title of Governor-in-Chief of Rupert's Land. HBRS 3, p. xi.

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36McLean, *Notes*, pp. 354; 386. Galbraith, *Hudson's Bay Company*, pp. 18-19, provides a few instances when the Governor and Committee exercised their "theoretical" control over Simpson.

37"The Pacific coast drainage basin and the territory beyond the Hudson Bay drainage basin was controlled under a grant dated December 5, 1821, which gave exclusive rights to trade with the Indians 'in all such parts of North America to the Northward and the westward of the lands and territories belonging to the United States of America. . . .'" Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, pp. 328-29. Copies of the royal license of 5 December 1821 and of "An Act for Regulating the Fur Trade. . . ." are in [Hudson's Bay Company], *Charters, Statutes, Orders in Council, etc. Relating to the Hudson's Bay Company* (London: Hudson's Bay Company, 1960): pp. 93-102; 217. See also Morton, *A History*, p. 628. The grant "... prohibited every Subject of his Majesty, except ourselves, or persons authorised by Us, to trade with the Indians on the North West Coast of America to the Westward of the Stoney Mountains." HBRS 3, pp. 328-30. For a copy of the exclusive license dated 26 March 1821 see HBRS 2, pp. 302-27. In 1843, Recorder Adam Thom of Rupert's Land wrote that no British subjects could settle on the Columbia River "because 1 & 2 Geo: 4, ch. Pg expressly limits the exclusive license to trading with the Indians." Simpson to G&C, 21 June 1843, HBCA A.12/2, fo. 202 b. See also Galbraith, *Hudson's Bay Company*, pp. 7-8 for these negotiations, acts, and licenses.
Before the merger, the Hudson’s Bay Company did not possess a single post west of the Rocky Mountains\textsuperscript{38} (Map 2). Mackenzie, Fraser, and Thompson of the North West Company had explored the Fraser and Columbia rivers and extended the fur trade into their watersheds. The Lewis and Clark expedition left no physical trace, and Astor’s company was short-lived. The North West Company had strengthened its presence west of the Rockies by buying the operations of the Pacific Fur Company and putting to an end, for the time being, American trading in the region. By an 1818 convention between Great Britain and the United States both nations had the right to the trade and the "joint occupancy" of the region west of the Rockies (between 42' and 54' 40'”) for ten years, leaving "sovereignty" (non-Native title, that is) undefined between California and Russian America.\textsuperscript{39} In 1821, however, the Columbia River passed from the firm control of the Montreal branch of the British fur trade to its powerful London branch.

When news of the merger reached Fort George it caused little change in personnel or policy. The NorthWesters were concerned with the daily difficulties of running an extended business in an extremely remote location. In April 1821, for example, James Keith of Fort George wrote to his supplier about the difficulties of the provision supply. Keith was

\textsuperscript{38}See Harris, ed., \textit{Historical Atlas}, plate 767. As Innis put it, "The Hudson’s Bay Company before 1821 had little knowledge of the trade on the Columbia River. The North West Company on the other hand had occupied the district and developed an extensive if not a profitable trade." HBRS 3, p. xxx. Joseph Howse of the Hudson’s Bay Company had, from 1809-11, operated on the Flathead River near Thompson’s Kullyspell House. Rich, \textit{HBC}, Vol. 2, pp. 308-9 and HBRS 4, pp. xi-xii. The company mooted a plan in 1818-19 to extend its trade into New Caledonia, and in 1820 sent an expedition into the region, but no post was formed. HBRS 1, pp. 420-21.

\textsuperscript{39}On this convention or treaty see Morton, \textit{A History}, p. 506; HBRS 3, p. xii; Galbraith, \textit{Hudson’s Bay Company}, p. 79. In 1819 the forty-second parallel (the Adams-Onis Line) had been decided upon as the southern boundary of the area of British-American joint occupancy. Hammond, "Marketing Wildlife," p. 14.
Map 2. The Columbia Department of the North West Company, 1821.
dependent on the Chinook people of the lower Columbia for salmon, sturgeon, and wildfowl. "The Winter has been unusually severe both as to the degree of cold & quality & duration of the snow," he wrote:

The fishery of the smelt being lately over the Natives begin to bring us a chance Sturgeon & wild fowl, which when more abundant will be gratifying to people from a long sea Voyage. Our horticultural labours in the experiment of the apple seed I am sorry to say did not succeed, though I believe as much owing to the want of the usual Conveniences, & using the requisite precautions as any defect of Climate, which by the bye is by no means one of the most invigorating or salubrious. Our Potatoes of which we raised upwards of 1000 Bushels last year, & which with our salted Salmon were [our] most valuable produce. . . .

Keith, busy struggling to get a share of the produce of the Native economy, was unaware that the North West Company no longer existed.

The commercial situation inherited from the North West Company by the Hudson’s Bay Company on the Pacific coast in 1821 was both promising and fraught with problems. Since 1813 the North West Company had been active in the fur trade of the lower Columbia River but had lost money in it. The company had, in 1813, taken over Fort Astoria from the Pacific Fur Company, renamed it Fort George, and made it depot for its Columbia business. Even with access to Pacific markets and with the abundant resources of the coast at their disposal, the Northwesters had struggled during their short presence on the lower Columbia. Their commercial achievement was limited. Access to the commercial potential and abundant resources of the lower Columbia did not mean these resources were automatically exploited. The poor quality of Columbia fur and expenses of transport, both to Canada and the Orient, contributed to the North West Company’s failure. The Hudson’s Bay Company

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40James Keith to Colonel Perkins, 13 April 1821, Keith Papers, University of Aberdeen. I owe this reference to Dr. Lloyd Keith.
inherited the North West Company's position west of the Rockies, its problems of market and supply, and the possibility of developing markets in China or in the Pacific. The new company inherited an essentially unexploited commercial position on the Pacific coast, and it inherited Dalrymple and Mackenzie's plan for an all-British China trade.

In 1821 the Columbia Department fell into two regions of activity separated by an immense distance (Map 2). New Caledonia, the oldest district, centred around the upper Fraser River and its tributaries. Father Adrien Morice described New Caledonia District as "that immense tract of land lying between the Coast Range and the Rocky Mountains, from 51° 30' to 57° of latitude north."41 This district was named (in 1805) and explored by Simon Fraser, who built posts at McLeod Lake (1805), Fort St. James on Stuart Lake (1806), Fraser Lake Post on the Nechako River (1806), and Fort George at the confluence of the Fraser and Nechako rivers (1807).42 New Caledonia had its origins as an extension of the North West Company's activities in the Saskatchewan and Athabasca districts. It received supplies and provisions from Athabasca and Peace River, and until 1817 furs from this region were sent overland to Montreal and thence to London; after that date they were sent to the Columbia for transhipment to Canton or London.43

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41 A. G. Morice, The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia (Smithers, B. C.: Interior Stationary Ltd., 1978) (first published 1904). Anderson wrote that Carrier hunting territory was "the tract lying, approximately, between 52° and 57° north latitude and 120° and 127° west latitude." A.C. Anderson, "Notes on the Indian Tribes of British North America, and the Northwest Coast," The Historical Magazine 7:3 (March 1863) [written 1855], pp. 73-81, 75.

42 Dates and locations of posts are from HBCA Search files; see also Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company, pp. 118-19.

To the south, the North West Company had operated another six posts on the lower Columbia River and its tributaries. These were Spokane House on the Spokane River (1810), Fort George (formerly Astoria) near the mouth of the Columbia (1811), Fort Okanagan on the Okanagan River (1811), and Fort Nez Percés or Walla Walla at the forks of the Walla Walla and Columbia rivers (1818). Spokane House and Fort Nes Percés had been established by the North West Company; forts George and Okanagan had been constructed by the Pacific Fur Company. In 1822, the minor posts of Flathead House and Fort Kootenay were attached to Spokane House.

In addition to these permanent posts, a mobile trapping party had, since 1818, pushed the North West Company's fur trade into the watershed of the Snake, the Columbia's major southern tributary. In 1821 the Snake Country was known to fur traders as a "frontier:" that is, a competitive region on the outer edges of the Indian Country; a place where the fur trade ended and competition, foreign commercial activity, or settlement started. The Columbia Department's frontiers were the Snake River Country and the North West Coast, and

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44 See Galbraith, *Hudson's Bay Company*, pp. 80-81. For a description of the land in this area see HBRS 4, p. xii.

occasionally the lower Columbia; districts in which aggressive policies of price reduction and overhunting would be practised.\textsuperscript{46}

Connecting the two districts was a rapid and efficient brigade route, devised by the Northwesterns, following the upper Fraser, Thompson River, Monte Creek, Okanagan Lake, Okanagan River, and the Columbia River.\textsuperscript{47} Midway were Fort Alexandria on the Fraser (1821) and Kamloops, or Thompson’s River Post, founded in 1812. Both had been founded by the North West Company.\textsuperscript{48} In 1821 the North West Company had recognised four districts in the southern interior and Columbia watershed: Thompson’s River District (Kamloops and Fort Okanagan); Spokane District (including Spokane House, Flathead House, and Fort Kootenay); Walla Walla District; and Fort George District.\textsuperscript{49}

Commercially and spatially the Columbia district contrasted greatly with land-locked and eastward-looking New Caledonia. These districts originated in separate westward expansions made by the Northwesterns. New Caledonia was explored and founded from the northern Rockies; the Columbia from the southern Rockies.\textsuperscript{50} The Columbia’s orientation

\textsuperscript{46}As Simpson said of the Southern Department in 1822, "It must not be forgotten that this is a frontier and may be made a cover and protection to our own proper Country." Simpson to G&C, 1822, HBRS 3, p. xlii.


\textsuperscript{48}HBRS 3, p. lxiv n. 4. Fort Alexandria was actually in New Caledonia District: Galbraith, \textit{Hudson’s Bay Company}, p. 119. The Pacific Fur Company’s shortlived Shewaps post, founded in 1812, rivalled the North West Company’s post at Kamloops.


was westward, toward the Pacific Ocean. Despite its contract with Perkins & Co, the Boston merchants, and a five-fold increase in returns from the Columbia District between 1813 and 1821, the North West Company’s shipments to Canton had failed disastrously owing largely to the poor quality of Columbia fur. So great were its losses that prior to the merger the North West Company considered abandoning the Columbia River trade altogether—as did the Hudson’s Bay Company on inheriting it.

A third sphere of fur trading activity existed in the sea otter trade of the North West Coast, which was the coastline north of Cape Flattery, including the west coast of Vancouver Island, the Queen Charlotte islands, and Kaigani.51 This trade was dominated by shrewd Boston merchants,52 who traded sea otter pelts, and an increasing number of beaver, from the people of the coast for the Canton market, and who supplied the Russian American Company on the north coast with foodstuffs and trade goods. Neither the North West Company nor the Hudson’s Bay Company had any control over this trade that, in any event, was on the decline by 1821.53 The sea otter traders had done their transactions on the outer coast, leaving the labyrinthine inner coastline much as Vancouver had found it in the 1790s. The North West Company had no posts north of the Columbia in 1821 and had shown no interest in the coastal trade after the destruction of the Tonquin at Clayoquot in 1811. More serious than the declining sea otter trade was the fact that American maritime traders (in 1815-18) obtained from three to five thousand beaver skins annually from the coastal

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51On their activities see Harris, ed., Historical Atlas, plate 66.

52On their shrewdness see Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 29-35.

53Ibid., p. 315.
Natives. These were continental pelts which otherwise would have been traded eastward
to New Caledonia. The American maritime fur trade was doomed, however, by the
imposition on the Pacific coast and interior of the coordinated and well-capitalized
commercial strategies (especially those relating to Indian trade, Indian policy, personnel pay
and promotion, agriculture, diversification) of the Hudson’s Bay Company after 1821. The
British fur trade would simply absorb the American maritime fur trade along with one of its
last experts, Captain McNeill, but this absorption would entail a certain amount of continuity
in trading practices, local knowledge, and trading jargon.

To the north, the Russian American Company operated a chain of posts from their
depot at Sitka. Like the Americans, the Russians traded fur on the coast that originated in
interior districts that the North West Company had yet to explore, like the Yukon, Taku,
Stikine, Nass, and Skeena rivers. Yet as Gibson points out, “Russian participation in the
maritime fur trade of the Northwest Coast did not extend south of the ‘straits,’ [Dixon
Entrance] and it remained marginal figuratively as well as literally.” Spanish interest in the
coast, Gibson continues, “remained strategic” throughout the eighteenth century.

The North West Company’s position west of the Rockies was, then, based around two
great river systems (the upper Fraser and the lower Columbia), two markets (London and
Canton), and one export (fur). Only Fort George was near the coast. The entire annual

54 "The demand for Beaver Skins in this market on an average of years does not exceed 12
to 15,000 . . . 3 to 5,000 are generally imported by the American vessels, which trade on the
NW Coast." J. & N. Perkins & Co of Canton to North West Company, [circa 1815-18],
quoted in Keith, "Adventure to the Columbia."

55 See James R. Gibson, Imperial Russia in Frontier America: The Changing Geography of

56 Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 18.
trade, storage, and transport of about 20,000 parchment beaver and land otter was achieved by 230 employees\(^57\) based at ten posts. Aside from its ambitious Canton venture, the North West Company had not transcended the river-focused mentality that had served it so well in its competitive westward expansion from the St Lawrence River. Its brigade route was essentially a light rapid transit system between two distant points, and it was not designed for bulk carriage. There were large uncharted areas in the North West Company’s field of operations, the most significant of which were the vast coastal regions north of the Columbia—including Puget Sound, the Lower Fraser, the whole of Vancouver Island, the North West Coast, and every river north of the Fraser including the Skeena and Nass. Despite Fraser’s journey of 1808, the North West Company had, in 1821, only a vague idea of where the Fraser met the sea.

The Hudson’s Bay Company would reap the benefit of the North-westers’ audacious failures and successes. They had taken birchbark canoes around the Horn only to find them unsuited to the place. They had introduced the horse brigade and the Snake River parties, innovations that the Hudson’s Bay Company would incorporate. They had introduced agriculture to the region on a limited scale to lessen dependence on imported food and Native provisions. At Fort George on the lower Columbia, company personnel relied on imported food supplemented by their own potatoes and by salmon obtained in the Native trade.\(^58\) Fishing and farming were undertaken at the interior posts, though New Caledonia was

\(^{57}\)Keith, "Adventure to the Columbia."

notorious for privations caused by a lack of provisions. The North West Company had not considered the export of provisions or agricultural foodstuffs from the Pacific. Natural abundance did not translate automatically into a diversified commercial economy.

Native labour was restricted primarily to the fur trade, and to a lesser degree to the provision trade. Natives worked indirectly and usually invisibly to the traders: they hunted and trapped animals on their own land and prepared pelts at their own settlements. They provided the fur traders with provisions such as salmon, but on the coast the traditional patterns of their seasonal economies had not been greatly altered by the land-based fur traders' economic demands.

The new company was staffed by an able and competent workforce, many of them—in the Columbia Department—old Northwesterners. The promotion of able traders was one of the venerable strategies of the Canadian fur trade, as was an insistence that they be competent to locate and develop promising new branches of the provision or export trades. The commercial prowess of North West Company employees was carried over by the Hudson's Bay Company in the Columbia Department, the management of which between 1821 and 1858 was continuously in the hands of old Northwesterners: John Dugald Cameron, John Haldane, John McLoughlin, Peter Skene Ogden, and James Douglas. They may as a result have been more familiar with certain strategies than employees of the old Hudson's Bay Company.

The dominance of old Northwesterners in the Columbia Department after 1821 was not, as some have suggested, a result of Simpson's habit of dumping undesireables there. Rather, it resulted from the Hudson's Bay Company's absence there before 1821. The overall result was a high level of continuity in personnel.

Following the 1821 merger, Nicholas Garry, an inspecting director of the Hudson's Bay Company, had observed "I fear the old Hudson's Bay servants are too fond of old regulations to encourage a new branch of trade and innovations." Garry is quoted in Innis, The Fur Trade
Moreover, many of the managerial staff were first-generation fur traders, often from mercantile backgrounds. Simpson had been a West Indies sugar merchant in London before joining the Hudson’s Bay Company; Douglas’s father was a West Indies merchant. McLoughlin came from a seigneurial background on the St. Lawrence; Peter Skene Ogden was the son of a chief justice of Lower Canada, and James Murray Yale of Fort Langley was also a Lower Canadian of professional background. All these men had been stationed east of the Rockies before the merger. Unlike some of their contemporaries who arrived on the Columbia from Britain by ship, they had continental experience and were keenly aware of environmental and economic contrasts between Rupert’s Land and the west coast. Whatever their former experience, all were aware of the latent economic potential of the region. They were experts in matters of commerce, geography, and exploration; after years of extending the trade and routing American traders on land and at sea they had developed a rigorously competitive, mercantile, spatial mentality. An inventory of Fort Vancouver’s library, for example, included "1 McKenzie’s Voyage," "1 Universal Geography," and "1 Pope’s Commercial Guide." These men were well-qualified to extend the company’s trade over the western third of British North America.

in Canada, p. 323. “The spirit of enterprise which had leavened the Hudson’s Bay Company after the coalition appears to have died out with the North-West Co partners, whose last representative on this coast, Sir James Douglas, had certainly contributed to the industries mentioned.” McKay, "The Fur Trading System," p. 23. Clearly these men were skilled entrepreneurs—defined by Watkins as having "the ability to perceive and exploit market opportunities." Watkins, "A Staple Theory," p. 146.

61"Indeed," wrote Geyer, a German botanist who visited the Columbia in 1843-44, "the officers of the Hudson’s Bay Company are a group of rather substantial, educated men." Quoted in Grace Lee Nute, "A Botanist at Fort Colvile," The Beaver, 277 (September 1946), pp. 28-31.

Neither the Strait of Anian, nor the North West Passage, nor direct access to the Canton market was subsequently located by the Hudson’s Bay Company. The reality was more modest and realistic. What was inherited was New Caledonia, rich in fur, and a maritime corridor, roughly charted by Captain Vancouver, densely populated by Native people whose lives intertwined with an abundant resource base bearing an enormous commercial potential. The wealth predicted by Dalrymple and others existed on the coast, but it was a more prosaic, less romantic wealth, consisting not of the spices and sugars of the Orient, but of workmanlike and increasingly frequent shiploads of salmon and lumber. The coast was not the Orient, but its products were destined for Pacific markets. The fur traders’ Northwest Passage led not to the known wealth of the Orient but to the unknown wealth of the North West Coast. In 1821, the region was suddenly controlled by a company whose name belied the real extent of its activities and of its territorial ambitions, a company anxious to establish Pacific and Oriental trade routes and to apply to the Pacific coast the tested commercial strategies of the continental fur trade.
CHAPTER 3

THE COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT: CONTRAST AND OPPORTUNITY

From the Chutes down to Vancouver the country assumes a different character. The tall & stately timber of various kinds interspersed on each side of the River [that] throw their strongly defined shadows across the placid surface of the water presented a strikingly splendid contrast to that which we had shortly passed. The eye can fix on no one object which is not directly the reverse of any thing to which it has been accustomed even on the east side the mountains. The trees birds insects & flowers all wear a foreign aspect. By its overpowering abundance all nature here demands attention.

Duncan Finlayson, 1831.¹

In this chapter I consider the very different relative location and environment of the Cordillera and the Pacific coast, the two great regions within the Columbia Department. Natural differences, limitations of transport, and isolation made it impossible for the fur trade companies to export anything but fur from the mountainous and land-locked interior, while the coast—especially the south coast—offered an immediate export opportunity that the company was quick to seize. Environmental constraints and limitations in overland transport meant that only lightweight and valuable furs could be exported from Rupert's Land, New Caledonia, and other interior districts.

Differences between the Pacific coast and the prairies were especially noticeable to those travelling east for the first time.² The prairies were incomprehensibly monotonous to

¹Duncan Finlayson, "Trip Across to the Columbia 1831," HBCA E.12/2, fos. 20-22.

²Regarding the Columbia River immediately east of the Dalles, Franchère wrote that "The aspect of the country becomes more and more triste and disagreeable; one meets at first nothing but bare hills, which scarcely offer a few isolated pines, at a great distance from each other; after that, the earth stripped of verdure, does not afford you the sight of a single shrub; the little grass which grows in that arid soil, appears burnt by the vigor of the climate. The natives who frequent the banks of the river, for the salmon fishing, have no other wood but that which they take floating down." Morton, A History, p. 363. For a more literal translation see W. Kaye
people accustomed to the variety and abundance of the coast. Botanist David Douglas, who travelled on the York Factory Express from Fort Vancouver in the 1820s, found Rupert’s Land an "uninteresting wretched country." His companion Edward Ermatinger recalled that on descending the Saskatchewan River, Douglas’s spirits flagged: "The sameness of scenery for hundreds of miles, and absence of variety in the vegetable kingdom damped his energies, and he floated down the stream apparently as unconscious of the magnificent scenery . . . as the boat in which he rode." Douglas was not the first to have this sensation.

The Pacific coast was a land of abundance after the cold sterility of Rupert’s Land. The mild climate and natural abundance promoted a different natural wealth from fur; moreover, furs were scarce in many mild coastal regions and of poor quality in parts of the southern interior. The most important differences were this often indifferent fur trade, abundant salmon runs, the possibility of year-round transportation, distance from the London market, and local market opportunities on the Pacific. These demanded a distinctive commercial response and had a direct influence on the company’s evolving coastal policies. The wealth and apparent limitlessness of other resources would make the fur trade, ultimately, just one of many export trades, and favourable transport, market, labour, and trade conditions allowed the fur traders to exploit a latent commercial opportunity.

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³*Douglas’s Journal* 1823-1827 BCARS NW 979.5 D 733.C.3; slightly different one at NW 580.5 H 784 No 45.

⁴Ermatinger, *The Hudson Bay Territories*, p. 9. That is, Douglas did not respect the magnificent prairie scenery.
Despite a fundamental natural and cultural cleavage between coast and interior, fur traders saw the whole of the Columbia Department as a viable region, primarily because it was isolated from Rupert's land in the east by an imposing mountain chain and in the west by an ocean. All its major rivers drained southward and westward through an equally mountainous country to the Pacific Ocean (Map 3). "The natural limits of this extensive and important region," a fur trader wrote in 1844, "are strictly defined by nature." John Dunn wrote that the Columbia Department extended from the Columbia to Russian America, and from the Pacific Ocean to the Rocky Mountains. The Columbia Department's coastal operations mirrored almost exactly the culture area of the Northwest Coast people, though this enormous department embraced the Plateau, Subarctic, Great Basin, and California culture areas too (Map 4).

Between the Rockies and the coast was New Caledonia, a region that gained a reputation for harshness and poverty. Cut off from Rupert's Land by the Rocky Mountains and from the Pacific by the Coast Mountains, New Caledonia was, like Red River, completely inaccessible to ocean-borne commerce. The people of New Caledonia subsisted largely on salmon exhausted and wasted after the long journey from the coast. Summer frosts made horticulture a problem. Daniel Harmon had planted potatoes, barley, turnips, "and the like" in 1811 at Stuart Lake; he called them "the first that were ever sowed on this

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5"Nature it would hence appear, herself places a barrier which alike checks the future extension of the interior nations seaward, and prevents invasion of the coast tribes beyond the limits easily accessible with the canoes. . . . " Anderson, "Notes on the Indian Tribes," p. 74.


Map 3. Principal 'English' toponomy, Columbia Department.
Map 4. Linguistic Families.
west side of the mountains," but only turnips could be grown there in 1836.  
John McLean, who arrived in 1833, recalled that the menu of Stuart's Lake was "scarcely fit for dogs."  
"A posting to New Caledonia was tantamount to a prison sentence." Conditions were so severe that after 1827 labourers in New Caledonia got £2 a year more than their counterparts in the rest of the Columbia Department.  

Even the hard-nosed Simpson could not hide his opinion. "The situation of our New Caledonia Friends in regard to the good things of this Life, is anything but enviable," he wrote in 1828. 
At Fort St. James he noted that "a few White Fish in the Winter with an occasional treat of Berry Cake prepared by the Natives, and a Dog Feast on high days and holydays constitute the living of nearly all the posts in New Caledonia." He found Fort McLeod even more dismal:  

In regard to the means of living, McLeods Lake is the most wretched place in the Indian Country; it possesses few or no resources within itself, depending almost entirely on a few dried Salmon taken across from Stuarts Lake, and when the Fishery there fails, or when any thing else occurs to prevent this supply being furnished, the situation of the Post is cheerless indeed. Its complement of people, is a Clerk and two Men whom we found starving, having had nothing to eat for several Weeks but

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8Harmon is quoted in Morton, A History, p. 621; McLean, Notes, p. 151.
10Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 26.
berries, and whose countenances were so pale and emaciated that it was with difficulty I recognised them.\textsuperscript{14}

What was bad for company employees was good for the company's finances. New Caledonia's numerous rivers and lakes, rolling hills, and long and bitter winters favoured animals with fine pelts, and the district was known as the "nursery" of the Columbia Department fur trade.\textsuperscript{15} Thus New Caledonia was the crucible of the Columbia Department fur trade, both because the transmontane fur trade was formed there and because the region continued to yield magnificent fur returns. Yet the district's isolation made it impossible for the company to develop and export other commodities than fur. In 1828 Simpson doubted that New Caledonia's profits could ever rise above £10,000 to £12,000 a year, beyond which, he wrote, "it cannot materially rise, as its Trade does not appear to me, capable, of further extension."\textsuperscript{16} This was the central problem Simpson faced in the later years of his tenure and one of the principal causes of economic diversification on the coast; he would make no such comments about the larger potential of the coastal districts of the department.

Thompson's River and Okanagan districts and the Snake Country, in the southern interior, were milder than New Caledonia and based on the rich Fraser and Columbia salmon runs (Map 2). A.C. Anderson wrote of the Kootenay Indians that "Their country, poor in fur-bearing animals, or to say the least, negligently hunted, held out no inducement for the establishment among them of trading posts, the source of comparative affluence to their

\textsuperscript{14}Simpson [to G&C], 1828 is quoted in Leechman, "Garden Seeds," p. 30.

\textsuperscript{15}McLean, Notes, p. 174.

\textsuperscript{16}Simpson is quoted in Rich, HBC, Vol 3, p. 617.
neighbors."\textsuperscript{17} Others, showing little cultural sensitivity, blamed poor fur returns on Native indolence. Donald Mackenzie of the Pacific Fur Company wrote that the Nez Percés "spurned the idea of crawling about in search of furs." "Such a life was fit only for women and slaves."\textsuperscript{18} The NorthWESTers at Fort Okanagan called the local Native people "indolent rascals."\textsuperscript{19} Later, John McLoughlin admitted that "Many Indians Hunt furs (In the Interior) merely to please us. . . ."\textsuperscript{20} Such judgements, of course, may reflect the fur traders' biases, but their very existence indicates that the fur traders had entered a peculiar region where Native people did not always have to kill mammals for protein, or to obtain pelts with which to obtain trade goods. The environment and the people had to be described in terms that would have been inappropriate further east.

At Kamloops, the company's problem was a scarcity of game compounded by good salmon provisions and Native disinterest in hunting.\textsuperscript{21} In 1829, with reference to Kamloops, Archibald McDonald wrote that "A person can walk for days together without seeing the smallest quadruped, the little brown squirrel excepted."\textsuperscript{22} Earlier, Simpson had

\textsuperscript{17}Anderson, "Notes on the Indian Tribes," p. 77.


\textsuperscript{19}Quoted in Meinig, p. 56.


\textsuperscript{22}The 1829 squirrel quote is from Margaret A. Ormsby, British Columbia: A History (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1958), p. 71.
wanted to abandon the post altogether because, he wrote in 1824, "1700 Beaver will do little
more than cover the Interest on the Capital employed, whereas in many other parts of the
Country it can be turned to much greater advantage." Beaver returns from Kamloops and
Okanagan declined from 2,946 pelts in 1822 to 1,051 in 1826; in 1827 McDonald wrote that
"the Beaver run on the verge of extermination, which the Natives themselves observe. . .
"

Dried salmon traded from the Fraser River was the staple food at Kamloops; it
carried the people through the winter. In 1827 McDonald noted that the abundance of dried
salmon contributed to a lack of interest in hunting, and the scarcity of game relative to other
districts reinforced the importance of salmon. Nonetheless, the Kamloops fur trade was
frequently held up as an example of poor returns caused by Native indolence. "The country
about Thompson’s River," Simpson wrote in 1829, "is poor in Beaver and small furs; and
the Natives are exceedingly indolent: for the means of subsistence they depend chiefly on

23Simpson to McLeod, 1 November 1824, McLeod papers, NAC.

24Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 229 n.; Archibald McDonald, [Report on the trade, 1827],
in Miscellaneous Papers Relating to Fort Kamloops, BCARS. "Okanagan," Simpson said later,
". . . is an outpost from the establishment of Thompson’s River, maintained more for the
purpose of facilitating the transport business of the post and New Caledonia than for trade, as
there are few or no fur bearing animals in the surrounding country." Simpson to G&C, 25
November 1841, in HBRS 29, p. 54.

25In about 1823 John McLeod noted that "the greatest part of our dried salmon is traded at
Fraser River." John McLeod, c. 1823, in McLeod Papers, BCARS.

26McDonald to Governor and Council, Northern Department, 5 April 1827, cited in Jean
Murray Cole, Exile in the Wilderness: The Biography of Chief Factor Archibald McDonald
Salmon, which their River generally affords in abundance." The post was kept open not for its fur trade but for its importance on the brigade route.27

Fur traders responded to the coast itself with a surprise, enthusiasm, and detachment uncharacteristic of the more mundane commercial records of the fur trade. They made environmental and cultural comparisons as soon as they arrived. Finlayson's 1831 remark that "by its overpowering abundance all nature here demands attention" summarizes the company's attitude to the coast better than any other brief phrase. Newcomers found a pronounced cultural break just west of the Coast Range and Cascade Mountains that reflected the great natural divide (Map 3). Near the coast Mackenzie, in 1793, found a wooden house containing three doors and three hearths. It was, he said, the only "Indian habitation of this kind I have seen this side of Michilemakina." He found it to measure thirty by twenty feet.28 Fraser, between Spuzzum and Yale in 1808, found a people whose language and manners were different from those he had passed. He noted their salmon fisheries, unusual clothes, and fair complexions, and he was surprised to find large villages and tombs "superior to any thing of the kind I ever saw among the savages." Like Mackenzie he measured one of the houses, finding it forty-six by twenty-three feet and "constructed like

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27Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, quoted in E. E. Rich, ed. Part of a Dispatch from George Simpson, Esq., Governor of Rupert's Land, to the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, London, March 1 1829, Continued and Completed March 24, and June 5, 1829 (London: Champlain Society for the Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1947). [HBRS 10], p. 31. Of Simpson's 1828-29 visit, Rich wrote: "Kamloops, or Thompson's River Post, proved to be a poor establishment in a country not rich in beaver or small furs. It was mainly kept up so as to protect the New Caledonia brigades as they came up from Vancouver, to Okanagan by boat and then by horse to Kamloops." Rich, HBC 3, p. 618.

28Mackenzie is quoted in Morton, A History, p. 416.
American frame houses." Fraser observed that Indians near Yale had "scarcely any leather, so that large animals must be scarce."29

To the south, travellers found a similar great natural divide between the interior and the coast at the Dalles of the Columbia.30 Thompson, in 1811, noted salmon, fine trees, and "log" houses west of the Cascades. He also remarked on the presence of slavery on the lower Columbia.31 In the same year, Franchère described many of the standard elements of the Native world: an abundance of salmon, cranberries, sturgeon, camas, potatoes, haiqua shells. He described Native salmon fishing methods and technology in detail, and he noted that the Chinook people would not allow fur traders to cut salmon crosswise.32 Finlayson, in 1831, described his ascent of the Columbia as follows:

Here & there along this River a monumental cross marks the spot of some fatal catastrophe. The country from Walla Walla to the Chutes consists of high steep masses black rocks & Stones resembling lava—it presents a picturesque but desolate and sterile landscape amidst which the eye seeks in vain for some spot capable of producing vegetation—not a solitary tree to be seen. We even had [to] purchase pieces of drift wood from the natives to supply our daily wants.

Eighty miles below the Walla Walla, are situated the Chutes, or Falls of the Columbia, where the great stream enters a gap in the Cascade range of mountains. Four miles farther down are the Dalles (a corruption of the French D’Aller, a term, as I was informed, applied by the Canadian French to the raceway of a mill, which this part of the river resembles). The Dalles are rapids formed by the passage of the water between vast masses of rock; and thirty miles below these are the Cascades, a series of falls and rapids extending more than half a mile, at the foot of which the


31Glover, David Thompson's Narrative, pp. 356-57; 363.

32Lamb, Franchère's Journal, pp. 84, 97 n.4, 100.
tides are observable, at the distance of a hundred and twenty miles from the Pacific.  

Whether they reached the Pacific via the Bella Coola, Fraser, or Columbia rivers, newcomers noticed this sharp physical and cultural break between the interior and the coast, a break that was ultimately responsible for the different direction followed by fur traders on the coast. The mildness of the climate was the first unusual quality the coast possessed. Botanist John Scouler noted that:

Every traveller who has visited the N.W. Coast of America has remarked on the uncommon mildness of its climate when compared with that of the eastern side of the continent in the same parallel of latitude. While the inhabitants of Quebec are subjected, during the winter months, to all the severity of the most intense cold, the natives of the Columbia, in nearly the same latitude, are almost strangers to the phenomena of frost and snow, and go about during the coldest season of the year in state little different from nudity.

Environmental factors lay behind many differences. The "Pacific Maritime" (or "Pacific Coast") ecological region, characterised by heavy rainfall, mild temperature, and abundant vegetation, lies to the west of the Coast Mountains. British Columbia's "Pacific Forest," identified by paleobotanists and glacial geologists, and characterised by Douglas fir, cedar, hemlock, spruce, and pine, has existed for thousands of years. Major salmon streams intersect the region from the coast.

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33 Finlayson, Journal. Franchere was the first to record the name Dalles, in April 1814. "The Dalles" is now a collective term for an eight-mile stretch of the Columbia River from Big Eddy in the west to Celita Falls in the east. Lamb, Franchère's Journal, p. 148.


35 Harris, ed., Historical Atlas, plate
There is, moreover, a close match between these ecoregions and west coast cultural regions, a term defined by the anthropologist Kroeber as the "geographical units of cultures." The Pacific Coast ecoregion corresponds with what anthropologists call the Northwest Coast culture area and what archaeologists call the "West Coast" or "Coast" archaeological region. (Map 4). "The ecological correspondence is remarkably close for the Northwest Coast," Kroeber wrote. "The vegetational-climatic area of the Northwestern Hydrophytic Coniferous Forest tallies most absolutely with the cultural one. . . ." The Northwest Coast culture area began on what is now the Alaska Panhandle, in Tlingit territory, and extended into northern California. To the east and north were the Plateau and Subarctic culture areas. Abundance produced high population densities in all parts of the coastal region.

The natural abundance of the coastal region set the area apart from the interior of the continent at an early date. Archaeologists believe that even before the end of the last ice

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38Kroeber, *Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America*, Vol. 1, pp. 28-31; map 8; table 18. Specifically, the Northwest Coast culture area included (in Kroeber’s orthography) the Northern Maritime Mainland (Northern Tlingit); Northern Maritime Archipelago (Southern Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian proper); Northern Maritime River (Niska, Gitskian, Haisla); Northern Central Maritime (Kwakiutl, Heiltsuk, Bella Coola); Southern Central Maritime (Nutka, Makah, Quileute, Quinault); Gulf of Georgia (Salish of Vancouver Island and Coast to Lummi, Nutsak, Klallam, Chimakum); Puget Sound (Salish of Puget Sound region from Skagit south); Lower Columbia (Chinook, Chehalis, Tillamook, Yaquina, Alsea, Siuslaw); Willamette Valley (Kalapuyan divisions); Lower Klamath (Kus, SW Oregon Athabascans, Tolowa, Hupa, Chilula, Yurok, Wiyot).
age, a mobile, seafaring people may have came down the coast from Asia or from the south, fishing, hunting, and exploiting the rich marine habitat.\textsuperscript{39} The sea that yielded such bounty to Native people at the end of the last ice age subsequently supported the rich material culture of the ethnographic Northwest Coast. The material abundance evident in coastal middens is the same abundance that confronted the fur traders and that found its way to Pacific markets in the holds of the Hudson's Bay Company's vessels. The west coast of North America was known, from the late eighteenth century, for its abundant resource base and dense Native population.

As might be expected, the ethnographies document these natural differences in detail. Lives of the Native people of the west coast revolved primarily around salmon. McIlwraith translated Bella Coola equinoctial months as follows:

First moon (after the winter solstice): "... what sweeps away food," or "angry moon."
Second moon: "Facing in both directions," or "The potlatch of the . . ."
Third moon: "When herrings spawn."
Fourth moon: "Time for making salmon weirs."
Fifth moon: "Time for making hand-nets for olachen."
Sixth moon: "Time for eating spring salmon."

\textsuperscript{39}Knut Fladmark has hypothesized that North America was peopled not through an ice free corridor in the Rocky Mountain Trench but along the coast of the continent. Some parts of the coast were not covered with ice during the last glaciation and the ocean even during the ice age contained abundant fish and sea mammal life. Unfortunately, the rise in sea levels caused by the melting of the ice has probably submerged most evidence for such a migration; any remains would now be under several hundred feet of ocean. Knut R. Fladmark, "A Paleoecological Model for Northwest Coast Prehistory," Archaeological Survey of Canada Mercury Series 43 (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1975). "Given the presence of inhabitable refugia, available resources, and a culture able to reach and exploit them, we can hypothesize that people moved southwards and eastwards around the North Pacific. . . . In addition, they must have been technologically and socially capable of exploiting a wide range of marine and terrestrial resources." K. R. Fladmark, "Routes: Alternative Migration Corridors for Early Man in North America," \textit{American Antiquity} 44:1 (1979): pp. 55-69; pp. 63-64.
First moon (after the summer solstice): "The time for sockeye salmon to ascend the river."
Second moon: "The time for eating dog salmon."
Third moon: "The time for eating cohoe salmon."
Fourth moon: "The time for gathering fern root."
Fifth moon: "The time for Kusint dances or . . . the gathering of the supernatural beings."
Sixth moon: "Sits down, that is, when the sun reaches the solstice." 

Not a single fur-bearing animal figures in this calendar.

The first person to identify and write about these environmental and cultural patterns was the Scottish botanist John Scouler, who was hired by the company in 1824 "to make collections in the various branches of natural history." The company was anxious, Scouler wrote, "to advance the knowledge of these exhaustive regions which are within the sphere of their commercial exertions." 41 He left London in July 1824 on the company's vessel, the William & Ann, on a reconnaissance of a region (the North West Coast of the maritime fur trade) that was still completely unknown to the Hudson's Bay Company, and began his botanical and ethnographic observations as soon as the vessel entered the Columbia early in 1825. "Everywhere the banks of the river were tolerably thickly inhabited by a people who never till the ground, and who subsist almost entirely by fishing." 42

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42 [John Scouler and David Douglas], "Notices respecting Mr Scouler's and Mr Douglas's recent Voyage to the North West Coast of America," Edinburgh Journal of Science 5 (April-October 1826), pp. 378-80; 379.
In the summer of 1825 Scouler accompanied the William & Ann on the company's inaugural voyage to the North West Coast. He visited the Queen Charlotte Islands, Observatory Inlet, Nootka, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. In his many articles on the climate and people of the west coast Scouler emphasised the great cleavage between coast and interior and explained cultural differences in terms of climatic and environmental factors:

The Indian tribes of the N.W. may be divided into two groups, the Insular and the Inland, or those who inhabit the islands and adjacent shores of the mainland, and subsist almost entirely by fishing; and those who live in the interior, and are partly hunters... In the interior of the country we find several tribes whose language and manners differ considerably from those of the inhabitants of the coast. Living, in fact, on the produce of the chase, each tribe occupies a much more extensive district than is required by the ichthyophagous communities situated on the margins of the rivers and inlets.43

It is, at least in part, owing to these peculiarities of their physical condition that the habits and social arrangements of the Indians on the opposite side of the mountains present such a remarkable contrast. The N.W. Indians, especially the coast-tribes, have made considerable progress in the rude arts of savage life. Their canoes are constructed with much skill; their houses, being for permanent residence, have been erected with some forethought and attention to comfort; and their fishing apparatus and articles of domestic economy are far more numerous and elaborate than can be found in the temporary lodge of hunting tribes. From this settled mode of life, they are more accustomed to continuous labour, and even show considerable aptitude for passing into an agricultural state... 44

Scouler even attributed linguistic differences to the "character of the country:"

Were we to construct an ethnographical chart of the north-west part of America... nothing would appear more striking than the great variety of languages spoken in the

43 Scouler, "Observations on the Indigenous Tribes," pp. 216-18. "The configuration of the coast is another circumstance which has great influence on the habits of the Indians. Abounding in islands, many of them of considerable size, while the shores of the mainland are broken up by numerous inlets resembling the lochs of the western shores of Scotland, the natives obtain their chief supplies of food by fishing, and are thus rendered more sedentary than the tribes which follow the buffalo on the E. side of the Rocky Mountains." (Ibid).

44 Ibid.
narrow district included between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific, contrasted with the few but wide spread dialects, spoken between Hudson's Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. . . . On the east of the Rocky Mountains the wide diffusion of particular languages depends in part on the nature of the country. Subsisting almost exclusively by the chase, each tribe required a great extent of territory; few natural barriers existed to prevent dispersion. . . .

Among the natives of the North-west coast, the features of the country, intersected by mountain ranges, or broken up into islands, rendered the tribes more sedentary; while at the same time, it permitted, and even from the diversity of its products required, some degree of commercial intercourse. 45

Similar comments on the abundant sea life and absence of hunting were made by Scouler's British, Canadian, Russian, and American contemporaries. Baron Wrangell of the Russian American Company observed a "complete dependence" on the sea for sustenance. 46 Fur traders from the Stikine River to the tributaries of the Columbia contrasted maritime resources with a scarcity of locally-obtained fur. Franchère, for example, was impressed by the low premium placed on hunting among the Chinook people of the lower Columbia. "Generally speaking, the men are not idle during the fishing season, knowing that the intervals between seasons would be a period of starvation for them if they did not accumulate a store of dried fish, which forms the mainstay of their existence; not being hunters, they


46 "T]he natives of this coastal strip and those of the neighbouring islands are also accustomed to living along the coast and are completely dependent on the sea for sustenance. Fish and other sea creatures are their chief, and sometimes their only, source of food. In this regard, the natives' way of life cannot be altered. No way, no source is open to them other than that which they possess in their completely native state." Richard A. Pierce, ed., Russian America: Statistical and Ethnographical Information by Rear Admiral Ferdinand Petorich Wrangell . . . Translated from the German Edition of 1839 . . . (Kingston: The Limestone Press, 1980), p. 13.
rarely eat meat, though they like the taste of it." Franchère recalled the summer of 1811 at Fort Astoria as follows:

The supplies we received from the ship soon gave out and from the month of July on we had to accustom ourselves to a diet of fish, salmon caught in that month being excellent, even too rich and oily, so that it made some of us ill. We became accustomed to it gradually. Not having brought any hunters, we had to depend precariously on the luck of one of the natives who occasionally brought us venison that we found to be very lean and dry and for which we had to pay high prices, the cost of a deer being a two-and-a-half point blanket, a knife, half a pound of tobacco, gunpowder and shot.48

The Chinook were not hunters but fishers and traders; they obtained fur from their neighbours in exchange for company goods. "The Chinooks among whom we are resident do not exert themselves in hunting and rarely employ their Slaves in that way," Simpson wrote in 1825; "They are however keen traders and through their hands nearly the whole of the Fort George returns pass. . . ." And he continued:

I do not know any part of North America where the natives could be civilized and instructed in morality, and religion at such a moderate expense and with so much facility as on the banks of the Columbia and Frazers River. On the East side the Mountain it does not appear to me practicable on account of the erratick life the Indians lead changing their Encampments almost Daily and the great difficulty nay utter impossibility of procuring the means of subsistence for any Considerable body of people until Cultivation becomes a principal object of attention among them! but in many parts of this Country they are settled in villages, the waters afford ample Provision, the earth yields spontaneously nutricious Roots and Fruits, and all descriptions of Game are abundant.49

47Lamb, Franchère's Journal, p. 100.

48Ibid., pp. 89-90.

In the same year John McLoughlin wrote, "But the fact is the Indians hereabouts are poor animal hunters though animals are numerous."50 Fort George fur returns had remained constant throughout the North West Company's tenure.51 A company official later told the story, possibly apocryphal, that the Native people of the coast had been unable to trap animals before the coming of the company. This was an art, Charles French said, "that they acquired after some tuition and the massacre of some imported Indians from the east, who were originally intended to teach the local natives how to trap fur-bearing animals. . . ."52

Fort Vancouver, founded upstream from Fort George in 1825, was intended to serve principally as a farm and as a depot; its fur trading function was secondary. Furs procured at the new post passed through so many hands that it was impossible to obtain properly-dressed skins for the London market.53 In 1827 McLoughlin (or his amanuensis) listed the following disadvantages of the Native trade at Fort Vancouver:

The Abundance of Nutricious Roots which though they would not satisfy an European Stomach to Indulge their Lasiness the Natives content themselves with Rather than Labour to procure Better—And the Abundance of Salmon which in short makes them

50 McLoughlin to G&C, 6 October 1825, HBRS 4, p. 15.

51 Between 1813 and 1821 Fort George's annual returns had held steady at between 2,500 and 3,000 pelts, most of which were traded from other places. H. Lloyd Keith, "The North West Company's 'Adventure to the Columbia': A Reassessment of Financial Failure," unpublished ms., 1989.

52 C. H. French, "Mr French Lectures," The Beaver 2:9 (June 1922), p. 38. Possibly French refers to Iroquois hunters attached to an interior post. Similarly, in the summer of 1925 Pinkerton recorded a conversation with one of Robert Hunt's daughters at Fort Rupert, Mrs Cadwallader. "I asked how native women cooked venison and discovered that coast Indians did not eat it because they were afraid it would make them forgetful." "You know how a deer looks," Mrs Cadwallader said. "I'd always attributed the deer's flighty manner to a constant state of fear, but the Indians had decided a deer couldn't keep his mind on one subject." Kathrene Pinkerton, Three's A Crew (Ganges: Horsdall and Schubart, 1991), pp. 176-77.

53 McLoughlin to G&C, 1 September 1826, HBRS 4, p. 31
perfectly Independant of us for the means of procuring subsistence and the Climate is so mild that the Only covering they use is a Rat skin Blanket the Woolens they Buy from us are merely to please their fancy. . . . Their is a Good deal of Beaver Yet in the District but the Natives are so Indolent and so Independant of us they will not hunt indeed the furs the Indians trade at Fort Vancouver they get in Barter from the more Remote tribes. . . .

Also in 1827 Simpson observed, hopefully, that "Fort Vancouver commands nearly the same Trade that Fort George did and as the Indians in that neighbourhood become more accustomed to the use of European supplies they will devote more of their time & attention to the chase in order to procure the means of obtaining them." Fort Vancouver produced even fewer furs than Fort George because it was shut off from the coastal fur trade; the Columbia's main profits, Simpson pointed out, came from the Snake Expeditions.

Impressions of abundance and a resulting indolence permeate the records for the south coast and lower Columbia. Paul Kane believed the Chinook people to be lazy. Anderson contrasted the "wretched fish eaters of the Columbia and its neighbouring coast. . . . procuring an abundant livelihood with little exertion; gross, sensual, and for the most part cowardly," with the hunters of the interior, "nerves and sinews braced by exercise, and

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57Kane visited the lower Columbia in 1847. "The country which the Chinooks inhabit, being almost destitute of furs, they have little to do with the whites. This, coupled with their laziness, probably induced by the ease with which they procure fish, which is their chief subsistence, prevents their obtaining ornaments of European manufacture, consequently any thing of the kind is seldom seen amongst them." Paul Kane, Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America from Canada to Vancouver's Island and Oregon through the Hudson's Bay Company's Territory and Back Again (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859), p. 126.
minds comparatively ennobled by frequent excitement. . . . "58 John Warren Dease, newly-arrived at Fort Vancouver from the interior, wrote in 1829 that "Trade here is miserable. Indians are difficult to deal with and in my opinion too much indulged."59 It was natural then that poor fur returns resulted from Native indolence. "I think that the growing indolence and inactive habits of the Chinook population, may be discovered the real cause of the late decline in the business of Fort George," he told James Birnie in 1838, and he urged the Chinook to hunt.60

On most of the south coast and Columbia River, camas approached salmon in importance as a staple food. Combined, salmon and camas relegated animal hunting to a minor or seasonal occupation. Fort Vancouver, Fort Nisqually, Cowlitz Farm, and Fort Victoria were constructed on or near extensive Camas plains. "This root," wrote the botanist Thomas Nuttall, "which is wholesome to almost all palates, is collected by the aborigines in large quantities, and constitutes their greatest substitute for the Cerealia of civilised life. [Agri]Culture is therefore wholly neglected in those countries which thus afford to the Indolent natives a spontaneous supply of food."61 Camas ranged from the Columbia near


59J. W. Dease, "Journal," 10 October 1829, NAC.

60Douglas to James Birnie, 6 April 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 5d.

61T. Nuttall, "Catalogue of Plants Collected Chiefly in the Valleys of the Rocky Mountains, near the Sources of the Columbia River," Journal of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia 7 (1834), pp. 5-60; 56. Scouler and David Douglas had found Fort Vancouver "to be situated in a fertile prairie, abounding in many curious plants; and at this season (May) extensive tracts of country were almost covered with the blue flowers of the Phalangum esculentum of Nuttall, called kamass by the natives, with whom it is a favourite article of food. The plant a good deal resembles the common field hyacinth of our country. The root is about the same size, and, when roasted, has an agreeable and sweet taste." [Scouler and Douglas], "Notices respecting Mr Scouler’s and Mr Douglas’s recent Voyage, p. 379.
Fort Nez Percés through the lower Columbia to Puget Sound and to the Gulf of Georgia.\(^62\) James Swan reported that "The Indians call it La Cammass, which is the name taught them by the early French voyageurs." After baking, Swan wrote, "The roots then are soft and very sweet, much like a baked sweet potato. The natives preserve them by pressing them into loaves, which when eaten, are cut in slices like pudding. I have never met with a white person who was not fond of naked cammass, and I do not know any vegetable, except fried bananas, so delicious.\(^63\)

Such resources as salmon and camas supported a larger Native population than most other fur trade territories, and seasonal abundance and mild sedentary winters promoted the development of a complex social realm. "The Country is densely inhabited, on account of the great abundance of its resources in the way of living," Simpson wrote in 1826 with reference to the region immediately north of the Columbia.\(^64\) Periodic epidemics did not lessen an impression of dense population. Population estimates greatly exceeded those from the east. In 1826 McLoughlin estimated that 2,000 men lived on the Columbia between the Dalles and the Pacific Ocean (the total Chinook population at the mouth of the river may have numbered up to 17,000 in 1805-06),\(^65\) and in 1830 Archibald McDonald estimated the

\(^62\)Camas does not seem to have grown on the Fraser River, though it was traded there from Vancouver Island by the Cowichan. In December 1828, for example, the keeper of the Fort Langley journal wrote that "[M]ore of the Canaitchins passing up, their canoes were loaded with Kamas which I believe is procured in abundance on the Island, with it and the salmon they left en cache last fall they propose living well for the winter." Fort Langley Journal 1827-28, HBCA B.113/a/1.

\(^63\)James Gilchrist Swan, The North-West Coast; or, Three Years' Residence in Washington Territory (London: Sampson Low, Son, & Co, 1857), p. 91.

\(^64\)Simpson to H. U. Addington, 5 January 1826, quoted in HBRS 10, p. 168.

"number of men inhabiting" Fort Langley district (which included all of Puget Sound and the
Gulf of Georgia including the Fraser River and Fraser canyon as far as Boston Bar) at 4,160.
This number might be considered "incredible," he said, if he had not repeatedly quizzed
chiefs trading at the post. Simpson's 1841 estimate that Fort Simpson was visited by
14,000 souls is plausible. By contrast, the 747 people living and trading at Fort
Alexandria (Map 2) constituted the largest population of any post in New Caledonia.

The lower Columbia was merely the southern extremity of an extensive and richly-
endowed coast which was not, of course, without internal variation. A trader who passed the
winter of 1795-96 in the mouth of the Columbia wrote that he had not found "the Climate so
cold as the South of England!" but a winter on the North West Coast was "dreary,"
"inhospitable," "wretched," "savage," "one vast wilderness and unbroken solitude." The
maritime explorers and fur traders had been the first to notice the basic distinction within the
coastal region itself. George Vancouver and his party, for example, divided the coast in
half: they found a southern, temperate region extending from the lower Columbia through to
Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the Gulf of Georgia, and a northern, more
inhospitable region on the west coast of Vancouver Island and on the coast to the north.
Accurately, they sensed a latent agricultural potential only on the south coast; the natural range of camas mirrors more or less the region with agricultural potential. But the wealth of the Northwest Coast people was based not on the resources of the land but the sea.

"Indolence" and abundance prevailed in the Gulf of Georgia, southern Vancouver Island, Puget Sound, and the Fraser River. In 1825, regarding the "Klallums of Port Discovery," Scouler wrote:

When we consider the abundance of provisions this beautiful country affords, we shall not be surprised at the great population it maintains; and, probably, no Indians in North America have less difficulty in procuring their food than the tribes from the Gulf of Georgia to the Columbia River; the sea yields an abundant supply of fishes of the most delicious kinds, as various species of mullet, turbot, and cod; every rivulet teems with myriads of salmon; and the meadows and forests produce an endless variety of berries and esculent roots. The collection of the latter forms the occupation of the women and children, while the men are occupied in procuring the former, and both are carefully dried for winter stores. About the end of September, they quit their summer residence on the coast, and retreat to the interior of the country, where, in addition to their winter stock, they kill abundance of otters, beavers, and elks, whose skins afford them clothing, or the means of obtaining European articles. They return to the coast again in the beginning of April.72

 Regarding the Native people at Fort Langley, James McMillan wrote in 1828 that "they are very lazy and independent [because] the Sea and river Supply their wants plentifully;" in the same year Simpson observed that "the indolent character of the natives and the ample means

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72 John Scouler, "Account of a Voyage to Madeira, Brazil, Juan Fernandez, and the Gallipagos Islands, Performed in 1824 and 1825, with a View of Examining their Natural History," The Edinburgh Journal of Science 7:2 (April 1827), pp. 228-236; 230. His unedited journal entry is slightly different: "Dr John Scouler's Journal of a Voyage to N. W. America," The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society 6:2 (June 1905), p. 198. Scouler's journal entry for 10-13 August 1825 shows that he was between Tatooch and Port Discovery when he wrote this. The seasonal rounds of the Native people, Scouler continued, explained "the cause of the mistake into which the very accurate C. Vancouver fell, concerning the apparent depopulation of the coast, when we recollect that between the months of October and April the natives would be at their winter abode." Ibid, p. 198.
their country and Coast afford, in regard to the necessaries and comforts of life," rendered the Native people of Fraser River "perfectly independent of our supplies."\(^7\)

Beaver, moreover, were scarce on the coast and especially on Vancouver Island. "A Nanaimaus brought us 5 Beaver and a few salmon," wrote the keeper of the Fort Langley journal in 1829, "and thought he could never be sufficiently rewarded for the honour he did us."\(^7\) In August 1838, Douglas told Kittson that he would be disappointed "if the supineness and inattention to the Indian Trade, which I have observed in other Posts of the Columbia, be found also at Fort Nisqually."\(^7\) He observed that the people of Fort Nisqually and Puget Sound subsisted "Chiefly on the Sea and Shell Fish, provided in the utmost profusion by the all bounteous hand of Nature." This profusion was not good for the fur trade, and it prompted one of Douglas's erudite observations on commercial economy:

We know the natural indolence and improvidence of the Columbia Indn. He must be urged by exertion by the most pressing wants. A few Beaver Skins appear to him wealth inexhaustible, and he remains inactive, until he finds a purchaser. This effect is not uncommon, neither is it peculiar to the Native American. It may be observed in a modified form even among the members of civilised and industrious communities, when disappointed of a market, for produce which has been with much pains & labour accumulated.\(^7\)

Paul Kane, who spent two months at Fort Victoria in 1847, noted the usual combination of natural abundance and Native "indolence." "All the tribes about here subsist almost entirely

\(^7\)McMillan to John McLeod, 21 January 1828, McLeod papers, NAC; Simpson to G&C, 10 July 1828, HBCA D.4/92, fos. 66-67.

\(^7\)30 July 1829, Fort Langley Journal, 1829-30, HBCA.B.113/a/3.

\(^7\)Douglas to Kittson, 1 August 1838, B.223/b/22, fos. 22-22d.

upon fish, which they obtain with so little trouble during all seasons of the year, that they are probably the laziest race of people in the world." In the 1860s naturalist Robert Brown called the Somenos people of Vancouver Island "a lazy set, only laboring to get a bare sufficiency of fish food." Numerous sayings such as "We'll eat dinner when the tide goes out" persist in the coastal lexicon.

Another comment is necessary on such statements. Indolence was a negative concept, part of the fur traders' cultural baggage, but "indolent" Native people had their own good cultural reasons for being so. For example, activities such as tilling the soil and even hunting were considered the work of slaves on the lower Columbia: in 1825 Scouler noted that the Chinook people, unlike the Haida, refused to grow potatoes because it was slaves' work:

The Indians of the Columbia, who enjoy far greater opportunities for improvement than those of Skittegass, have as yet steadily refused to cultivate the ground, in spite of the example and encouragement of the settlers, and have refused to grow the seeds

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77Kane, Wanderings, p. 147.


79Herbert Spalding, the head of a depression family on Pender Island, used to tell his family that "We'll eat dinner when the tide goes out." Personal communication, David Spalding, 1990. Similarly, in the 1920s Kathrene Pinkerton recorded saying in Queen Charlotte Sound: "Every time the tide goes out it sets a table." Pinkerton, Three's A Crew, p. 183. "When the tide is out the table is set," Vern Koontz, personal communication, 1993. "Only a stupid man would starve on this coast," Bill Reid.

80Maritime fur traders had noted this "indolence" in the 1790s: "because they did not labour constantly and regularly, let alone hurriedly, the Indians were regarded as 'indolent and lazy.'" Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 154.
that were offered them, while their pride urged, as an apology for their indolence, that it was the work of slaves to cultivate the ground.\textsuperscript{81}

The Haida, by contrast, were more amenable to Scouler's notions of industry and economy:

Around Skitteggass, the potato is now pretty extensively cultivated, and they brought us plenty to sell. One cannot but rejoice at this symptom of commencing civilisation, which, if persevered in, will limit their wanderings, and give them better ideas of property, and teach them that more is to be gained by cultivating their fertile soil, than in following salmon up every creek, or spending days in the uncertain support of the chase.\textsuperscript{82}

The Hudson's Bay Company that invaded the Pacific slope of North America after 1821 possessed a set of clear, adaptable, and forceful commercial policies that enabled company officials to adapt their business to a new trading opportunity on the Pacific and to a Native population on the coast consisting mainly of traders not hunters. Fur traders implemented strategies devised gradually east of the Rockies: extension of the fur trade (location of new and untapped sources of fur) was appropriate in some places, diversification in others, and where it existed it was necessary to combat American fur traders. A flexible,

\textsuperscript{81}John Scouler, "Account of a Voyage to Madeira, Brazil, Juan Fernandez, and the Gallipagos Islands, Performed in 1824 and 1825, with a view of examining their Natural History," \textit{The Edinburgh Journal of Science} \textit{6}:1 (January 1827), pp. 51-73; 69-70. "The acuteness of the Queen Charlotte's Islanders has prompted them to adopt a great many customs of civilised life, & the cultivation of potatoes is very general among them, and had our time permitted we might have obtained any quantity of this useful article. This consideration alone, in my opinion, places them far above the natives of the Columbia in the scale of intelligence. With all the advantages of having Europeans constantly among them I do not know of one improvement requiring the smallest exertion that has been adopted by the Cheenooks." John Scouler, "Dr John Scouler's Journal of a Voyage to N.W. America," \textit{The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society} \textit{6}:2 (June 1905), pp. 159-205; 191. [26 July 1826]. For similar statements see John Scouler, "Observations on the Indigenous Tribes of the N.W. Coast of America," \textit{Journal of the Royal Geographical Society} \textit{11} (1841), pp. 215-50; 219.

\textsuperscript{82}Scouler, "Account of a Voyage to Madeira, Brazil, Juan Fernandez, and the Gallipagos Islands. . . . (January 1827), pp. 69-70.
pragmatic application of commercial strategies was appropriate. As Douglas said in 1838, "The business is now yearly declining, and we must not remain tame spectators of its utter ruin, but strain every nerve to retrieve its former prosperity."  

The strategy with the most surprising results was economic diversification, a commercial policy requiring an intentional adaptation to a new environment and new resources. The company would have to adapt to a new environment if it were to survive. Nothing in the company's charter or in the subsequent trade licenses granted it by the British government prohibited diversification; the emphasis on fur was an artifact of a particular time and place. The Hudson's Bay Company was a trading company, and the west coast offered unprecedented trading opportunities. The profit motive was always apparent, and led to the extension of corporate activity into new regions and into new activities. These fur traders knew how to make money and diversify their exports. The west coast, its resources, and its commercial potential were irresistible. Nature here demanded attention, as Duncan Finlayson said on his arrival at Fort Vancouver in 1831. And he continued:

> It has hither to been the fate of this part of the country, like modest minds to remain unnoticed; but [we] will do it justice; towns & cities will hereafter flourish where all is now desert; the waters over which scarcely a solitary boat is yet seen to glide will reflect the flags of all nations & a happy people will dispense what nature here bestows so freely to every port of the world.  

Neither Finlayson nor his entrepreneurial colleagues imagined that the trade in fur could produce these changes.

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84 Finlayson, "Trip Across to the Columbia, 1831." On Finlayson's appointment see Rich: 3, p. 629.
Native cooperation was essential if the company were to adapt its business to this new commercial opportunity. The company’s commercial success was bound up inextricably with a dependence on Native trade and labour. Most of its commercial strategies were based on some degree of cooperation with Native people. In the long run the company would have to adapt to the resources and behaviour of the Native economy instead of condemning Native economic behaviour as indolent. The scarcity of fur would be inconsequential once the company realised the commercial potential of the Native economies of the coast. The land-based fur traders of the lower Columbia and the maritime fur traders of the North West Coast had even found a way to facilitate this trade: the Chinook language, a hybrid offspring of the languages of the transcontinental fur trade, maritime fur trade, and of the people of the ethnographic Northwest Coast.
CHAPTER 4
COMING TO GRIPS WITH A NEW REGION, 1821-29

Altho' the Country has been occupied upwards of Fourteen Years, and immense sums of money expended therein I feel that as yet we have done little more than Commenced operations on this side the Continent.

George Simpson, 1825

At the time of the 1821 merger the Columbia Department was in the hands of two Northwesterners, John Dugald Cameron and John Haldane. They, as chief factors in the new company, continued in charge. At first the future of the department looked very bleak. The North West Company had lost £40,000 on its China adventure alone, and the Governor and Committee considered abandoning the Columbia altogether. If the Hudson’s Bay Company had given up the Columbia—and they were under no obligation to keep it—it is doubtful that the British, let alone the Canadians, would have noticed. However, within a few years Simpson’s reforms had ended the possibility that the company might abandon the Columbia River and coastal regions. Between 1824 and 1829 Simpson transformed the

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1Simpson to G&C, 10 March 1825, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 109-48.


4Regarding company employees on the coast, James Douglas wrote in 1855, during the San Juan crisis, that "Without their exertions not a foot of land, on the west coast of America, would this day, own the sway of the British crown, and had a bolder spirit ruled the Aberdeen Cabinet in 1846, the Americans would never have set foot on the north bank of the Columbia, and we would not now be humble suppliants at the President's footstool, for the protection of rights, so hardly earned, by the best blood and treasure of the Company." Douglas to Simpson, 12 October 1855, Fort Victoria, Correspondence Outward, 1850-1858, BCARS.
company's business on the Pacific coast through the imposition of a strict and competitive set of measures. Territorial control came first, and during his first visit in 1824-25 Simpson ordered the spatial extension of the fur trade to the North West Coast and to the interior as far south as California. In 1825 Simpson attempted, without success, to market Columbia Department fur and other commodities in China, but the region was not yet ready for the imposition of the British Pacific trading scheme proposed three decades earlier by Dalrymple and Mackenzie. Such a scheme depended on the complete extension of the fur trade to this competitive region and on the creation of efficient transport and provisioning systems. By the time of Simpson's second visit in 1828-29 the company had greatly and profitably enlarged the North West Company's field of operations, and the company was ready to diversify its exports and locate new Pacific markets. The new regional economy sought by the Northwesterners was in the process of formation.

The first phase, then, of the new Columbia policy was an extended and efficient fur trade, while the second was economic diversification and market location. The first phase manifested itself territorially; the second involved making the most of the territory gained in the first. On his second visit Simpson oversaw the creation of new export trades in salmon and lumber and the investigation of new markets in Hawaii and on the Mexican coast to the south. Such trades could be carried on conveniently in the dead winter months when the fur trade was in abeyance. This, however, entailed expenses not encountered elsewhere on the continent. The company's belated embarkation on the maritime fur trade meant the purchase of vessels, the hiring of qualified mariners, and often the imposition of a different (higher-}

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5On Simpson's revolution on the Columbia see Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, pp. 47-73 and passim; Innis's introduction to HBRS 3, pp. xxxi-lxxi; Rich, HBC, Vol. 3, pp. 447-48; 557; 578-79; Ormsby, British Columbia, pp. 51-57; Cole, Exile in the Wilderness; Cullen, Fort Langley, pp. 9-16; Gibson, Farming the Frontier, pp. 7-27.
priced) standard of trade than was needed in non-competitive districts. Despite these expenses, by 1829 the company was poised to challenge American coasters for commercial control of the North West Coast, and Simpson was poised to fulfil Dalrymple's and Mackenzie's ambitions of marketing local produce in Pacific markets.

In February 1822 the Governor and Committee told Simpson that they were not hopeful that the Columbia could ever turn a profit, but that it might be worth holding to protect the valuable New Caledonia fur trade. They considered the possibility of abandoning the lower Columbia and withdrawing to New Caledonia:

But if by any improved arrangement the loss can be reduced to a small sum, it is worth a serious consideration, whether it may not be a good policy to hold possession of that Country, with the view of protecting the more valuable districts to the North of it; and we wish you to direct the attention of the council to this subject and collect all the information which you can obtain from individuals acquainted with the Country.

Should the result of all your enquiries be unfavourable to the plan of continuing the trade of Columbia it will be proper to consider, whether it will be better to continue the trading establishments there. . . . The Russians are endeavouring to set up claims to the North West Coast of America as low as Latitude 51, and we think it desirable to extend our trading operations as far to the West and North from Frazer's River in Caledonia, as may be practicable, if there appears any reasonable prospect of doing so profitably.6

Simpson had, meanwhile, sent Archibald McDonald to the Columbia "in the capacity of accountant and requested him to give a full and accurate report of it which will be transmitted to the Committee."7 McDonald reported in the spring of 1822 that the major

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7Simpson to G&C, 8 September 1821, HBRS 3, p. 399; also quoted in part in Cole, Exile in the Wilderness.
cause of the lack of profits was an expensive dependence on European provisions. In July 1822 Simpson wrote that the Columbia trade had improved over the previous year, he praised Haldane "for the economical and systematic arrangements" he had adopted, and he noted that Haldane and "every Gentleman conversant with the affairs of that Country are of opinion that it would not be politic to withdraw from that Country if it does not realize profits no loss is likely to be incurred thereby and it serves to check opposition from the Americans. He told Cameron that it might be necessary to extend the trade to the coast north of the Columbia to keep the Russians "at a distance." Thus political motives figured in Simpson's early plans.

Simpson's optimism was just what the Governor and Committee wanted to hear, especially since it transpired that the North West Company's final shipment of Columbia furs to Canton had, surprisingly, made almost £12,000, a profit that benefited the newly-merged company. This profit brought a version of Dalrymple's scheme to light again, and caused them to consider entering the China trade. In September 1822 they outlined to Haldane and Cameron their proposals for the extension of trade, economic diversification, and the opening of a direct trade between the west coast and Canton:

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8McDonald to G&C, 6 April 1822, cited in Cole, Exile in the Wilderness, pp. 101. From the start Simpson also emphasised the need to obtain provisions on the Columbia; this would lower the need for imports and save money. Still, he wrote, "in case of accident it would be safe policy to have on hand at all times a certain stock of Indian Corn or a substitute for it, to keep the Posts independent of the Natives for they will exact high prices when they can." Simpson to G&C, 31 July 1822, HBRS 3, pp. 341-57; 343.


10Simpson to J. D. Cameron, 18 July 1822, HBRS 74, p. 414.

11Keith, "Adventure to the Columbia."
We have to desire that you will transmit a full and detailed Statement of the Trade of
the Columbia Department, your opinion as to the possibility of extending it, it being
absolutely necessary that we should possess every information relative to the
productions of the Country, in order to ascertain the possibility of bringing other
articles as well as Peltries to a profitable market.

You will likewise state whether you consider that a Vessell can be beneficially
employed on the Coast, in collecting Furs, and procuring provisions from California
or elsewhere for the Service of the Department, the size and description of Vessell
best adapted to such purpose and in the event of it being considered in future
advisable to forward the trade of the Columbia Department direct to Canton, you will
also state whether any Officer in the department, competent to take charge of the
Goods and proceed with the ship as Super Cargo to Canton.\(^\text{12}\)

After 1822, then, there was no more talk of abandoning the Columbia. The company
decided it was worth holding, and even expanding, for its commercial and political potential:
to protect New Caledonia’s fur trade, to keep the Russians well to the northern part of the
coast, to battle American traders, to establish a British mercantile presence on the North
Pacific coast, to open a trade with Canton, and to find new exports.

In July 1822 Simpson proposed that the company send a supply ship directly to the
Columbia from London—causing the Governor and Committee to drop a plan to hire the
North West Company’s old agents in Boston, Perkins & Co, to supply the Columbia with
provisions and market Columbia furs and other commodities in Canton.\(^\text{13}\) By 1823 the
Governor and Committee had approved a plan to transport the Columbia’s complete outfits

\(^{12}\)G&C to Haldane and Cameron, 4 September 1822, HBRS 3, p. 335.

\(^{13}\)Simpson to G&C, 31 July 1822, HBRS 3, pp. 341-57; 343-44. "For many years past,"
they told Perkins & Co., "there has been a regular trade of fine beaver and fine otter skins from
this market [London] to Russia, which it is well-known found their way to China through
Kiachta. This shows that there must be a regular and constant demand for fine furs at high
prices in some of the provinces of China." William Smith to Messrs Perkins & Co, Canton, 9
April 1823, HBCA A.6/20, fos. 107-107d. I owe this reference to Harry Duckworth. See also
Merk, *Fur Trade and Empire*, p. 192.
and returns every two years on a company vessel. Thus the Governor and Committee decided to keep control of their entire transport system and concentrate on fur exports to London.

Reports on the fur and provision trades on the lower Columbia improved steadily. In 1823 Simpson wrote that the Natives in the Columbia were "getting rapidly in the way of collecting Skins," and in August 1824 he reported that the Columbia Natives, "instead of occupying their time in search of Furs during the Summer they promise to turn their attention solely to the provision trade." The Columbia business had been brought nearly into a "regular and organized train." "Mr Cameron has brought very satisfactory reports from the Columbia by which it appears that the Trade is increasing, the expenses diminishing and the natives becoming well disposed towards the Whites."

It was not until 1824 that Simpson made his first tour of inspection of the Columbia. The merger of the companies had resulted in an organisation top-heavy with employees as well as duplicate or rival posts and transport systems. Problems were most severe in the competitive regions east of the Rockies, and since 1821 Simpson had toured the rest of the Northern Department, formulating and imposing "rigid measures of oeconomy"—most of them venerable economic strategies of the fur trade—including policies of trade extension, fur conservation, and personnel and wage reduction. He standardized the accounting systems of the Hudson’s Bay and North West companies and everywhere promoted men of

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14"We are of opinion that a Vessel chartered every second year will answer the purpose for transporting outfit and returns. . . ." Simpson to G&C, 1 August 1823, HBCA A.12/1, fo. 11.

15Simpson to G&C, 23 June 1823, quoted in HBRS 3, pp. xxxi, from Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, pp. 195-196; Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1824, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 65-108; fos. 65 and 69.

16See e.g. Simpson to G&C, 8 September 1823, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 47-64.
"regularity & system." No inhabitant of the Indian Country had, he said, a right to extravagance. Simpson developed an intimate knowledge of the amalgamated company's vast territories. "By these visits of inspection," Innis wrote, "he was able to gain a remarkable knowledge of the demands of the trade and to bring the trade under the control of the organization." He looked forward to imposing his measures of economy on the west coast, even though their strictness earned him enemies.

In August 1824 Simpson proposed to visit the Columbia "to take a more accurate view of the Company's affairs and prospects in that country." He complained that the Northern Council of Rupert's Land would gladly drop the Columbia: "Our Council know so little about that Country having confined their attention to the mere trafficking with Indians and not taking an enlarged view of its affairs either in regard to political or Commercial prospects indeed there is a general feeling against it and I believe they would gladly throw up

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17 On the standardization of accounts see HBRS 3, pp. 319-25; on qualities of regularity and system see Ibid., pp. 338, 388, 396, 424, 453.

18 Simpson to G&C, 10 March 1825, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 109-48. "Indian Country" referred to the company's territorial heartland held by the company for the purpose of trade by charter or license.


20 In 1845 John McLean wrote that Simpson pushed his "strict system of economy" "to the extreme of parsimony." "[M]uch economy, or rather parsimony, of a very questionable and impolitic kind, has been of late years attempted to be introduced. . . . " McLean, Notes, pp. 239, 354, 360, 383.

21 Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1824, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 65-108; fo. 69. In November 1822 Simpson had stated that "The Columbia affairs occupy a good deal of my attention & I have serious thought of paying that District a visit next Fall, my presence there might do some good & I do not fear the hardship of the undertaking. . . ." Simpson to J. G. McTavish, 12 November 1822, HBRS 3, p. 424.
all interest in the trade on the West side of the Mountain (New Caledonia excepted) if left to themselves." The Columbia presented a challenge to Simpson.

The uncertain political tenure west of the Rockies concerned Simpson, and he thought it might be necessary to divide the territory between British, Russian, and American commercial interests, in which case, however, the Hudson's Bay Company might retain only New Caledonia:

> We consider it would not be advisable to enter into any expensive arrangements in regard to extension of Trade to that Country until we are in possession of further information as to Territorial rights. . . . it is a matter worthy of much consideration whether it would not be more to the interests of the Cy to come to some understanding in respect to a division of the Trade than risk such evils by entering the lists of opposition in which case it would naturally follow that we should give up the Trade of the Coast and confine ourselves to the interior taking in our supplies and bringing out our returns by the safest and easiest pass that might be found in the mountain. . . .

Simpson’s first inspection of the Columbia Department was an epochal affair, and impressive in the energy displayed by Simpson. It took him only 84 days to get from York Factory to the mouth of the Columbia. For part of the journey he travelled with Dr. John McLoughlin, newly-appointed to the charge of the department. Along the way, Simpson scrutinised the company’s operations, never losing sight of the profit motive. He investigated a quicker and more economical route to the Pacific via the Saskatchewan River, Fort Assiniboine, and Athabasca Pass—a route that the Fort Vancouver-York Factory

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22Simpson to Andrew Colvile, 9 August 1824, HBRS 3, pp. 243-44.

23Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1824, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 65-108; fos. 97-98.

express brigade thereafter followed every spring and autumn (Map 5). At the Committee’s Punchbowl in the Rockies he shot a mountain goat and sheep and kept their skins in case they became "an object of Trade worthy of our attention;" as an experiment he ate the mountain goat, the flesh of which he described as "tough." He asked John McLeod, in charge of Kamloops, to consider opening a trade in swan skins and quills, and instructed him to depend less on imported provisions and more on fish, game, and horseflesh.

As he worked his way to the coast he grew increasingly wrathful at the dormant commercial and agricultural opportunities around him. "If my information is correct," he wrote in October 1824, "the Columbia Deptmt from the Day of its origin to the present hour has been neglected, shamefully mismanaged and a scene of the most wasteful extravagance and the most unfortunate dissention." Regarding the Spokane District he wrote:

The good people of Spokane District and I believe of the interior of the Columbia generally have for a length of time shewn an extraordinary prediliction for European provisions without sufficiently considering the enormous price. . . . I do not know any part of the Country on the East side of the Mountain that affords such resources in the way of living as Spokane District; there is an abundance of Salmon besides a variety of other Fish to be had quite at home, plenty of Potatoes if trouble is taken to raise them, Game if required in short everything in the way of necessaries that an


27Simpson to John McLeod, 1 November 1824, McLeod Collection, NAC; see also Simpson to G&C, 10 March 1825, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 109-48; 119. "I have shipped three Swan skins and 10 lb. Isinglass as Samples to see what they would Sell for and to know if worth Collecting." McLoughlin to G&C, 6 October 1825, HBRS 4, p. 16.

28Simpson to G&C, 27 October 1824, Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, p. 43; HBRS 3, p. xxxiii.
Map 5. Columbia Department Trails and Brigade Routes, 1840.
inhabitant of the Indian Country has a right to look for; why therefore squander large sums of money in this manner?29

On his way down the Columbia River he gave some thought to the fur trade of the Snake River. "If properly managed," he told the Governor and Committee, "no question exists that it [the Snake] would yield handsome profits as we have convincing proof that the country is a rich preserve of Beaver and which for political reasons we should endeavour to destroy as fast as possible."30 This would give American fur traders on the Missouri no incentive to enter the watershed of the Columbia River.

Simpson spent a long winter (1824-1825) in Fort George at the mouth of the Columbia, part of the time going over the accounts with Archibald McDonald.31 This gave him ample opportunity to devise policies and vent his spleen—inseparable activities for Simpson. "Every thing appears to me in the Columbia on too extended a scale except the trade," he wrote. He thought the department could be reduced from 136 to seventy-six men and that the number of pieces sent upriver from Fort George could be reduced from 645 to 200; many were "superfluous and unnecessary." He found Fort George wanting as a fur trade post. "The Establishment of Fort George is a large pile of buildings covering about an acre of ground well stockaded, and protected by flanking Bastions with two 18 Pounders, mounted in front, and having altogether an air or appearance of Grandeur, and Consequence which does not become or is not at all suitable to an Indian Trading Post." He thought that

29Simpson to G&C, 10 March 1825, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 109-48; 119. The following discussion (eight pages) is based on this letter, which also forms the basis of Merk’s Fur Trade and Empire. Merk, however, used an incomplete draft of the letter.

30Simpson to Governor and Committee, 27 October 1824, in Merk Fur Trade and Empire, p. 46 and HBRS 3, p. xxxiii.

31Maclachlan, "The Founding of Fort Langley," p. 16.
the excess goods at Fort George—inaherited from the North West Company—could be traded to the Spanish in California or to the Sandwich Islands. He met with the captain and crew of the William & Ann, and learned from them the state of the fur trade on the North West Coast.

Deciding that Fort George was unsuitable as a depot because of its poor potential as a farm, he ordered the construction of a new depot some hundred miles up the Columbia at a place known to the fur traders as Jolie Prairie which was, Simpson said, "... an admirable situation for a Farm where we expect to raise all the Corn required for the Coasting trade." He thought that a very large farm could be made there, and that thirty-five of the seventy men at Fort George could be spared for the new post. Fort Vancouver was operational before the end of 1825.

The North West Coast presented problems. Knowledgeable Northern Council members, many of them old North-westers, had told Simpson that the "hostile character of the Natives" would prevent any northward extension of the company's coastal activities. The Russians, they warned Simpson, kept their Native customers only by "force of arms." The North West Coast was, after all, the theatre of the Maritime fur trade, and the memory of the destruction of the Pacific Fur Company's fur trade vessel Tonquin and her crew by the

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32 On inheriting the Columbia Department, Hudson's Bay Company employees had found an exotic assortment of trade goods at Fort George including ostrich feathers, gold lace, embroidered damask, and artificial flowers. The North West Company had imported these from Canton for the California trade. Keith, "Adventure to the Columbia," p. 31, n. 34. In 1823 J. D. Cameron was ordered by the Northern Council to ship to England "such unsaleable & superfluous articles of British manufacture as he may judge necessary . . . if necessary re-shipped for Hudsons Bay." HBR S 3, p. 53.

33 Pelly to Canning, 9 December 1825, in Klotz, Certain Correspondence, pp. 9-12; 12.

34 Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1824, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 65-108; fo. 69; see also Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company, p. 136.
people of Clayoquot was still fresh. The William & Ann’s 1825 voyage to the North West Coast was simply a preliminary reconnaissance of a region that was still almost entirely unknown to the land-based fur traders. Botanist John Scouler made it clear on this voyage that he was revisiting a coast that Vancouver had mapped between 1792 and 1794: indeed Vancouver’s maps remained the only existing guides to the coast until the new hydrographic surveys of the 1850s.35

Simpson did not share the view that the coastline north of the Columbia was forbidden territory owing to hostile Native people, and made plans to extend the trade to that area. "The Country north of this place as far as the Southern Shore of Pugets Sound has been visited occasionally but in consequence of a serious affray which took place with the natives some years ago and not yet amicably settled our intercourse with that quarter has since then been limited. . . ." He lamented the poor quality of maps and charts of the coast, the most recent of which were done by Vancouver thirty years before, and which omitted such important features as the Fraser River. "Frazer’s River we knew little about until this season as neither Cook Vancouver nor any of the Traders on this Coast take any notice thereof." Simpson thought this "a disgrace to the whole concern," and a few days after his arrival at Fort George sent a party under James McMillan to gain a knowledge of "Frazer’s River and the adjacent country"36 (See Map 7).

35"And I further say that previous to AD 1846 the only existing guides to the mariner of the NW Pacific Coast were the Charts of Captain Vancouver RN. . . ." Captain James Cooper, 1871 boundary question evidence, in Cooper file. Gibson (Otter Skins, p. 25) writes that Vancouver’s charts would assist trading vessels only until the 1820s.

36"Rather than allow an other Season pass without obtaining a knowledge of the Coast natives & resources of that part of the Country (our ignorance of which after being established on the Coast upwards of Fourteen years being a disgrace to the whole concern). . . ." Simpson to G&C, 1824, quoted in Ormsby, British Columbia, p. 55.
Map 6. The Pacific Rim, 1840.
Map 7. Lower Fraser, Lower Columbia and Puget Sound, 1843.
This voyage of exploration represented the first attempt to assert the company's commercial presence on the mainland coast of what is now British Columbia: the William & Ann had stayed on the North West Coast and only once ventured into the Strait of Juan de Fuca. McMillan left Fort George on 19 November 1824 with forty-two men and a copy of "Vancouver's Chart." Fittingly, one of McMillan's men had been with Simon Fraser on his descent of the river in 1808. McMillan travelled up the eastern shore of Puget Sound with the San Juan and Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island in the distance. Simpson reported their main findings to the Governor and Committee. "The channel which divides Vancouver's Island from the main land they found studded with Islands," he wrote. Vancouver had missed the Fraser, Simpson said, because its entrance to the Gulf of Georgia is "covered with high Grass and Willows which gives it the appearance of an extended Marsh or Swamp . . . the only indication of a large River emptying itself at this place is the freshness of the Water and the numerous trunks and Roots of Trees strewed along and sticking on this Shoal." Captain Vancouver was their guide for the coast itself. One of the explorers, John Work, identified a promontory as "Vancouver's Point Roberts. . . . Where we are now encamped is the Birch Bay of Vancouver."37

McMillan learned that the Native name for the river was "Cowitchen." He and his party kept an eye open for possible provisions and cultivable land. "The soil appeared to be rich and fertile;" the explorers found "good situations for the site of an Establishment in every reach and many beautiful clear spots adapted for agricultural purposes." They learned

"that the Country abounded with Deer and that Beaver were numerous." The Natives of the Fraser River spoke of the Kamloops Indians as their neighbours, Simpson said, and McMillan was told that all the way to Kamloops the Fraser was "a fine large bold stream and not barred by dangerous Rapids or falls." The Native people had not objected to their presence.

The exploration held many possibilities to Simpson, who considered it "most flattering & satisfactory." He was convinced that the Fraser would prove to be a northern version of the Columbia. "In short Frazer's River appears to be the grand Communication from the Coast with all the Establishments on this side of the Mountain." No time, he said, should be lost in exploring the country between the Fraser and Babine rivers so as to make the Fraser the main route between the coast and New Caledonia. New Caledonia could be outfitted from the Pacific instead of York Factory at a saving of thirty men. He also saw that a Fraser River post could become, owing to its central location and easy access to the interior, the "principal depot" not just for New Caledonia but also for the posts on the lower Columbia River. "All the Posts of New Caledonia would be outfitted" from the new depot, "likewise those of Thompson's River, Spokane, Fort Nez Perces, Flat Head, and Coutenais, also Fort George. . . ." "Coasting craft would receive their outfits and deliver their returns" at such a depot. He concluded that the coasting trade held out advantageous prospects if "conducted with enterprise spirit and activity from Fraser River," and that "important savings and Gains" would result from "transferring the principal Depot from the Columbia to the
same place and making but one Department of the whole west side the Mountains to be outfitted from that Depot. . . ."\(^{38}\)

Simpson was very interested in the coast. He thought it possessed an unrealised commercial potential:

"The riches of this Coast, and its interior Country, are unquestionably worth contending for, and if the British Government does take that interest in the Fur Trade which it is wonted to do in every other branch of its widely extended Commerce it must as a matter of course fall into the hands of the Honble Company and if the business is properly managed, and sufficiently extended I make bold to say that it can not only be made to rival but to yield double the profit that any other part of North America does for the Amount of Capital employed therein; but in order to turn it to the best advantage New Caledonia must be tacked to this Department, and the Coasting Trade must be carried on in conjunction with the inland business.

Simpson’s vision of extending the business on the coast looked both west and east (Map 6). He saw the Fraser River depot as a place "from whence a Vessel for China would sail annually with the returns." Without acknowledging the source, he resurrected the "China Trade" envisaged by Dalrymple, Mackenzie, and others, even to the extent of hoping for a "privilege" or "indulgence" (a license) from the East India Company. He considered that his plan would benefit the company and that it would also "become an important branch of Commerce in a National point of view."

His scheme worked as follows: the Hudson’s Bay Company would send its Columbia Department furs direct from the Fraser River to Canton on its own vessel every two years.

\(^{38}\)The Governor and Committee were so impressed with the rediscovery of the Fraser that they informed the government. "I annex extracts from Mr McMillan’s report and as this Country appears to be rich in Fur bearing Animals we have it in contemplation to form permanent Establishments therein next Summer, to push our discoveries to the Northward both in Land and on the Coast, and to embark a considerable Capital in endeavouring to secure to Great Britain the benefits arising from an exchange of British Manufacturers for the produce of that Country with its numerous inhabitants." Pelly to Canning, 9 December 1825, quoted in Klotz, *Certain Correspondence*, pp. 9-11; p. 11.
After depositing the furs with the East India Company agent in Canton, the captain would invest the proceeds in a cargo of China produce. Meanwhile the Governor and Committee would send a cargo of British goods direct from London to Lima (or Acapulco) on another vessel. The Canton vessel would then proceed to Lima with its China goods. After selling the China produce to the Spanish, and picking up the trade goods sent from London, the vessel would return to the Fraser River, trading on the Spanish coast (Mexico and California) on the way. Thus the company needed a license from the East India Company and two ocean-going vessels: one to commute between London and Lima, the other to perform a circuit through the Pacific Ocean. Simpson thought a vessel of 150 tons appropriate for this Pacific trade.39

A smaller vessel would do for the coasting trade. And, in a piece of foresight, Simpson stated that salmon and spars from the west coast could be sent along with the furs to Canton; he wrote that Native labour was so inexpensive that he had bought thirty-five salmon at Fort George for seven pence. He thought that agricultural provisions might also become "an article of Trade from this Coast if a market could be found." "Your Honors will see the propriety of conducting the business on a more enlarged scale," he said. He thought that this "extended scheme" would cost £10,000, principally in salaries, freight, and charter and purchase of vessels, but would be worthwhile because "settling a new country" required money. Enterprising men were needed for the task; the rest, he said, could go back over the Rockies.

Simpson believed that the Columbia Department, "even on the limited scale proposed," would yield a profit of about £5,000—that is if the "present Establishments of

39On this scheme see also Cullen, *Fort Langley*, p. 15.
Columbia proper" were maintained; if New Caledonia were attached to the Columbia; and if
the company embarked on the Coasting Trade and built new posts on the coast north of the
Columbia. "Whether we are assailed by opposition or not I think there is a Field for
Commerce on this side the Mountain which has been much neglected and which if properly
cultivated would become an object of the first importance to the Honble Hudson’s Bay
Company."

The plan, then, served many ends. Simpson estimated that furs would reach the
Canton market eighteen to twenty-four months sooner than if sent to London and overland
through Russia. He thought that his proposal promised "a handsome recompense for our
labours and exertions;" he was so enthusiastic and confident of success that he offered to
trade his fixed salary from the Hudson’s Bay Company for an interest in the China trade
scheme. He proposed to spend one or two winters on the west side and the whole of the
winter of 1826-27 conducting the plan. He asked the Governor and Committee to send a
vessel out immediately so that he himself could, in November 1826, accompany it to Canton
and South America.

The scheme depended on the willingness of the East India Company to grant the
Hudson’s Bay Company a license to carry furs to Canton, and China produce to South
America, and on the navigability of the Fraser River between the coast and New Caledonia.
Though neither was possible, Simpson’s scheme indirectly bore fruit. The company soon
expanded its coastal operations along the lines advocated by Simpson, and this included a
post at the mouth of the Fraser River (1827). And in 1833, the Hudson’s Bay Company
established an agency in the Sandwich Islands which effectively took the place of Canton in
Simpson’s scheme. Eventually the company did move its depot to the Gulf of Georgia
region—though to Fort Victoria (1843), not Fort Langley—and the company did eventually
replace the Columbia with the Fraser as the "grand Communication" between the coast and interior.

On his departure, in March 1825, Simpson left John McLoughlin in charge of the Columbia Department. Absent in name from Simpson's 1824-25 despatches, McLoughlin was charged with implementing the full range of Simpson's reforms and policies west of the Rockies. He was joined by Peter Skene Ogden and Samuel Black, making for a managerial trio that ensured the continuation of North West Company practices and perhaps spirit. Although possessed of great energy and entrepreneurial acumen, McLoughlin wrote a hurried and sometimes illegible letter; he was, Simpson noted, "wanting in System & regularity." The early part of McLoughlin and Simpson's relationship was cordial and productive.

On Simpson's journey back across the continent he removed Spokane House to a new location on the Columbia River, just above the Kettle Falls portage. "We selected a beautiful point on the south side," he wrote in April 1825, "an excellent Farm can be made at this place where as much Grain and potatoes may be raised as well would feed all the Natives of the Columbia and sufficient number of Cattle and Hogs to supply his Majesty's

40 On Simpson's decision to assign McLoughlin to the Columbia see Sampson, McLoughlin's Business Correspondence, pp. xxviii-xxx.

41 "Upon the Pacific slope were concentrated the hopes of the London Committee, the minute and vigorous care of Simpson, the energies of the two most intransigent Northwesterners, [Ogden and Black] and the determination of the most purposefully moderate of the former wintering partners [McLoughlin]." Rich, HBC, Vol. 3, p. 574.

42 Quoted in Alice M. Johnson, "System and Regularity," The Beaver 291 (Summer 1960), pp. 36-39.
Navy with Beef and Pork." He named the new post Fort Colvile after a member of the London committee.  

Between Simpson's departure in the spring of 1825 and his return in the fall of 1828, Hudson's Bay Company officials in London and in North America concentrated on the following priorities: negotiating with the East India Company for direct access to the Canton market, attaching New Caledonia to the Columbia Department, starting farms, completing the new depot at Fort Vancouver, extending the coastal fur trade, opening a post on the Fraser River, extending the fur trade south of the Columbia, and finding a market in California. Simpson had the entire backing of the Governor and Committee for his Columbia plans, and he constantly reminded them of their seriousness.

The only aspects of the plan out of Simpson's control were the tantalizing China adventure and the impassable Fraser canyon. The Governor and Committee responded to Simpson's request to open a direct trade with Canton by contracting with the East India Company to transport and sell Columbia Department furs in Canton and Singapore. This, however, was as close as Simpson's ambitious Canton adventure got to fruition. Like the North West Company's earlier version of the plan, it failed owing to the East India Company's refusal to allow the Hudson's Bay Company to carry a return cargo from China,

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43Simpson to G&C, 14 April 1825, quoted in Nute, "A Botanist at Fort Colville." Later, Simpson called it "an advantageous situation both as regards Trade and the means of living." Simpson to G&C, 20 August 1826, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 238-89; 245.

44HBCA search file, "Fort Colvile."

45"The more we look into the prospect submitted for your consideration, the greater anxiety we feel that it should be adopted, anticipating great benefits to arise from embarking with spirit, enterprize and perseverance on this fine field which the west side of the Continent presents to our view." Simpson to G&C, August 1825, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 155-208; 195.
and to the unsuitability of Columbia furs in both the Canton and Singapore markets. The Cantonese wanted sea otter pelts, but these were now scarce on the coast.

In 1824 the Governor and Committee convinced the East India Company to carry a test shipment of Columbia pelts from London to Canton—thus bypassing the overland route through Russia. Simpson approved of the arrangement with "that powerful and highly respectable body" because he still considered that "the China Market appears to us to present an outlet for the Compys Trade on the North West Coast."46 Five months later the Governor and Committee reported the failure of the shipment owing to the great variety of coastal pelts, which had not found a willing buyer in Canton. Because of this they decided not to send a vessel directly to Fort Vancouver and Canton, "more especially," they wrote, "as there is no probability that the East India Company would allow us to take a return Cargo from thence. They seem to be liberally and well disposed to the British Fur Trade, but are tenacious and jealous of their exclusive right to the China trade."47

46Simpson to G&C, 1 September 1825, HBCA D.4/88, fos. 77-78. As Simpson said at about the same time, "The NWCo. had been in the habit of sending their Furs from the Columbia River . . . thro' the medium of an American House and American Shipping to Canton paying heavy Freights & Commissions to the Americans. This plan the HBCo. are desirous to discontinue and to form some arrangement with the East India Company. . . ." Simpson's despatch appendix A, on "The China Trade," HBRS 10, pp. 123-147. (Date?).

47G&C to Simpson, 23 February 1826, HBRS 10, p. 137.
Disappointed at the collapse of his elaborate scheme, Simpson pinned his faith on the Hudson’s Bay Company’s extension to the North West Coast where he believed sea otter to still be numerous. In September 1827 he wrote hopefully that "Now that the Trade of the Coast is becoming more extended, we shall be able to furnish a considerable quantity of Sea Otter Skins, an article, which we understand was some years ago in great demand in the Northern parts of China." Meanwhile the Governor and Committee had contracted with the East India Company to market fur in Canton and Singapore, but the shipment lost money, and in January 1828 they told Simpson that "it will be better for the Company to sell their Furs here [London], to those who can carry on such a Trade with the Chinese." On hearing this news, Simpson had no choice but to concur:

We are sorry to learn that the consignment to Singapore has not answered expectations, and are of opinion, from the result of the late shipments to China, that the Hon’ble Company are likely to do better by desposing of the returns at home to manufacturers, and shippers, than exporting on their own account, and we fear that the last contract which the East India Company had, was so unprofitable, that they are not likely to renew it.

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48Simpson expressed disappointment that the China Market did not promise "advantageous Sales for Beaver . . . under such circumstances it cannot be expected that the East India Company will renew their Contract . . ." Simpson to G&C, 20 August 1826, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 238-89; 248. Quite unfairly, Innis blamed the failure of the HBC’s Canton Adventure on the HBC’s commercial conservatism. "The Hudson’s Bay Company was equipped to take advantage of a large metropolitan market but not to participate in the complex and multifarious activities of numerous markets." (HBRS 3, p. lxxiii). Innis is wrong here; he knew next to nothing of the company’s Pacific markets after 1821. On these unprofitable shipments see also Galbraith, Hudson’s Bay Company, pp. 123-124 and Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 28.


51Simpson to G&C, 10 July 1828, HBCA D.4/92, fo. 25.
This marked the end of Simpson’s China scheme of 1825 and the end of Dalrymple’s older hope of forging a direct Pacific link between the Hudson’s Bay and East India companies.52

The company may have been powerless in Canton and Singapore, but its fur continued to dominate the London market, and it possessed the exclusive British license to the trade of the “continental shore” of the North West Coast. This meant that the company could build posts on land without the threat of British land-based competition. Their monopoly did not, however, extend to Russian and American trading competition. The Americans, unlike the Russians, traded principally at sea and at three harbours on the lengthy coast: Neah Bay (Cape Flattery), Nawitti (Shushartie Bay), and Kaigani (Dixon Entrance). They traded for fur which originated in New Caledonia and elsewhere in the interior, and they chased a rapidly dwindling number of sea otter pelts. They had diversified into the sandal wood trade of the Hawaiian Islands, and increasingly they supplied the Russians and Spanish with provisions in Alaska and California. Their seasonal rounds were accurately described by Simpson in 1828:

They are Chiefly outfitted from the United States, prepared for a three years cruise, and loaded with Trading Goods; at the Sandwich Islands they leave what is not required for the Trade of the first season, there get supplied with Provisions, proceed to the Coast and return at the close of the season with what they may have collected, such part of their returns as is adapted for the China Market is forwarded by any vessel going thither, consigned to their Agent at Canton, and such as is likely to meet a better market in the States is sent thither in like manner; this is repeated the second year and the third they proceed to China filling up with Sandal wood; then return either to the States with a cargo of China produce, or to the Spanish or Russian Settlements, with Goods, which they barter either with the residents at the Settlements

52“After the union . . . in 1821 . . . an attempt was made to open a fur trade direct to Canton in conjunction with the East India Company; but, as no union between that body and the new HBC had taken place, their divided interests were fatal. The fur traders were allowed to carry beaver to Canton, but not carry tea away, and the long voyage home in ballast ate up all profits on the fur. Dalrymple’s own design was wrecked by the jealousy of his successors in his own company.” Glover, "Hudson Bay to the Orient," p. 51.
or with the shipping frequenting those Ports and such supplies for the Fur Trade, as cannot be obtained in this manner, are sent on freight from the United States either to the Sandwich Islands or to the Spanish Settlements as may be agreed on, where they are deposited until called for.\textsuperscript{53}

The fur trade, judging from the Americans' continuing interest, appeared profitable, as did potential new export trades on the southern part of the coast.

Before anything else the company had to put vessels on the coast to learn the tricks of the trade. The first, the \textit{William & Ann}, was sent in July 1824 by the Governor and Committee on a reconnaissance to the coast. "Our object in dispatching the \textit{William & Ann} thus early, is, that as soon as she has delivered her outward bound cargo she should proceed to the Northward to ascertain if there are good harbours on the coast, and whether a beneficial trade may not be carried on with the Natives. The principal point to which we have directed Capt. Hanwells attention is the Portland Canal."\textsuperscript{54}

John Scouler, the naturalist on board, made a series of remarkable observations on the coast that indicate how recently and strongly Captain Vancouver’s presence had been felt. The \textit{William & Ann} arrived at Observatory Inlet on 1 July 1825. "The Indians appeared to have some traditions of C. Vancouver," he wrote. Scouler, who had a copy of Vancouver’s \textit{Voyages} with him, wrote in his journal that "they were at some pains to make us understand that a great many snows ago two vessels had anchored in the place where we are now."\textsuperscript{55}

The vessel was rediscovering a coast that had been out of official eyes since Vancouver’s

\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Simpson to G&C, 10 July 1828, in HBRS 3, p. lxx.}

\textsuperscript{54}\textit{G&C to Chief Factors in Charge of Columbia District, 22 July 1824, HBRS 4, p. 2. [see cards 6 Oct 1825 and 1 July 1825].}

visit of 1792-94. Putting back to sea, the William & Ann visited Nootka and entertained Chief Maquinna:

Before venturing on board the old man inquired from what country we had come, & on being informed that we were English, he & his people clapped their hands & seemed highly delighted. On showing him a portrait of Mr Mears he soon recognised his old friend, & had not forgot the Spaniards or C. Vancouver. When we showed him the portraits of himself & Calleum, he easily found out the unfortunate chief & told us that Komkela was dead for many years. In the evening he & his people left us, much pleased with the reception they had experienced.56

"His tribe indeed is now seldom visited by traders, on account of the hostile character he acquired, and the poverty of the place, yielding very few furs."57

Simpson was not pleased with Captain Hanwell's 1825 tour of the coast. When he heard that Hanwell had stayed out at sea and had done little trading, he stormed that the company still knew nothing of "either Harbours, Rivers, Trade or Country." The Captain had "rarely ventured within a sufficient distance of the land." "Prudence in moderation is commendable but is an evil when carried to an extreme and we certainly think that Captn. Hanwell's prudence on that voyage amounted to pusillanimity."58

56Scouler, "Dr John Scouler's Journal," pp. 192; 194-95. In another version, Scouler wrote "This chief well remembers Mr Mears and Captain Vancouver, and even speaks with gratitude of them. Maquina, a well-known character, is a stout healthy old man." Scouler and Douglas, "Notices Respecting Mr Scouler's and Mr Douglas's Recent Voyage," p. 380.

57Scouler and Douglas, "Notices Respecting Mr Scouler's and Mr Douglas's Recent Voyage," p. 380. The Hudson's Bay Company was serious about the coast trade. Hanwell traded a fowling piece near Nootka and sent it to London where it was examined in the company's pattern room and replicas made. The Governor and Committee sent twenty-five such guns to the coast in 1826 and asked McLoughlin how many to send out in 1827. G&C to Simpson, 2 June 1826, HBRS 4, p. 42, n. 1.

58Simpson to G&C, 20 August 1826, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 238-89; 241-43. For the dates of the William & Ann's visits see Howay, "A List," p. 44; for Simpson's opinion of Hanwell see also Gibson, Otter Pelts, p. 65.
In the spring of 1826 McLoughlin gave Captain Hanwell a wide assortment of trade goods "so as to discover those best adapted for the trade," and he instructed the vessel’s Indian Trader (the person in charge of the trade in fur), Alexander McKenzie, "to undersell any Trader he found on the Coast." He gave Hanwell a "list of all places we know are frequented by Traders," with orders to visit them "so as to spread among the Coasters the news of our Entering the Trade . . . we can afford to undersell them by carrying on this business in conjunction with an Extensive Inland Trade." Echoing Simpson, McLoughlin stressed the national importance of the undertaking. He believed that the Coasting Trade "can be made a profitable Business and . . . we can Secure it to our Country." He recommended that officers in charge of New Caledonia send people down the rivers to the coast to obtain a knowledge of the region, but this did not happen.59

As a result of Hanwell’s poor performance, the company hired Simpson’s capable cousin, Aemilius Simpson, to conduct the coasting trade.60 Formerly a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, Simpson was sent to the coast in 1826, and in the spring of 1827 took command of the brigantine Cadboro, which had just arrived from England.61 He was closely involved

59McLoughlin to G&C, 6 October 1825, HBRS 4, pp. 2-3; 18-19.

60Regarding the Cadboro: "... Lt. Simpson will be enabled to open that branch of trade without delay." GS to G&C, 29 October 1826, HBCA A.12/12, fos. 83-85. McLoughlin later complained that "our Naval Gentlemen were unacquinted with the coast and had never seen an Indian till they came here." McLoughlin to G&C, 28 May 1834, HBRS 4, p. 119. On Simpson’s hiring see also Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 65-7.

61On the Cadboro see also Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 298, as well as Peter Skene Ogden, Traits of American Indian Life and Character; Walbran, British Columbia Coast Names, p. 76. In 1825-26 two vessels had been built for the coasting trade at Fort Vancouver—the Broughton (30 tons) and the Vancouver (60 tons), but Aemilius Simpson thought only the Broughton "... appears sufficiently strong for the purpose of making Trips along the coast during the Summer months." A. Simpson to McLoughlin, 20 March 1827, HBRS 4, p. 29, n. 1.
with the coast trade, with the establishment of forts Langley and Nass (Simpson), and with
the opening of the California trade before his death in 1831.

Captain Simpson's first job was to establish Fort Langley. After picking up a land
party in Puget Sound under James McMillan he guided the Cadboro up the Fraser River on
22 June 1827—the first European vessel to enter the river. The men were put ashore on
the last day of July. The post was named after Thomas Langley, a member of the
company's London committee. George Simpson wrote that after lending the new fort
protection for three weeks, the vessel was to "proceed to the northward touching at all the
Ports and villages between that and Norfolk Sound, likewise touching at the Russian
Establishments. . . ." This indeed happened: in September 1827, Captain Simpson and
Alexander McLeod explored northward as far as Johnstone Strait, but American traders had
"scoured" the coast before their arrival. McLoughlin said it would be necessary for the
coasting vessel to leave Fort Vancouver every spring if this situation were to be avoided.

Simpson founded Fort Langley to replace Fort Vancouver as the Columbia
Department's new depot (he feared that serious American competition on the Columbia

62Walbran, British Columbia Coast Names, p. 76. See also "The Establishment of Fort
Langley," in Cullen, Fort Langley, pp. 17-21 and Maclachlan, "The Founding of Fort Langley,"
pp. 13-14. See Aemilius Simpson, "Log of the Cadboro," HBCA C.1/218 (cited in Maclachlan,
p. 14).

63Cullen, Fort Langley, p. 16; Maureen Korman, "The First Fort Langley," Canada West
7:3 (September 1991), pp. 84-91; 88.

64Simpson to G&C, 20 August 1826, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 238-89; 241-42.

65Simpson to G&C, 10 July 1828, HBCA D.4/92, fo. 67.

66"Indeed we can never do any thing in that branch of the business till we have the Outfit
a year in advance so as to be able to dispatch the Vessel on it in March, & another disadvantage
under which we labour is the Vessel [Cadboro] being too small." McLoughlin to G&C, 10 July
1828, HBRS 4, p. 61.
"would be attended with a ruinous sacrifice of money") and because he needed a central land-based fort to carry the trading war to the Americans on the coast. In July 1827, Simpson wrote that "the advantages we shall possess over Strangers from the facilities that our Establishments on the coast will afford should secure to the Honble Coy the command of that branch of the business." Natural factors, however, made Simpson cautious, and in 1826 he wrote that until the "navigation of Frazer's River between the coast and New Caledonia is thoroughly known and ascertained to be practicable we cannot venture to make Fort Langley the principal Depot on that Coast."

The fur trade itself, naturally, was not neglected at Fort Langley, though the river was inhabited by an apparently indolent people who were indifferent to hunting. Native inhabitants had exploited the resources of the river and ocean instead of trying to adapt to a mountainous land lacking a large population of fur-bearing animals. In January 1828 James MacMillan, one of Fort Langley's builders, reported to a friend at Norway House that the post's returns were "not very flattering," amounting to only about 1100 beaver and otter skins:

The winter here this year is very severe and would not be thought too mild even at Your own quarters. I don't know if this is always the case or not here. And in such Cold our naked Indians cannot go about in Search of Skins were they so inclined but they are very lazy and independent the Sea and river Supply their wants

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67It had "the double object of securing a share of the Coasting Trade which had previously been monopolized by the Americans, and of possessing a Settlement on the Coast which would answer the purpose of a Depot, in the event of our being under the necessity of withdrawing from Fort Vancouver." Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, in HBRS 10, p. 41. Desertion of freeman had prevented the establishment of the post in 1826: HBRS 3, p. lxix.

68Simpson to McLoughlin, 10 April 1825, HBRS 3, pp. lxv-lxvi; Simpson to G&C, 25 July 1827, HBCA D.4/90, fo?

69Simpson to G&C, 20 August 1826, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 238-89; 241-42.
plentifully—we make out to live pretty well, fresh salmon in fish season, and can Procure plenty of Dried for the winter. Sturgeon can be had at all times, and the forest gives us an Occasional Red deer now and then. We could trade at the door of our fort I suppose a million of dried Salmon if we chose enough to feed all the people of Ruperts Lands.⁷⁰

Disappointed with the fur trade, McMillan initiated export trades in salmon and timber.

Simpson descended the Fraser River in 1828 to ascertain its worth as a route to the interior. However, his perilous exploration confirmed Fraser’s finding that the river was not navigable above the Falls ("I should consider the passage down, to be certain Death, in nine attempts out of Ten. . . ."),⁷¹ and convinced him finally that Fort Langley could never replace Fort Vancouver as depot for the Columbia Department. Yet Simpson found other reasons to maintain the post. Its access to the Straits, the Gulf, and the Sound convinced Simpson that the post "will become a valuable acquisition to the Business, and that in co-operation with the Vessel to be employed in transporting its outfits and returns, will secure the Trade of the Straits of St. Jean de Fucca and inland of Vancouver Island." Fort Langley’s vast district, which included all of the Gulf of Georgia and Puget Sound, and the Fraser from its mouth to Boston Bar, was enumerated at 4,160 men in 1830; in 1829 Simpson had estimated the population surrounding Fort Langley at 5,000.⁷² He thought the

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⁷⁰McMillan to John McLeod, 21 January 1828, McLeod papers, NAC. C.f. Simpson: ". . . it appears that the country in the neighbourhood of Fraser’s River is not rich in Beaver, yet the few Indians brought to us considering the indolent character of the natives and the ample means their country and Coast afford, in regard to the necessaries and comforts of life rendering them perfectly independent of our supplies, bears evidence that Beaver are scattered throughout. . . ." Simpson to G&C, 10 July 1828, HBCA D.4/92, fos. 66-67.

⁷¹"Frazer’s River, can no longer be thought of as a practicable communication with the interior." Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, in HBR 10, p. 38-9.

⁷²Simpson estimated the population at 5,000 in 1829 and in 1830 McDonald enumerated it at 4,160. Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, in HBR 10, p. 42; McDonald to Governor and Council, Northern Department, 25 February 1830, HBCA D.4/123, fos. 66d-72 (reprinted in
post’s fur trade would improve over time. He ordered Fort Langley to be reduced in size, and he attached the post to the "Coasting Trade."

Simpson’s interest in the coasting trade north of Fort Langley was mainly to drive the Americans away so as to prevent them from obtaining furs from the interior. "The Country situated to the Northward of Frasers River, up to Lat. 54, is beyond all doubt valuable from the number of land Skins that find their way to the coast . . .," he wrote in 1829; "The greater part of the Land Furs, is got at the Port of Nass, entrance of Simpson’s [Nass] River, and they find their way from the unexplored parts of New Caledonia. . ." Therefore he decided to establish a post at "Port of Nass," centrally-located on Portland Inlet, and in 1828 he outlined the strategic and commercial importance of this location:

A strong establishment at this point would collect the Land Furs that come down from the Northern parts of New Caledonia which forms the principal returns made by the Americans on this coast, it would likewise enable us to settle the Country to the eastward of the Russian Boundary Line running parallel with the Coast which is now

Cullen, Fort Langley, pp. 83-88.

73"There are a good many Beaver in the immediate vicinity of Fort Langley, and we have reason to believe that except in the very mountainous parts, the interior country is rich. Its permanent inhabitants, however, being few in number, are intimidated by the large and powerful bands that come to the River from Vancouver Island [and] the Coast, for the purpose of fishing, and as yet venture only to Steal a visit to us during the absence of their more warlike neighbours: they have begun, however, to supply themselves with our Traps, which they are surprised to find so much better adapted for taking Beaver than those of their own rude workmanship, and give us a few skins in exchange for Arms, Blankets, etc., so that as their wants increase, which they will soon do from an acquaintance with the use of our supplies, their Trade will become more valuable to us." Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, in HBRS 10, p. 42.

74Simpson reasoned that the post "therefore may now be considered as forming a branch of the Coasting Trade." Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, in HBRS 10, p. 41. McDonald promptly "reduced his establishment" to "one Clerk, Twelve men and two Apprentice Boys . . . consequently every speculation upon Salmon, Timber, Extension of trade must be given up." McDonald to McLoughlin, 23 October 1829, HBCA B.113/a/3.

75Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, in HBRS 10, pp. 81-82.
drained by their Establishment at Norfolk Sound, and in co-operation with our Shipping would in the course of 2 or 3 Years compel the Americans to relinquish the contest. 76

This post (Fort Simpson) was not built until 1831.

By 1828, then, the basic structure of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s North West Coast trade was in place, even if there were discouragements. "From all I am able to collect," Simpson wrote in March 1829, "it appears that the Fur Trade of this coast, is by no means so extended as we were led to suppose; the average Annual returns of the Americans for some years past, not exceeding 600 Sea Otters, and also about 6000 Beaver and Land Otters." And he continued:

Altho' the Fur Trade of this coast, is not so extensive as it has been represented, it would nevertheless be of great value to the Honble. Compy., if unrestricted by Opposition; indeed it is the Land Skins of our interior Country, that renders it all worth following, as the Marine Furs, form a very small proportion of the returns. . . . 77

Elsewhere, despite the fact that the Fraser was not navigable, Simpson proceeded with his plans to unite New Caledonia and Columbia districts and to outfit New Caledonia from the coast. As he put it in 1825, "There is a great Field for extension of Trade in this part of the Country but while it continued to be outfitted from York Depot it was impossible for us to reap the fruits thereof as nearly the whole year round was occupied in transport." 78 This plan was approved by the Northern Council in June 1825; and by August 1826 New Caledonia district was part of the Columbia Department for the purposes of supply and

76Simpson to William Smith, 17 November 1828, HBRS 4, p. 95 n.1.

77Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, in HBRS 10, pp. 78; 80.

78HBRS 3, p. 115.
In 1828, New Caledonia and Columbia accounts were merged into "one complete set" for transmission to York Factory.

Meanwhile, the fur trade of Fort Vancouver had dwindled to a minor activity by 1829, when Simpson wrote that:

The Indian Trade of this Establishment has I am concerned to say, fallen off . . . the returns being, in 1825 about 3700 Beaver, in 1826, 3200 & in 1827—3000 . . . this can be ascribed only, to the gradual decline of the Fur bearing race; which in our immediate neighbourhood amounts to extinction, and had not great exertion been used at a distance from the Establishment, our returns would by this time barely defray the Expenses of an ordinary Trading Post. There is no prospect of amendment at this place, indeed, the regular Trade must as a whole continue to fall off. . . .

This put added pressure on the company to find other sources of wealth.

To the south, McLoughlin extended the fur trade on the Columbia and its tributaries.

To offset the scarcity of furs on the coast and to keep American trappers at a distance, Simpson and McLoughlin mounted a massive fur-hunting offensive on the southern tributaries of the Columbia, especially the Snake, and down the coast as far as San Francisco Bay. The Snake Country, Simpson wrote in 1825, was "a rich preserve of Beaver and which

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79 Ormsby, British Columbia, p. 60; Simpson to G&C, 20 August 1826, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 238-89; 245. Gibson gives the date of amalgamation as 1827: Farming the Frontier, p. 18. See also Cullen, "Outfitting New Caledonia," p. 234.

80 In July 1828 the Northern Council resolved that the "annual accounts of the Columbia Department including the section of New Caledonia be made up in one complete set, and not as heretofore in two distinct sets, and they be forwarded under the charge of the Columbia Accountant p. Express Canoe sufficiently early to be at Edmonton on or before the 10th May." HBR 3, p. 214. See also Mary Cullen, "Outfitting New Caledonia 1821-58," in Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray, Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 231-51.

81 Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, quoted in HBR 10, pp. 68-69.
for political reasons we shall endeavour to destroy as fast as possible." On Simpson's
departure in the spring of 1825, McLoughlin declared war on fur-bearing animals south of
the Columbia. He and former North西部ers, Peter Skene Ogden, Alexander Ross, and Finan
McDonald, took up Simpson’s orders with a fanatical zeal. Their Iroquois hunters and other
freemen were, Simpson said, "the very scum of the country and generally . . . the most
unruly and troublesome gang to deal with in this or perhaps any other part of the
World. . . ." 83

The Americans could not compete with such a policy. The company systematically
routed American trappers who ventured west of the Rockies after 1825: Jedediah Smith,
Jackson, Sublette, Joshua Pilcher, the Missouri Fur Company, and General W. H. Ashley
were put out of business and driven back over the Rockies by the company. 84 The company
acquired control over a vast region. "The Snake Country," Ogden said in his "Snake
Country Report" for 1825-26, "is bounded on the North by the Columbia Waters on the
South by the Missourie, on the West by the Spanish Territo[ries] and the East by the
Saskatchewan Tribes." 85 The Snake River journals and correspondence read like battle
reports. "And in concluding remember Gentlemen we ought to get all we can from the south
side of the Columbia while it is in our power," McLoughlin ended a letter in August

82Simpson to G&C, c. 10 March 1825, quoted in HBRS 3, p. xxxiii. Parts of the southern
interior were very rich in fur. In August 1826, a band of Ogden’s trappers discovered "a
Country immensely rich in Beaver, more so than any they have ever seen before. . . ."
McLoughlin to Governor, Chief Factors and Chief Traders, 4 July 1826, McLeod Papers, NAC.

83Simpson is quoted in HBRS 3, p. xxxiii.

84HBRS 3, pp. lxviii-lxix. On the activities of these traders see Galbraith, Hudson's bay
Company, pp. 85-88; 96-98.

85Quoted in Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company, pp. 90-91.
In July of 1826, Simpson told McLoughlin that while the company had access to "the country to the southward of the Columbia... it is our interest to reap all the advantages we can for ourselves, and leave it in as bad a state as possible for our successors..." And a year later Simpson stated that:

> The greatest and best protection we can have from opposition is keeping the country closely hunted as the first step that the American Government will take towards Colonization is through their Indian Traders and if the country becomes exhausted in Fur bearing animals they can have no inducement to proceed thither. We therefore entreat that no exertions be spared to Trap every part of the country... The Snake Expedition we look to as a very prominent branch of our business and we wish by all means that it be kept constantly employed; even under all the disadvantages and misfortunes that have befallen it, the profits are most respectable, it moreover does much good in over-running and destroying that extended country south of the Columbia which is the greatest temptation to our opponents.

By 1828, the Snake River brigades were the chief source of Columbia Department profits. The company found other fur regions south of the Columbia. In the summer of 1826 Alexander McLeod led a trapping party to the Umpqua River, and in September he trapped and explored the country south of the river. His explorations were a preliminary to trading activities. In January 1827 he reached the Klamath River via the Umpqua and

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86 McLoughlin to Chief Factors and Chief Traders, Northern Factory, HBC, 10 August 1825, HBCA B.223/b/1, fo. 21. The following June he told his men to "work the Southern portion of the Country as hard as possible." McLoughlin to Connolly, Dease, and Black, 3 June 1826, HBCA B.223/b/2, fo. 13.

87 Simpson to McLoughlin, 10 July 1826, HBRS 3, p? n. 1.

88 Simpson to McLoughlin, 9 July 1827, HBRS 3, p. lxviii.

89 "[T]he posts on the Columbia were so meagre in their returns that the Snake expeditions were the chief source of profits." Rich, HBC, Vol. 3, p. 620.

90 "In 1821, getting hold in the West, the HBCo sent trapping and trading parties north, east, and south." Tolmie to James Swan, 27 March 1884, Swan Papers, UBC.
Siuslaw rivers. He traded on the coastal strip and in the river valleys south of Fort Vancouver, while the Snake brigades worked to the east. In September 1828 he left Fort Vancouver to explore the Buenaventura River. In 1829 he led the company’s first trapping expedition into the Sacramento Valley. McLeod, John Work, Michel Laframboise and their successors established an inland route between Fort Vancouver and San Francisco Bay later known as the Siskiyou Trail. It followed the Willamette, Umpqua, and Rogue ("Rouge") rivers, the Siskiyou Mountains, Klamath River, and the Sacramento Valley. The American explorer Fremont followed in McLeod and Ogden’s footsteps.

At the same time Hudson’s Bay Company vessels began to locate sources of trade on the coast south of the Columbia. In 1828 the Cadboro visited the "Spanish settlement of Monterrey" for supplies of beef and salt when Fort Vancouver was in short supply. George Simpson reported the trip to the Governor and Committee. "Lieut. Simpson seems to think that a profitable branch of trade might be opened with the Spanish Settlements in Salmon and Timber, which will be fully considered when I get to the Columbia." This, however, came later.

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91"Chief Trader McLeod with a small party has traced the coast to the southward of the Columbia about 120 miles and in that distance crossed three Rivers of considerable size in all of which he found vestiges of Beaver. . . ." Simpson to G&C, 21 June 1827, HBCA D.4/90, fo. 6.

92This information is derived from McLeod’s biography in HBRS 3, pp. 448-49.


95On the company’s Bonaventura expeditions and San Francisco business, see Lamb’s introduction to HBRS 7, pp. xviii-xxix.

96Simpson to G&C, 10 July 1828, HBCA D.4/92, fos. 68; 72-73.
To provision its various fur-trading expeditions McLoughlin created an agricultural oasis at Fort Vancouver. The success of the farm led Simpson to state in 1829 that "... never did a change of system, and a change of management, produce such obvious advantages in any part of the Indian country, as those which the present state of this Establishment in particular, and of the Columbia Department as a whole, at this moment exhibits."98

The company barely looked beyond the fur trade in the 1820s; Simpson’s energies were devoted to extending the fur trade over the vast spaces of the Columbia Department; fur remained the only export. The most important discovery of the 1820s was that, despite the riches of the Snake River and New Caledonia, Columbia Department fur was not of the best quality. The North West Company had learned this earlier. In some places the fur trade was defunct; in others, Native people knew little about hunting; salmon was the staple food everywhere on the coast. Even the sea otter trade, though still dominated by Americans, did not seem as promising as anticipated. Simpson remained hopeful: in 1826 he thought that in the long run it "cannot fail to do well and our views and plans connected therewith remain unaltered."99 And in 1827 he complained that "The Columbia Department does not improve so rapidly as I could wish altho' great exertions are making [sic] to extend the

97Gibson, Farming the Frontier. See also HBRS 3, p. xxxi for the political need for a post on the north bank of the river.

98Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, in HBRS 10, pp. 68-69; see also HBRS 3, p. lxviii.

99Simpson to G&C, 14 June 1826, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 220-33; 224-25. See also Simpson to G&C, 20 August 1826, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 238-89; 238; 241-42.
Trade, and every encouragement held out to induce the natives to shake off their indolent habits and devote more of their time and attention to the chase. \^100

Gradually it transpired that it would be a work of years to make the region very profitable. In 1826 Simpson was asked "What, on a rough calculation are the annual profits of Trade in the district of Columbia and do they arise from the Northern or Southern portion of that district principally?" Simpson replied, "The Trade of the Columbia district is yet in its infancy and the Countries to the Northward and Southward [of the Columbia] produce an equal quantity of furs amounting together in value to between 30 and £40,000 p. annum." \^101 The accuracy of Simpson's statement is borne out by the actual figures; between 1821 and 1825 furs from the Columbia Department were valued at an average of £32,209. \^102 Owing to high expenses, profits were considerably less.

This and the potential for new exports lay in the background to a new set of policies formulated by Simpson on his second visit. In 1828 he thought that the Columbia would yet repay the money invested in the extension of trade, building of new posts, exploration, hiring and purchase of vessels. "I still conceive it presents a wide and valuable field for the exercise of activity, and enterprise, and when all the branches of Trade are brought into full

\^100Simpson to G&C, 21 June 1827, HBCA D.4/90, fo. 6.

\^101[Simpson to H.U. Addington], 5 January 1826, in HBRS 10, p. 169; also in Klotz, Certain Correspondence, p. 4. Rich confused value for profit when he wrote that Simpson "checked and found the profits of the posts [north of the 49th] running, year after year, at the level of about £30,000. . . ." Rich, HBC, Vol. 3, p. 749.

\^102Annual figures were as follows: 1821 (£ 25,715); 1822 (£ 31,726); 1823 (£ 32,720); 1824 (£ 40,952); 1825 (£ 30,431). York Factory, Accounts Current 1821-1826, HBCA B.239/d/286. In the original these are divided between Western Caledonia and Columbia.
and regular operation, I feel satisfied it will realise the hopes and expectations that were a few years ago entertained of it, unless we are disturbed by opposition.\footnote{103}

In his 1829 dispatch, sent just before returning to the east side, Simpson outlined his achievements and defended his plans. He asked the people east of the mountains—who were already distrustful of developments on the Pacific coast—to show some patience at the expense the company had undertaken to extend the Columbia trade.\footnote{104} He stated that he had collected extensive information respecting the trade of the coast which showed that shipping and commerce—not the extension of the fur trade itself—held the most promise. Now that the transportation infrastructure had been put in place, Simpson suggested that the company was ready to embark on the export of salmon and timber from forts Vancouver and Langley in the dead season. He also reported that Richard Charlton, the British consul-general in the Pacific, had been appointed (in January 1829) the company’s agent in the Sandwich Islands, and that Aemilius Simpson had placed a first load of timber and other exports in Charlton’s hands.

Simpson’s commercial acumen permeates these early Columbia dispatches. In most other parts of the continent he had only the fur trade to cultivate, but in the Columbia, he wrote, "new and extensive fields present themselves, which to yield rich harvests, only require a spirit of Enterprize, with steady and active management; but which none can

\footnote{103}Simpson to G&C, 10 July 1828, HBCA D.4/92, fos. 61; 81.

\footnote{104}"The present outcry on the East side the Mountains, against extension of Trade, in this quarter" was largely the result of an objection to the 70 \% advance, Simpson said. In response he reduced the advance to 33 1/3\%—the same as York and Moose factories, which meant that English goods were delivered to all three depots at the same cost. G&C to McLoughlin, 28 October 1829, HBR\$ 4, p. 37 n. 1.
cultivate to advantage except ourselves. 105 Before 1829 Simpson masterminded the formation of a new regional economy of the fur trade on the Pacific coast.

105 Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, in HBRS 10, pp. 72; 85-99; 109-10. See also Ormsby, British Columbia, p. 67 for these new plans.
CHAPTER 5

EXTENDING THE FUR TRADE: THE NORTH WEST COAST

The enterprising spirit of the British merchant shews itself conspicuous in all parts of the world except on the North West Coast of America.

George Simpson, 1825

I entertain sanguine hopes that before the expiration of 5 years there will not be an American on the Coast.

George Simpson, 1830

Between 1829 and 1843, in a virtuoso display of commercial prowess, the Hudson's Bay Company virtually abolished American competition in the Columbia Department fur trade—both on the North West Coast and on the Columbia. This chapter and the next deal with this extension of trade on a district-by-district basis. Simpson's policy of "exhausting the frontier" was a success in economic terms, and in these years the Columbia Department fur trade reached its greatest territorial extent. The company extended and consolidated its trade in fur from the Willamette Valley to the Bay of San Francisco; from Puget Sound to the valley of the Taku River. The company pushed the fur trade as far north as the Lynn Canal at the fifty-ninth degree of latitude, with posts at forts McLoughlin, Simpson, Stikine, and Taku. The steamer Beaver, which arrived in 1836, ensured the company's dominance of

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1Simpson to G&C, 10 March 1825, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 109-42.

2Simpson to G&C, 26 August 1830, HBCA D.4/97, fo. 39.
the maritime fur trade. The company's commercial activities west of the Rockies after 1821 buttressed Britain's territorial and political claim to the region.³

The trade of the entire outer coast north of the Columbia was known as the "coasting trade," an obsolete term once applied to the coastal trade of the British Isles, Hudson Bay, and the eastern seaboard of the United States. Historians refer to its earlier phase as the maritime fur trade, but its contemporary term was the "North West Coast trade." Distinct from the other branches of the company's business, and based at Fort Simpson, the coasting trade was managed by the company's marine department.⁴

The most valuable part of the coasting trade was the North West Coast, the company's great fur-producing region. At first, the maritime fur traders defined the North West Coast as the entire coast north of the Columbia River, including Cape Flattery, Vancouver Island, the Queen Charlotte Islands, and the southern part of Russian America.⁵ The location and definition of the North West Coast changed between 1821 and 1843, reflecting what might be called the company's "subregionalization" of the Columbia

³Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company, p. 110.

⁴It was also known as the country marine, the country shipping, the naval department, the marine establishment, and the naval establishment. Places of commercial activity were known as "stations." A fishing station was a place where the company traded for salmon; a trading station (or simply "station") was a place on the North West Coast, like Nawitti or Kaigani, where company vessels traded with Native people. "The shipping business is conducted by a person appointed for that purpose, who is styled, par excellence, the head of the 'Naval Department.'" McLean, Notes, p. 4. On the development of the marine department see Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 65-83.

⁵Gibson defines the North West Coast of the maritime fur trade very broadly as the "well-known but loosely defined stretch of the damp, rugged Pacific shore of North America between, say, glacier-ringd Ice Bay and red-wood-studded Cape Mendocino." He points out that "the toponym "Northwest Coast" even came to refer to the entire western coast of North America," though he states that his own study focuses on the ""classic" Northwest Coast of Franz Boas," that is, an ethnographic region extending from Chinook to Tlingit territories. In fact, Gibson's focus for the period 1821-41 is Fort Simpson. Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. xi, 7, 251.
Department. The North West Coast moved northward and shrunk in size with the extermination of the sea otter and with the concentration of the company's activities in the south coast, especially in the Gulf of Georgia—which turned out to be a distinct coastal region in itself, part of what became in 1827 the company's Fort Langley District. The Gulf of Georgia never had a resident sea otter population.

By 1843 the North West Coast, to the Hudson’s Bay Company, was the coast north of Cape Mudge, including the west coast of Vancouver Island, the whole of the Queen Charlotte Islands, and the Russian territories. By the 1830s the company no longer regarded the coastline south of the Strait of Juan de Fuca as part of the North West Coast. Maps 4 and 8 show, approximately, the changing location of the North West Coast between 1821 and 1843. In this chapter I define the North West Coast in the Hudson’s Bay Company’s own sense as the coast and islands extending northwards from Cape Mudge; chapter six concerns the company’s fur trade on the south coast, that is, the Gulf of Georgia, Juan de Fuca Strait, Gulf of Georgia, and Puget Sound; as well as the fur trade of the Columbia and its tributaries, and on the Sacramento.

All the company’s coastal operations, from California to the Russian territories, were united in a common policy of intercepting interior furs before they reached American traders on the outer coast. This policy required an extensive inland fur trade combined with a fleet of fur-trading vessels on the coast, manned by experienced and knowledgeable employees.

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6Named the Gulf of Georgia by Vancouver in 1792, this body of water was renamed the Strait of Georgia by Richards in 1865. Walbran, British Columbia Coast names, pp. 204-5.

7"The trade of the North West Coast is understood to be that of the coast and islands extending northwards from Point Mudge. . . ." Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, in HBRS 29, pp. 66-67. Interestingly, Cape Mudge is also the linguistic and cultural division between the southern and northern people of the ethnographic Northwest Coast.
Even after the near-extinction of the sea otter in the 1820s and 1830s, the North West Coast promised a good yield of "land furs" because the Boston traders (American vessels engaged in the maritime fur trade were known to company officials as "Coasters" or "N. W. Coasters") had switched to the trade in continental furs. They paid more for these than the Hudson's Bay Company offered at its posts in New Caledonia, which resulted in a haemorrhage of fur from the interior to the coast via Native trading trails, like the grease trail Mackenzie followed to the coast in 1793. This trade was substantial. In 1815-18, American traders alone took 3-5,000 beaver skins annually from the North West Coast to Canton; in March 1832, Finlayson was "creditably informed that from 8 to 19 thousand Beaver Skins can be collected annually on the coast, this is worth a struggle & from the steady & well regulated opposition now carried on by us, we have every reason to expect our efforts will be ultimately crowned with success." Later that year he revised the figure to 10,000 beaver skins after making enquiries at the Sandwich Islands; similarly in 1841 Simpson estimated that "The trade of the North West Coast" amounted to about 10,000 beaver and land otter skins annually, apart from small furs. In the 1830s the American coasters and the Hudson's Bay Company struggled for control of this valuable trade; the Americans lost the struggle.

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8For a discussion of the maritime fur traders' switch from sea otters to land furs on the North West Coast see Gibson, *Otter Skins*, pp. 61-2, 66, 133-6, 204, 240-42.


10Finlayson to Hargrave, 10 March 1832, in Glazebrook, *Hargrave Correspondence*, p. 88.


12See Cullen, *Fort Langley*, p. 23.
This coastal fur trade was worth fighting for, and together with the New Caledonian fur trade was well worth protecting against American and Russian competitors. Until 1843 New Caledonia remained the "nursery" of the Columbia Department with consistently high profits of about £8,000 a year. John McLean called it "One of the richest districts in the Company's domain" with about 8,000 beaver traded annually. Simpson wrote in 1828 that he doubted that New Caledonia's profits could ever rise above £10,000 to £12,000 a year, beyond which, he wrote, "it cannot materially rise, as its Trade does not appear to me, capable, of further extension." But these substantial profits had to be protected by securing the Pacific coast.

After 1829 Simpson sought to capture the coastal fur trade in its entirety from the Americans and Russians and to stop the flow of interior fur to the coast. This required the building of forts at strategic locations and the formation of a competitive, aggressive marine department. Simpson described this in a jingoistic way in 1830. He wanted, he said, to put the company in the "undisturbed possession of a branch of Trade . . . the value of which will be greatly enhanced in our estimation from the circumstance of its being wrested out of the

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13 1835 returns were valued at £11,000; expenses were £3,000, leaving a profit of £8,000. "This is the great beaver nursury, which continues to replace the numbers destroyed in the more exposed situations." McLean, Notes, pp. 185, 151, 174. See also Innis's remarks in HBRS 3, p. lxiv. Between 1821 and 1825 New Caledonia District returns averaged £9,607 a year, while those of the Columbia District (before the two districts were amalgamated) averaged £22,702. York Factory, Accounts Current, 1821-26, HBCA B.239/d/286.


hands of Foreigners, by whom it has been so long, so insultingly, and so unjustly monopolized. ¹⁶

American competition was more pressing than Russian. In January 1831, Aemilius Simpson wrote that the Americans "have not formed any fixed trading Establishments on the Coast but carry on their trade in Vessels, whose number vary from two to six annually in which they visit the different Harbours from the Northern extremes of Quadra & Vancouver Island to the northern part of Chathams Strait." The Russians were more sedentary and traded principally on the northern coast:

I have once visited their establishment at Sitka Norfolk Sound & am told they have some others to the North of it on the Continent as well as on the Aleutian, Analaska, & Kodiac Islands, but I have no idea as to the extent of their business however if I may judge from the establishments & the number of Vessels they employ I should infer the trade carried on by the Russian Fur Company in these seas as very extensive.¹⁷

The Americans posed the greater threat owing to their expertise in the coasting trade and their access to Canton. In his 1831 journal Finlayson noted that "Every Channel of speculation appears to be entirely glutted by the unusual number of Amn Vessels resorting to these seas." "The American Coasters," he continued, "are masters & part owners of their Vessels & cargoes filled out on the most oeconomical & cheapest manner & who moreover enjoy facilities & privileges in his Canton Dealings of which British subjects are deprived." And he continued:

¹⁶Simpson to G&C, 26 August 1830, HBCA D.4/97, fos. 41-42. On the implementation of this policy see also Cullen, Fort Langley, p. 23.

¹⁷A. Simpson to C. O'Gorman, 7 January 1831, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 103-4.
No means exist by Statute or by treaty to check the Americans on the coast—they are more accustomed to the trade and better acquainted with the natives & have other facilities of which we are not possessed our only plan therefore is to oppose them with a well regulated steady opposition.\(^{18}\)

The Hudson's Bay Company prised the valuable fur trade of the North West Coast from the Americans through four policies: by constructing Fort Simpson at the mouth of the Nass (1831) and Fort McLoughlin on Campbell Island (1833), by entering the coasting trade officially in 1832, by hiring the experienced Boston trader William Henry McNeill in the same year, and by placing the steamer *Beaver* on the coast four years later. At all these places the company paid more for Native furs than American traders could afford and then lowered prices on their departure. By 1840 the Americans had abandoned the fur trade of the North West Coast as a direct result of the company's activities.

The surest way to capture the fur trade of the North West Coast would be to build a post at some central trading location to intercept the flow of interior fur to the coast. "North of Vancouver Island," Charles Ermatinger recalled, "the natives were accustomed to bring their peltries to the ocean to be bartered on the decks of the trading vessels . . . or to exchange them in the interior with the tribes nearer the coast, who sometimes acted as middlemen."\(^{19}\) In July 1830, Aemilius Simpson—superintendent of the Marine department—visited the mouth of the Nass River, which he reported had long been spoken of by Russian, American, and Sandwich Islands traders as being as "the grand mart of the Coast." From them he obtained 100 very fine beaver which, from the manner they were stretched and dressed, he decided had originated in New Caledonia. A post at the Nass

\(^{18}\)Finlayson, "Trip Across to the Columbia," fos. 31-32.

\(^{19}\)C. O. Ermatinger, "The Columbia Department During the Hudson's Bay Regime," ms., n.d., [?ca. 1850], Ermatinger Papers, NAC.
would stop these interior pelts from going to the Americans, and at the same time reduce the role of Native middlemen. The Native people at the Nass River were not primarily hunters but fishers and traders; they fished oolichan at the mouth of the Nass, which they traded for fur with the interior people.

Simpson and Ogden embarked from Fort Vancouver on the Nass expedition in March 1831, and in April they established a post at the mouth of the Nass. James Douglas, then a twenty-eight year-old clerk recently-arrived at Fort Vancouver, reported on the Native reaction to the Nass Party as follows:

To their great surprise and not a little to their satisfaction, the natives received them in the most friendly manner, nor have they as yet displayed any symptoms of a hostile or turbulent disposition. They are nevertheless keen hands at a bargain and make the most of the competition among the traders. If they cannot do business with one party they make no ceremony in trying what can be done with the other.

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20 For a summary of Simpson's 1830 Nass visit, see Rich, HBC, Vol. 3, p. 626; Simpson to G&C, 18 July 1831, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 370-418; fos. 378-79 [date of expedition]. HBCA search file "Fort Simpson" gives the date of construction as April, though Walbran (British Columbia Coast Names, p. 395) gives the date as May 1831; Walbran also provides the data on vessels and founders.

21 "The Banks of the mouth of the [Nass] River appear to be a favourite resort of the neighbouring tribes at certain seasons, when they take immense numbers of a small fish resembling the Anchovy or Ulachan of the Columbia, from which they extract an oil which is held in great estimation by and forms a principal Article of Barter with the Natives of the Interior." Simpson to G&C, 18 July 1831, HBCA A.12/1, fo. 379. Oolican was later known as "Nass Grease" or "Nass Oil." York Factory Country Produce Account Book, 1828-36, HBCA 239/d/491, fo. 81. For Coast Tsimshian trade in this item see Harris, ed., Historical Atlas, plate 13, and see also Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 231-3 for oolichan references in the maritime fur trade.

22 Douglas to McLeod, 12 March 1832, McLeod Papers, NAC. On the founding of the fort see Walbran, British Columbia Coast Names, p. 395 and Marius Barbeau, "Old Port Simpson," The Beaver, 271 (September 1940), pp. 20-23.
Simpson and Ogden spent the summer trading at the new post and at the Queen Charlotte Islands, but in September Simpson died; the post was named after him. When McLoughlin heard of his death he wrote that "The best that we can now do in my opinion is to attach the coasting Trade to Fort Simpson & give Mr C-T Ogden charge of the two. . . ." "Mr Ogden writes the Post of Fort Simpson has no direct Water communication with the Interior no Ground about it to make a Garden and that very little Provisions can be procured from the Natives." Although provisions had to be imported from forts Vancouver and Langley, Fort Simpson did what it was meant to do. By November 1831, George Simpson wrote, "the furs collected by the Shipping and establishment [Nass] amounted to upwards of £4000 in value. . . ." This was despite the competition of the American brig *Lama*, captained by William Henry McNeill, a Bostonian who had been on the coast since 1816.

In the summer of 1832 the Americans returned in force. "Ogden was getting a few Beaver," John Work reported, "but was paying very dear for them as there was no less than six Yankee ships opposing him." The following year (1833) Ogden was without competition: for the first time in about forty years not a single American vessel traded on coast, and in that year the company traded fur on the coast worth £13,000.

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24Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1832, HBCA A.12/1, fo. 431.
26Ogden's 1832 activities were reported by Work to Donald Ross who summarized them in this fashion. Donald Ross to Robert Miles, 11 April 1833, Donald Ross Papers, BCARS.
27"There were no Americans on the Coast this Season. . . ." McLoughlin to Governor, Chief Factors, and Chief Traders, HHBC, 9 Sept 1833, HBCA B.223/b/9, fo. 28.
28McLoughlin to Manson, 20 December 1834, HBCA B.223/b/10, fo. 83.
Probably as a result of Donald Manson's exploration of the Nass and Skeena rivers in 1832, Fort Simpson was moved in August 1834 to a more favourable trading location on the Tsimpsean peninsula equidistant from the mouths of the Nass and Skeena. Here, the fort became the headquarters of the coasting and land-based trade of the entire North West Coast and the "grand mart" for the people of the north coast. In 1841 Fort Simpson was visited by about 14,000 souls, Simpson said, of whom about 800 were the Tsimshian homeguard. The Tsimshian were in contact with the Carrier, and they obtained fur from many north coast groups including the Tsimshian, Tongas, Haida, and Kaigani. In 1836 Finlayson described the post's trade and Native customers:

The best hunters and traders who are in the habit of selling their furs at this place, and from whom the Returns are chiefly collected, may be estimated in the following order, in which they are classed—The Pearl Harbor and Skeenah Indians called the Chimmesyan tribe—The Nass the Stikine, Tongass, Sebassa, and the Queen Charlotte Island tribes: and it is now confidently expected that the Kygarnie Indians who have commenced to negotiate a treaty of peace with the natives of this place, will, if it be concluded, occasionally trade here; so that the objects which were anticipated by the removal of the settlement from Nass hither will thereby be gained—as all the surrounding tribes some of whom inhabit Russian territory will give us some portion of their Furs—So that the present situation possesses many advantages over the

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20 On Manson’s voyages see HBRS 1, p. 458. On the relocation see HBCA search file and Walbran, British Columbia Coast Names, p. 396. Simultaneously the people in New Caledonia were exploring toward the coast from the east. See Simon McGillivray, "Journal of Voyage [from Stuart Lake] to Simpson's River by Land Summer 1833," HBCA D.4/125, fos. 63-82. The management of the coasting trade passed to John Work from Ogden in December 1834. HBRS 4, p. 358.

30"It is visited by a great many Indians, occupying the islands and continental shores, to a considerable distance, among whom are the inhabitants of five villages on the mainland, likewise by the natives of Queen Charlotte Island, by the inhabitants of Tomgass, and by those of Kygarnie . . . in all, a population of about 14,000 souls." Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBRS 29, pp. 61-62.

31"The Chimseyans communicate with the northern branches of the Ta-cully [Carrier], the Na-ta-otin of Babine Lake, namely, and other neighboring septs." Anderson, "Notes on the Indian Tribes," p. 74.
former—such as being more centrical for the trade—affording better facilities for the shipping, better resources in the way of living—and better means of guarding our frontiers from the encroachments of our enterprising opponents.32

Fort Simpson's fur returns increased steadily until they surpassed those of any post on the Pacific coast of the Columbia Department. Douglas wrote in 1838 that the fort's returns "exhibit a uniform and rapidly progressive improvement which has not I hope attained its extreme limit." He believed that no increase was likely from "the natives residing within the British Territory," and that the Russian part of the coast offered potential.33 "Our trade this Year is Good," Work wrote in 1840; returns were valued at £6,964 but had cost only £2,162.34 "The present returns are from 3000 to 4000 beaver and otter," Simpson wrote in 1841, "and a large quantity of small furs, the gross amount being about £6,000, of which about £3,000 forms the amount of charge so that the net revenue arising from this post may be estimated at £3,000 per annum."35

The provision problem was solved by the Indian Trade. In 1836, Finlayson wrote that the supply of Native provisions at Fort Simpson was usually quite ample for the maintenance of the fort. "The resources in the way of living which Fort Simpson affords, are Deer, Halibut, and Salmon, which, however may be considered as precarious while our dependence is placed on the natives for providing them. . . ." The fort "can never be maintained with safety without having a six months stock of provisions," and by that time its

32 Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fos. 16-17, and HBRS 4.


34 Work to Donald Ross, 27 November 1850, Donald Ross Papers, BCARS.

garden produced from 100 to 200 bushels of potatoes a year. By 1841, Simpson wrote that the means of living were abundant, consisting principally of fish, venison and potatoes.

Fort Simpson was intended also as a base from which to launch further assaults on the American traders, who continued to visit the coast in the early 1830s. The company's shipping was still very rudimentary in 1831; the voyages of the William & Ann and the Cadboro had been little more than supply and reconnaissance expeditions. By 1832 Fort Simpson was working well enough to contemplate extended action against the Americans, and Finlayson observed that:

Our people appear to be firmly settled down at Nass,—the Natives are so far peacable & well disposed, & we have it in view to extend our settlements along the coast, being the best & most judicious plan, we can adopt for the purpose of wresting the trade from the grasp of the Americans, who have so far monopolized it & no doubt derived considerable gains therefrom.

The company also needed a post to intercept the flow of furs from the central coast to American maritime vessels. Fort McLoughlin was built in May 1833 two hundred miles south of Fort Simpson on a protected bay on Campbell Island, Lama Passage, Fitzhugh Sound. Its territory included Bella Bella and Bella Coola, where Alexander Mackenzie had reached the Pacific in 1793. Scouler, in 1825, had recorded that the explorer's memory


38 Duncan Finlayson to John McLeod, 12 March 1832, McLeod Papers, NAC.

39 Walbran, British Columbia Coast Names, pp. 152; 45-47; 298.
was still alive. "It was on this part of the coast," he wrote, "inhabited by the Billechoola, that Sir A. McKenzie first reached the Pacific; and some of the old men of the tribe still remember his visit."40

Known at first simply as "Milbank Sound" after its seaward access, the post was intended to catch coastal and interior furs. In 1834 Simpson regarded it as the most valuable post on the coast with the potential to yield about 4,000 beaver and otter a year. "The country is unquestionably rich in Beaver and otters, as the skins are frequently brought to the Establishment fresh, which is proof that they are taken in the immediate neighbourhood. By these channels we shall find access to tribes with whom we are as yet unacquainted."41

Fort McLoughlin allowed the company to obtain furs that had previously gone to the Americans.42 Tolmie's 1834-35 diaries show the "Quaghcuils," "Kitamats," and "Chimnseyans" trading at Fort McLoughlin, though the Bella Coola furnished more beaver than any people visiting the post.43 Finlayson, on the Beaver in 1836, likewise found that "the greatest part of the Furs sold at Mill bank" were collected on Dean Channel and Bentinck Arm. He wrote that:

The Bela hoola tribe inhabiting Deans Canal and Bentincks Arms trade the greatest number of skins at this post. The Wacash tribe of Milbank Sound who procure theirs chiefly from the neighbouring tribes, are the next in importance. The Oyalla tribe


41Simpson to G&C, 21 July 1834, HBCA D.4/100, fo. 17.

42"My instructions were to lower the price of skins; as the Americans had previously been here. . . ." Dunn, History of the Oregon Country, p. 246.

who procure theirs in like manner as the former may be classed after them, and the Chichysh who are considered the best beaver hunters in the Sound, hunting themselves all the Furs they trade at the Fort are the next. There are many others from whom some furs are obtained but while there is an opposition on the coast they cannot be considered as regular traders at this place.\footnote{Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fos. 17-17d. And in HBRS 4.}

Charles Ross in 1842 provided the following description:

But, taking the aggregate of their villages, and reckoning the average number of occupants in two or three houses, I am of opinion that the Billbillahs may amount to about 1500, and the Bellwhoolas to 650 individuals of every age & sex. It might be supposed that the abundance, as well as the facility of supply, which the sea offers to both these tribes, ought to render the population much denser, than it really is, and this would no doubt be the case—were it not for the lax state of morals, which obtains among them—permitting not only frequent divorce, but also the still more unnatural practice of Infanticide both before & after birth.\footnote{Charles Ross to Simpson, 1 October 1842, [Charles Ross Correspondence?] BCARS, A/B/40/R 735.}

Pelts came overland along the Native grease trails in exchange for Oolichan oil and other coastal products; Mackenzie had followed one such trail from the Chilcotin Plateau. Fort McLoughlin's fur trade endangered the company's larger good because fur prices were lower in the interior than on the competitive coast. Naturally, then, Native people in the interior chose to sell their furs on the coast. In 1836, Donald Manson of Fort McLoughlin sent a letter eastward in the hands of Natives who traded at the post to the "Gentlemen of New Caledonia." He complained that "some of the New Caledonia Indians have found their way to Mill Bank Sound" to the injury of the New Caledonian trade.\footnote{McLoughlin to Finlayson and Work, 8 August 1836, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 59.} Similarly, in 1838 Douglas complained that Fort McLoughlin drew New Caledonian furs to the coast, and that
owing to the "great disparity in the Coast and interior prices," Manson must adhere to the lower prices recently fixed for the coast. He asked him to trade as much as possible with "the maritime Tribes and guard with the utmost care against interference with the interior Districts:"

The system pursued during the early part of the last Outfit at Fort McLoughlin, is decidedly opposed to the Company's general interests. . . . The Coast establishments should not become the instruments of drawing the furs from the Inland Districts, where the cost is moderate, into the very focus of opposition without any security whatever, of their finally falling into our hands, even at the extravagant prices paid for them. New Caledonia extends westward to the marine range of Mountains and sweeps along their base, from the 52nd to the 50th degree of North Latitude embracing the whole extent of our Coast possessions, and no attempt can be made to abstract the trade from the east side of that range of mountains, without signal mischief to the Company's best interests.47

Local provisions at Fort McLoughlin, built on a rocky island bereft of good land, were scarce. It could only be maintained with the help of provisions from the south, and five or six hundred bushels of potatoes were required annually from forts Langley, Nisqually, or Simpson. In 1836 Finlayson recommended that enough deer and salmon might be salted at McLoughlin to supplement provisions "procured in plentiful seasons from the natives."48

Fort McLoughlin, Simpson said in 1841, was visited by about 5,200 Indians, "the natives of seven villages." The post, he continued, "is principally maintained on country provisions, say fish in great abundance and variety, venison and potatoes. . . ." The gross value of its returns was between £2,500 and £3,000; annual costs were about £1,400, and net

47Douglas to Manson, 21 June 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 17.

48Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fos. 17-17d. And in HBRS 4.
profits about £1200. A trader at the post, Charles Ross, concurred with Simpson. "The trade, too," Ross wrote in 1842, "is pretty fairish—realizing about £1500 a year—which if a body were permitted to put in his own Pocket he aught indeed to be truly thankful."50

Forts Simpson and McLoughlin served as the northern and southern anchors of the North West Coast fur trade, but they could not serve for the whole coast. Trade could best be extended to the intricate coastline and to the principal Native trading locations by adopting the seafaring methods of the Americans themselves, and in 1829 Simpson and McLoughlin devised a plan for the operation of the coasting trade. The company should have two vessels employed in the coasting trade, McLoughlin said, one of them based on the North West Coast which would, when time permitted, take a cargo of salmon or lumber to the Sandwich Islands or California; the other vessel stationed at Fort Langley "constantly going between that place and De Fuca Straights."51 However, until 1832 McLoughlin lacked the vessels or personnel to put this plan into effect and trade goods had not arrived from England in time to send vessels to coast in time to intercept the spring hunts.52

Two events—the hiring of McNeill in 1832 and the arrival of the Beaver in 1836—helped extinguish American fur trading pretensions on the North West Coast.


50Charles Ross to James Hargrave, 8 November 1842, in Glazebrook, Hargrave Correspondence, p. 415.

51McLoughlin to G&C, 5 August 1829, HBRS 4, pp. 78-79. On this plan see also HBRS 4, pp. 118-19, 231.

52"Our coasting trade is not yet begun to speak properly and correctly in consequence of the Disappointment of not receiving yet an outfit a year in Advance which caused us to wait till July before she could start for the purpose and this is too late—the places by that time have been visited by the Americans." McLoughlin to John McLeod, 1 February 1830, McLeod Papers, NAC.
McNeill joined the Hudson’s Bay Company through the back door. The company’s new brig *Isabella* was wrecked on the Columbia bar in 1831, and McLoughlin authorized Finlayson to buy a vessel at the Sandwich Islands for the coasting trade. Suitable ships could be bought there for $5-7,000.53 "You ought to endeavour to get McNeill for the Coast," he told Finlayson in July 1832; "as he is well acquainted with that business . . . the man’s superior knowledge of the business in comparison to any of our Sea Officers, renders his services more valuable, & his knowledge is worth something."54 Finlayson recalled the voyage as follows:

I made a cruise to the Sandwich Islands, for the purpose of purchasing a vessel & collecting information relative to the trade of the NW Coast. . . . I remained behind at the Islands to prosecute the object of my voyage & was fortunate enough to purchase a fine new Brig [the *Lama*] of about 150 tons, for £1250. . . . I also engaged her captain . . . to continue in the command of her, as his experience on the NW Coast, from cruising theron for the space of 12 years, will give our people an insight into the nature of the trade & a knowledge of the Bays, Inlets, Harbours & trading stations of that Coast, hitherto unknown to us & which cannot fail to give us a footing & promote our interest in that quarter.55

Finlayson engaged McNeill and his two mates because, he said, "We have seen, since we entered the field with the Americans on the N.W. Coast, the advantage their experience gave them over us, & from the inefficient state of our Naval Force, during the last Summer . . . it

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53McLoughlin to G&C, 16 June 1832, HBRS 4, p. 99. The Governor and Committee hoped the loss of the *Isabella* "will not prove of any serious consequence to the Coasting Trade, as the various stores saved from the wreck have no doubt enabled you to equip the Vessels built at Fort Vancouver in a proper state for the sea." G&C to McLoughlin, 21 September 1831, HBRS 4, p. 85 n1.

54McLoughlin to Finlayson, 17 July 1832, HBRS 4, p. 117. On McNeill’s hiring see also Gibson, *Otter Skins*, p. 69.

became the more necessary to oppose them with their own weapons.\textsuperscript{56} McLoughlin supported Finlayson. "These gentlemen are perfectly acquainted with the Coast, & with the Trade with the Natives," he wrote, adding that the company's own men were deficient in such knowledge.\textsuperscript{57}

The Governor and Committee were startled when they heard, six months later, that McLoughlin had engaged Americans in the "principal situation of our Naval force." McNeill would be seized if he went to England because foreigners were ineligible to command British vessels.\textsuperscript{58} McLoughlin defended his actions by citing Simpson's 1829 plans for the coasting trade, which clearly required someone of McNeill's stature:

\begin{quote}
... if when we had began the business we had in command of the Company's Vessels persons equally well acquainted with the coast and with the manner of dealing with the natives it would have saved the Company a good deal of money and me an immensity of trouble... our Naval Gentlemen were unacquainted with the coast and had never seen an Indian till they came here.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{56}Finlayson to McLoughlin, 10 September 1832, HBRS 4, p. ?

\textsuperscript{57}McLoughlin to G&C, 28 October 1832, HBRS 4, p. 101.

\textsuperscript{58}G&C to Simpson, 1 March 1833, HBRS 4, p. 116 n 5. Emergency measures were adopted to cope with McNeill's suspect nationality. "As Captain McNeill is not a British born subject, and if he falls in with an English Cruiser while in Command of the Steamer, it would expose her to seizure; you will please make out the papers in the name of Mr Scarborough. ... and on falling in with any British Cruiser, Mr Scarborough may step forward, and Declare himself Master, and be fully justified in calling upon the crew to defend the Company's property and resist seizure." McLoughlin to Work, 14 November 1837, HBCA B.223/b/18, fo. 8. In 1838 the Governor and Committee informed McNeill that they would promote him to Chief Trader if he became a British subject: Douglas to McNeill, 16 June 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 18d. McNeill signified his willingness to do so, and in January 1840 he received his chief tradership: McLoughlin to Douglas, 1 October 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo?

\textsuperscript{59}McLoughlin to G&C, 28 May 1834, HBRS 4, pp. 118-19.
Even before McNeill's arrival the coasting trade looked promising. In 1831, total returns from the coast amounted to 3,000 beaver skins worth £1,613—the "first gains ever realized from it," according to Finlayson. In the spring of 1832 McLoughlin wrote that, having "nothing to interrupt our proceedings—we intend to give it the first fair Trial it has had," and Finlayson reported that:

Every branch of the business seems to be in a fair train. The coasting trade, which has suffered much in the loss of the late Captain Simpson . . . is not as yet, on as firm a footing, as to realise anything handsome. The natives, sagacious enough to pursue their own interest with persevering industry, are owing to the Yankee opposition most extravagant in their demands.

McNeill gave the marine department just the advantage it needed. Finlayson later reported that McNeill had done a fine job of watching and "keeping in company with" the American vessels on the coast,

and the manner in which he has performed this duty reflects much credit upon him; having from his intimate knowledge of the harbours, and trading stations on the coast, on many occasions given them the slip and secured the skins before their appearance at such harbours and when they happened to be together the Lama generally collected the best share of what ever was to be gleaned.

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60 Douglas to McLeod, 12 March 1832; Finlayson to McLeod, 12 March 1832, McLeod papers, NAC. See also Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 334.

61 "Ogden is at Nass—this year though of three vessels only two could go on the Coast and one was only fifteen Days and the other was only three months still the Coastings trade will clear itself and this Year when we have nothing to interrupt our proceedings—we intend to give it the first fair Trial it has had and from what has been done this year we have every reason to Expect it will do well." McLoughlin to McLeod, 1 March 1832, McLeod Papers, NAC; Finlayson to Hargrave, 10 March 1832, in Glazebrook, Hargrave Correspondence, p. 88.

62 Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fos 17d-23d; also HBRS 4.
So successful was this policy that late in 1833 Finlayson had to make a special trip to Woahuh for provisions and trading goods such as leaf tobacco, rice, and beef. These were absolutely necessary for the company's coastal trade, he said, "as the departure of the opposition therefrom has thrown a greater demand of these articles upon us than we anticipated." This purchase was a watershed in the history of the North West Coast fur trade. After the early 1830s the Native demand for European goods was met not by Boston traders but by the Hudson's Bay Company.

Ultimately McNeill's coastal knowledge, obtained in the maritime fur trade, was wed with the technology of the industrial revolution. Simpson mooted the need for a steam vessel in 1832. He told the Governor and Committee that the combination of permanent establishments and coastal vessels gave the company a decided advantage over American traders which the addition of a steam vessel would strengthen. Sailing vessels took at least two months to get in and out of Fort Vancouver, he said. "The saving of time in ascending and descending the Columbia and Fraser's Rivers, of itself, would be a very important object..." A steamer would be valuable in this respect at Fort Simpson too, and provide system and regularity on the coast. "A steam Vessel would afford us incalculable advantages over the Americans, we could look into every Creek and cove... we could ascend every stream of consequence upon the coast, we could visit our establishments at stated periods."}

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63Finlayson to Smith, 11 January 1834, HBCA B.223/b/9, fos. 50-51.

64Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1832, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 431-36. The Governor and Committee wrote in 1843 that "the steamer was intended to be employed in the highly useful service of surveying the harbours and inlets in the Straits of De Fuca and on the adjacent Coasts, and in towing our vessels in and out of the Columbia. G&C to McLoughlin, 27 Sept 1843, HBRS 6, p. 310. See also W. Kaye Lamb, "The Advent of the Beaver," The Beaver, 2:3 (1938), pp. 163-84 and Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 68.
The Governor and Committee favoured the idea for similar reasons and also because a steamer would allow the company’s other vessels—six in 1836\textsuperscript{65}—to enter the export trades. A steam vessel, they said, would "perform the service of four of the Saling Vessels now employed on the Coast." "We think there is a prospect of combining with the Coasting Trade a promising branch of business with the Sandwich Islands and the Spanish American Coast in the articles of Timber, Cured Salmon, Grain and other supplies. . . ."\textsuperscript{66} Steam would be used where it was really needed, on the coast, while sail would be used on the open ocean.

Launched in 1835, the Beaver reached Fort Vancouver under its own sail in the spring of 1836, with side paddles in its hold. A very precocious arrival, it was the first steamship in the Pacific Ocean.\textsuperscript{67} Known to the Chinook people as a "Skokum ship,"\textsuperscript{68} the Beaver immediately caused a technological and spatial revolution in the coasting trade by visiting the heads of inlets inaccessible by sail, where Native furs first reached the coast from the Interior. Tolmie recalled that the vessel simply "made it unprofitable for traders in sailing vessels to visit the coast" after 1836-37.\textsuperscript{69}

The vessel’s inaugural voyage is well-documented. In June 1836, McLoughlin wrote ahead to Kittson at Fort Nisqually to prepare fifty cords of firewood "cut into pieces of the length of three feet and piled in a convenient place on the beach for the use of the steamer,"

\textsuperscript{65}Simpson to J. H. Pelly, 1 February 1837, in HBCA search file "Trade."

\textsuperscript{66}G&C to Simpson, 5 March 1834, HBCA D.5/4, fos. 67-73; fo.72.

\textsuperscript{67}Walbran, British Columbia Coast Names, p. 40; Lamb, "The Advent of the Beaver;" Derek Pethick, S.S. Beaver: The Ship that Saved the West (Vancouver: 1970).

\textsuperscript{68}McDonald to John McLeod, 25 January 1837, McLeod Papers, NAC.

\textsuperscript{69}Tolmie to Swan, 30 December 1878, Swan Papers, UBC.
and he instructed Yale of Fort Langley to prepare and place on the bank of the Fraser fifty cords of "pine wood." Tolmie recalled that the job of preparing the Beaver's cordwood was given to Native people. Finlayson wrote that "The result of the trials is that she can stow enough of wood to take her from one Fort to another, through the canals where the water is smooth, or from 2 to 230 miles."

John Dunn was on the Beaver as trader and interpreter on this first voyage, as was John Work, in charge of the coasting trade. The ship got a late start from Fort Vancouver in June, and travelled down the Columbia to the Pacific, north to Cape Flattery, Puget Sound, and Fort Langley. From there the vessel made its way to Dean Channel, Bella Coola (North Bentinck Arm), Fitzhugh Sound, and eventually Sitka. Dunn recalled that McLoughlin's directions were to:

to push along the numerous and intricate inlets (that interlace the whole country) as far as possible inland, in order to come as much within reach of the interior tribes as possible. Therefore we ran into their uttermost extremities, along almost the whole of the labyrinth; stopping sometimes to trade, and ascertain the capabilities of the country, and the character of the natives, who had never seen a large vessel (and especially a steamer) or a white man before.

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70 McLoughlin to Kittson, 9 June 1836, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 40; McLoughlin to Yale, 9 June 1836, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 41.


72 Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fos 17d-23d; also HBRS 4.

73 Dunn, History of the Oregon Country, pp. 265-266. Finlayson wrote that most furs sold at Fort McLoughlin were interior furs collected at Dean Channel and Bentinck Arm. He thought that the voyages of the Beaver "will shut up that drain, and leave little to glean by vessels sailing along the coast." Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fos 17d-23d; also HBRS 4.
McLoughlin instructed Work to accompany the Beaver to Queen Charlotte Sound, "and after clearing these Indians of all their skins you will hurry on to the residence of the Sabasus Tribe" before the Americans arrived. And he told Work that:

In the course of the summer if possible she ought to visit the Canals in Queen Charlotte Sound—so as that we may in case of the opposition coming know what can be done on these places at the same time the Steamer ought not if possible to pay dearer for furs than the Indian traders, as it should be our object to throw as few Goods into the Hands of the Canal Indians as we can—so that they may have less means to interfere with us in New Caledonia.\(^74\)

Finlayson, who was on board, wrote that the navigation of the coastal inlets "for steam, is very favourable—not a rock to be seen in mid Channel":

In the canals we do not find it safe to run at night, owing to the quantity of drift timber which the tide carries along; and which if it came in contact with the Paddles, would break them to pieces, and perhaps cause some serious injury to the vessel and the engine. On the whole she will give the most effectual blow to the opposition which they have ever met with on the Coast, and will also lessen in a great measure the traffic carried on amongst the natives themselves.

The trip was a success, and in September 1836 Finlayson reported "a considerable increase" in the general returns of the coast.\(^75\) The vessel's modus operandi consisted of visiting, in the spring and early summer, the main trading stations on the coast.

Traders on the Beaver acquired an extensive knowledge of coastal trading patterns and a sensitivity to the requirements of the fur trade on the coast and Interior. In December

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\(^74\) He also instructed Work to sell arms only if there were an opposition. McLoughlin to Work, 13 March 1836, HBCA B.223/b/18, fos. 22d-23. On Sebassa see Donald Mitchell, "Sebassa's Men," in Donald N. Abbott, ed., The World is as Sharp as a Knife (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1981), pp. 79-86.

\(^75\) Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fos 17d-23d; also HBRS 4.
1836 McLoughlin urged Work to "commence plying as early as in February or March as possible, so as to collect the Spring Hunts before the appearance of any opposition." He also reminded him that Nisqually and Langley prices for fur applied "at any trading stations to the south of point Chatham [Johnstone Strait]." That is, he was to observe the different fur tariffs established by the company: to pay high prices on the competitive North West Coast, to pay low prices on the south coast in the absence of competition. McLoughlin's 1837 policy was to restrict the Beaver's trading to "the usual stations" without actually going up the inlets, as this would interfere with the trade of New Caledonia. In the absence of American competition the company could afford to ignore the fate of the fur trade of the coastal inlets because Native people were boxed in: if they had fur they could only dispose of it overland to New Caledonia, to coastal posts, or to the steamer. In monopoly conditions the company could lower its prices. The success of the Beaver is indicated by the aggregate figures: between 1825 and 1849 the vessel traded a total of 109,389 pelts, a number surpassed on the coast only by Fort Simpson, where 173,452 pelts were obtained.

The Beaver also revealed the potential of the coast in a number of ways. The few furs from the west coast of Vancouver Island found their way to north to Nawitti or south to

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⁷⁶ McLoughlin to Work, 8 December 1836, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 117.

⁷⁷ "In the event of their being no opposition on the Coast, you will give instructions that the Steamer proceeds only to the usual Stations, as her going up the Canals &c will supply the traders with Goods, and enable them to push their trade with more energy towards New Caledonia, which will be injurious to our trade in that quarter; in short, our object ought to be, to discourage as much as possible every attempt to push the trade into the Interior from the Coast, and limit our endeavour to collect all the skins we can on the coast." McLoughlin to Work, 16 June 1837, HBCA B.223/b/17, fo. 20.

Cape Flattery and thence into the company’s trading system at no additional expense. As a
result the west coast of Vancouver Island never entered the Hudson’s Bay Company’s
immediate range. In July 1825 Scouler had visited Nootka on the William & Ann and
reported that the sea otter trade was nearly extinct:

> Nootka, which excited so much attention between the courts of Madrid and London,
is now completely neglected by every civilised power, and the state of poverty in
which they are at present affords little inducement to the visits of mercantile
adventurers. The few skins they have to dispose of, seem to make their way to Fort
George through the inter medium of other tribes, as most of the blankets and other
articles were recognized to be the goods of the N.W. Company.  

No more thought was given to Nootka until 1838 when Douglas considered using the Beaver
to explore the west coast of Vancouver Island. He decided against it owing to the hazards
involved and to the fact that fur from the west coast of the island already found its way to
the company:

> In relation to the western coast of Vancouver's Island, the attempt to examine it, in
the "Beaver" is much too hazardous to be made; and it is doubtful, if the gain which
might result, even from a successful attempt would justify or compensate the risk of
such a voyage. Nearly all the furs of that part of the Island find their way to the
Coquilts, and other places in Queen Charlotte Sound, where the navigation is
confined, and [where] the Steam power of the "Beaver" works to advantage and
confers a decided advantage over sailing vessels.  

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79 Scouler, "Dr John Scouler's Journal," pp. 194-95. Nootka Sound, Dunn wrote in 1844,
"is to the west side of Vancouver’s Island, in the 49° of latitude. The company’s vessels seldom
visit this place for traffic, as there is now scarcely any fur to be found there." Dunn, History
of the Oregon Country, p. 244.

80 Douglas did not want to draw attention to the steamer's lucrative trading activities in the
coastal inlets and sounds: "It is therefore clearly our interest to retain the trade of Vancouvers
Island in its present channel, so favourable for our purposes, and to conceal, the more accessible
avenue. . . ." Douglas to Work, 21 June 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fos. 16-16d.
Later, Douglas hoped that the **Beaver** might have time to survey Vancouver Island.\(^{81}\)

Douglas considered the central part of the coast as inadequately known to the company, and in June 1838 he stated that:

The ‘Beaver’ will this year, have full time, besides guarding the regular trading Harbours, to explore the Canals and deep inlets of Queen Charlotte’s Sound, that part of the Coast may become of value, and I am very anxious to form a more intimate acquaintance with its inhabitants and commercial resources. The Coquit Tribe, in their trading excursions in that quarter, gather a considerable number of Skins and I think under improved management, the trade would become more productive without causing any corresponding decline, or increased expense, in the business of the interior.\(^{82}\)

Later that year Douglas instructed the **Beaver** to visit the canals and inlets of Queen Charlotte Sound between fifty and fifty-two degrees north. "A correct survey of each will be required, together with every information relative to the population & natural resources of the Country."\(^{83}\) The results of this survey convinced Douglas that a post was needed at the intersection of "Queen Charlotte’s Sound with Johnstones Straits and Vancouver’s Island," a fur-rich area then visited by the **Beaver**. Douglas thought such a post would yield commodities other than furs, and that a permanent establishment was needed "in a central position convenient for the resort of the natives" which would:

- serve as a point of attraction to the more distant tribes, inhabiting the continental Canals and the west coast of Vancouver’s Island with whom our intercourse has been hitherto limited to casual meetings of very rare occurrence. And should our views hereafter extend beyond the mere traffic of peltries we will have it in our power to cultivate the fisheries of these shores, which, judging from the abundance of excellent

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\(^{81}\) Douglas to Work, 29 May 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo. 18.

\(^{82}\) Ibid.

\(^{83}\) Douglas to Work, 29 November 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 40d.
Salmon I saw there, will yield a large produce, and may become a valuable auxiliary business.  

He favoured the neighbourhood of Nawitti, "where there are several good harbours accessible to Shipping at every season, and which is almost directly in the centre of the Native Population, being about equi-distant from the most southerly tribes of Johnstone's Straits and those living in the vicinity of Fort McLoughlin." A post near Nawitti, Simpson noted, had the added advantage of being near the coal deposits recently located on Vancouver Island. Fort Rupert was in fact built in the neighbourhood in 1849, but not for the reasons Douglas suggested in 1840.

In 1840, Douglas employed the Beaver to explore the four hundred mile coastline between Fort Simpson and the head of Lynn Canal (see Map 3), and to establish forts Taku and Stikine. This resulted from the company's 1839 agreement to furnish the Russian American Company with provisions in exchange for a lease of the panhandle; part of the agreement called for the Russians to transfer Fort Wrangell to the Hudson's Bay Company. Douglas's trip is one in the most extraordinary in the history of the Canadian fur trade, for it saw the Hudson's Bay Company in the space of a summer extend its trade some 500 miles to the fifty-eighth parallel and into the far northern reaches of the coast.

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84 Douglas to McLoughlin, 1 October 1840, HBCA B.223/b/28, fos. 77-79.
85 Ibid.
87 HBCA Search file, Fort Stikine. "Our dealings with the Russians promise to become more extended...." Simpson to G&C, 20 June 1841, HBCA D.4/109, fos. 21-32; fo. 22.
The history of this northern expansion began in 1833 when Ogden went forty or fifty miles up the Stikine on a reconaissance and found the river too shallow for the company's sailing vessels.\footnote{For Ogden's journey see Finlayson to Smith, 11 January 1834, HBCA B.223/b/9, fos. 51-52 and Ogden and Douglas to Simpson, 15 March 1847, HBCA B.223/b/36, fo. 4. On McLeod's 1834 trip from Fort Halkett (on the Liard) to Dease Lake and the Stikine, see Morton, \emph{A History}, p. 706. On the founding of Fort Stikine see also Gibson, \emph{Otter Skins}, pp. 16, 79.}

The next year, he returned to establish a post on the banks of the Stikine which, like Fort McLoughlin, would intercept the flow of interior furs to the coast and which, Work said, "... will enable us to Extend our trade in the country north of New Caledonia."\footnote{Work to McLeod, 1 March 1834, McLeod Papers, NAC. McLoughlin said the post would have allowed the company to "extend the Trade to the British Territory North of 54." McLoughlin to G&C, 14 March 1835, HBRS 4, pp. 134-35.}

However, the Russians, despite an agreement with the British government, prevented Ogden from building the post in 1834.\footnote{The 1825 convention gave the British the right of access to the coast east of 139° longitude from the interior of British territory by the rivers flowing to the coast. Rich, \emph{HBC}, Vol. 3, pp. 610-11; see also Ermatinger, "Notes," p. 117; Galbraith, \emph{Hudson's bay Company}, pp. 134; 145-147; Gibson, \emph{Otter Skins}, p. 77.}

McLoughlin considered that the company's "rights of territory" on the panhandle had been violated, and high-level negotiations between the Russian and British governments ensued which resulted in part in the liberal lease of 1839.\footnote{McLoughlin to Simpson, HBCA B.223/b/15, fos. 147-48. [1837-on card].}

In June 1839, Douglas was instructed to establish posts at Taku and Stikine as a result of the agreement with the Russians,\footnote{Oliver, \emph{The Canadian North-West}, Vol. 2, p. 785.} and in June 1840 he left in the \textit{Beaver} to take possession of what he called the company's "newly acquired territory at the coast."\footnote{Simpson to G&C, 20 June 1841, HBCA D.4/109, fos. 21-32; fo. 21.}

He explored the Taku River, and between June and August built Fort Taku (also...
known as Fort Durham) on the coast fifteen miles south of the river. Douglas described the site as follows:

The situation is in every respect favourable, being well supplied with fresh water, having abundance of good Timber while it is directly in the highway of trade, at a convenient distance for the people of Chilcat and Cross Sound; and should it be hereafter desirable, we can push into the interior, with as much facility from it, as from any point nearer the river.  

Douglas estimated that five principal Native groups resorted to Fort Taku, namely the Saindan-quanay of Port Snettisham, the Tako-quanay of Tako River and fort, the Auke-quanay of the north end of Douglas Island, the Hoona-quanay of Cross Sound, and the Chilcat-quanay of Lynn Channel. Altogether they totalled 1,330 "able men." "Their numerical force as here given is if anything underrated," Douglas wrote. Cheap and plentiful venison was the major provision at the post.

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94Douglas to McLoughlin, 1 October 1840, HBCA B.223/b/28, fos. 77-99; 82-83. "The Fort was built in the Spring of 1840—It was abandoned in the Spring of 1843—The Inlet on which it was built was named by Mr Douglas 'Locality Inlet' situated about 30 miles south of the entrance of Takou River." Finlayson to McKay, 27 December 1888, McKay Papers, BCARS.

95Douglas to McLoughlin, 1 October 1840, HBCA B.223/b/28, fo. 91. This letter also describes these people, slavery among them, etc. Fort Taku, Simpson wrote a year later, "is frequented by a great many Indians occupying the continental shore, both to the northward and southward, likewise by some of the islanders; in all, from 4000 to 5000 souls are more or less dependent upon this establishment for their supplies." The village surrounding the fort contained "from 300 to 400 Indians." Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBRS 29, p. 64. In July 1842 Simpson reported that some 2,000 Indians were around Fort Stikine. Simpson to G&C, 6 July 1842, HBRS 29, p. 162.

96"It is principally maintained on venison, got here as at the other establishments at so cheap a rate from the natives, that we absolutely make a profit on our consumption of provisions, the skin of the animals selling for much more than is paid for the whole carcase." Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBRS 29, p. 64. On provision trades see also Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 210, 243-6.
With a copy of Vancouver's voyages in hand, Douglas then explored north from Taku to Cross Sound and "Kuckuanoo." At the head of Lynn Channel he feasted at a Chilcat village, where he was told that forty-five of their people had been massacred by the crew of an American trading vessel—encouraging words to a British fur trader. The Chilcat told Douglas they traded far into the interior, and asked him to establish a post in their territory, which he was unable to do.\textsuperscript{97} At the end of August, Douglas and his party left to take possession of Fort Wrangell, the Russian post at the mouth of the Stikine River on Wrangell Island. He renamed the post Fort Stikine after the river and the Stikine people. "The Native name of this Tribe," he wrote on 26 August 1840, "is Secat-quanay, they number about 600 able men, and are now the only people, within our territorial limits, who regularly frequent Stekine for trade." Prospects for provisions looked good:

The provision resources of this Post, are more than equal to meet the wants of its establishment, in fact the waters abound with salmon and the forests with deer, which the Natives sell cheerfully, at a moderate price. On one occasion 300 carcasses of Deer, were traded in 15 days, by the late Russian Commandant.\textsuperscript{98}

Douglas then considered the possibility of extending the trade up the Taku and Stikine rivers. "In reference to the feasibility of carrying our settlements into the interior, the preceeding pages show, that so far as regards mere natural obstacles of route, the object is clearly attainable by making the Tako and Stikine Rivers our lines of communication." The

\textsuperscript{97}Douglas to McLoughlin, 1 October 1840, HBCA B.223/b/28, fos. 77-99; 83-88.

\textsuperscript{98}Ibid., fos. 94-97. In November 1841 Simpson wrote that fish and venison at Fort Stikine were "procured in great abundance from the natives at a very cheap rate." Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBRS 29, p. 63. There was no garden at Fort Stikine: McLoughlin to G&C, 20 November 1844, HBRS 7, p. 48. On north coast provisions see also Gibson, \emph{Otter Skins}, pp. 210, 243-6. For an undated "Census of Indians" see "Fort Stikine Miscellaneous 1842-45," HBCA B/209/z/1.
company, however, would gain nothing from doing so because it already controlled the interior trade, and because such a policy if carried into effect might interfere with the trade of the Mackenzie and Liard river posts.99

Regarding the fur trade itself of these rivers, Douglas observed that the absence of navigable tributaries was the "one great difficulty incident to all rivers on the North West Coast." This made trade difficult:

In all such cases I would recommend that the natural enterprise of the native population should be turned to account, by trusting certain individuals of them, with small adventures, on the security of a sufficient property pledge, left in the Company’s stores, to insure punctual payment. The direct tendencies of this system would go to increase our general influence and it may prove, in the end, the safest and least expensive way, of improving the important territory in question.100

The Beaver had some general effects on the coast. The company’s extension of trade to, and eviction of American fur traders from, the North West Coast resulted in the disappearance of the "Kygani" trading jargon and its replacement by the Chinook jargon. Originally there were two trading languages, as Tolmie explained. "Before the HB Steamer ‘Beaver’ in 1836 and later," he wrote in 1878, "made it unprofitable for traders in sailing vessels to visit the Coast, a jargon consisting chiefly of broken Kygani and Tshatsinni Haida and English was the lingua franca, or medium of communication, between traders and Indians as far south to my knowledge as Milbank Sound." This language had been developed by the American maritime fur traders in their business at Kaigani. A year later, Tolmie referred to

99 Though as Anderson noted, "Some of the offsets [of the Taku or Chilkat] are in communication for the purposes of barter with the Chipewyans frequenting the posts of McKenzie’s River." Anderson, "Notes on the Indian Tribes," p. 75.

100 Ibid, fos. 94-97. In the summer of 1845 Basil Bottineau of Fort Stikine, accompanied by Chief Shakes, ascended the Stikine River to a distance of about sixty miles on a fur-trading expedition. Ogden and Douglas to Simpson, 15 March 1847, HBCA B.223/b/36, fo. 4.
"Ky-ga-nie jargon" as "the 'lingua franca' of the Northwest Coast fifty years ago and later, altho now in disuse generally, supplanted by a much changed Chinook Jargon." Support for this theory is lent by Richard Mayne, who noted in 1862 that the southern tribes universally understood Chinook, but the northern tribes did not. He stated erroneously that Chinook was "introduced by the Hudson’s Bay Company" (it was not; it was developed on the lower Columbia before 1821). The Hudson’s Bay Company was, however, responsible for the spread of Chinook over the northern part of the coast; by the late nineteenth century Chinook jargon was spoken as far north as Alaska. The dissemination of this trade language between 1821 and 1843 was primarily an artifact of the company’s extended commercial activities.

By the 1830s the North West Coast had become a major fur region within the Columbia Department. The company’s investment, in terms of personnel, transport, and trade goods, did not, however, yield immediate profit. The coastal fur trade did not turn a profit until 1831, but returns continued to increase as the company took the trade from the Americans; this increase, in time, eventually overcame expenses. In 1833, the company

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101 Tolmie to Swan, 30 December 1878; Tolmie to Swan, 6 July 1879, Swan Papers, UBC. Anderson made a similar comment in 1855: "Queen Charlotte’s Island and Prince of Wales Archipelago are the country of the HAIKAHS; a numerous connexion including the Kygany, Massett, Skittgetts, Hanega, Cumshevas, and other septs. Upon the foundation of their language, as upon that of the Chihelels and Chinooks further south, a jargon has been constructed, serving as a lingua franca for trade, for some distance north of Milbank Sound." Anderson, "Notes on the Indian Tribes," p. 74.


103 "it [the coast] cleared the last outfit £1613—the first gains ever realized from it. . . ." Finlayson to McLeod, 12 March 1832, McLeod Papers, NAC.
traded furs on the coast alone worth £13,000.\textsuperscript{104} This included pelts from New Caledonia and other interior regions that reached the coast through Native trade routes. Thereafter Fort Simpson and the Beaver's fur returns ranked consistently high.\textsuperscript{105}

Coastal extension entailed high expenditures on competition, provision, and transportation. The North West Coast lay on the company's far outer frontier, accessible not overland from New Caledonia but only circuitously at first from the mouth of the Columbia. Furs from the North West Coast lay beyond the company's established continental, river-based transport systems, and the company had to pay more for them when American traders were present. McLoughlin estimated that costs of competition and shipping made it ten times more expensive to obtain furs on the coast than in New Caledonia;\textsuperscript{106} the company's operations in non-competitive regions were generally very profitable.\textsuperscript{107} Until the North West Coast trade turned a profit in the early 1830s, the rich interior fur trades of New Caledonia and the Snake River compensated for coastal losses caused by this capital outlay. But by 1840 between a quarter and a third of the department's total fur returns came from

\textsuperscript{104}McLoughlin to Manson, 20 December 1834, HBCA B.223/b/10, fo. 83. Simpson stated that coast trade returns amounted to £17,700 in 1833. Simpson to G&C, 21 July 1834, HBCA D.4/100, fos. 10-11.

\textsuperscript{105}See Fort Vancouver, Fur Trade Returns, Columbia District and New Caledonia, 1825-1857, BCARS.

\textsuperscript{106}McLoughlin in HBR 6, p. 24, cited in Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{107}Furs sent to England by the company from Rupert's Land in mid-century, for example, were twenty times as valuable as the trade goods exchanged for them, and in the 1840s, fur returns of the Mackenzie District were worth ten times the total expenses of the district, including trade goods, supplies, and wages. Alexander Simpson stated in 1845 that in "protected territories, the value of goods bartered for furs is . . . under one twentieth of the value of those furs in England." In one year the entire value of fur traded by the company was £210,000, and the profit for that year was £119,000, leaving total expenses at £91,000. Alexander Simpson, Life of Thomas Simpson, quoted in Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, pp. 319-320; McLean, Notes, p. 346.
the coast,108 and the coastal fur trade was able to absorb costs involved in the construction of the new posts in Russian territory, forts Taku and Stikine. "The Company's business in this quarter is going on prosperously," Douglas told Hargrave in 1840, "the result of the outfit will not fall short of last year's even tho' it is saddled with the heavy expenses of the new settlements on the coast."109

These policies, posts, and vessels brought an increasing number of pelts to the company's stores, making the coast uninteresting to Americans traders. When Captain John Dominis of the Owhyhee returned to New York in 1832, after two years trading on the lower Columbia, Gulf of Georgia, and Puget Sound, he told a newspaper that the country was "delightful, but that the Hudson's Bay Coy. are too well established for citizens of the United States to make any thing in the way of Fur Trade."110 Similarly, the Boston merchant Nathaniel Wyeth in 1832 lamented the company's control of the coast trade. He spoke admiringly of the "the more economical methods of the British," which he thought could only be defeated by diplomatic manoeuvres. He condemned the "... peculiar state of the trade in the country in question" resulting from the 1828 convention:

I think this convention will not be renewed because it virtually destroys our trade there by opening it to the competition of the British Co, whose capital and facilities are so great that [American] vessells cannot trade to a profit on that coast they being subject to a long delay on the coast whereas the British

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108See Fort Vancouver, Fur Trade Returns, Columbia District and New Caledonia, 1825-1857, BCARS.

109Douglas to Hargrave, 26 February 1840, in Glazebrook, Hargrave Correspondence, p. 311.

trade is effected by posts and their vessels have nothing to do but to discharge and re-load.111

A year later, in 1833, Wyeth wrote that the risk of bringing out a vessel from Boston to the coast was too great: "The whole coast as far as furs are concerned is taken up by the H.B.Co."112 And to a different merchant house in Boston he stated in the same year: "I tell you plainly that my prospects of doing anything on the coast with no more means than I have still left of my own are at an end. I have traversed the country in many directions and found all those places which [are] accessible to shipping occupied or about to be by the H.B.Co. who are efficient opponents."113 Other Americans did not take the company's commercial success as well as Wyeth. "This Northwest fur trade," James Swan wrote, "has been gradually taken from the Americans by that grasping monopoly and incubus on all attempts at American enterprise. . . . "114 The company may have achieved a monopoly on the fur trade of the North West Coast,115 but it did so not through subterfuge but by superior trading resource and prowess. The company possessed no de jure trading monopoly against American merchants anywhere on the continent; American traders had equal rights and access to the entire region before 1846.

111Wyeth to Leon. Jarvis, 6 February 1832, in Young, The Wyeth Correspondence, p. 32.

112The whole reads: "... neither do I deem the business of the coast of such certain issue as to induce me to risk bringing out a vessel. The whole coast as far as furs are concerned is taken up by the H.B.Co." Wyeth to Mess. Tucker & Williams and Henry Hall Esq., 4 July 1833, in Ibid.


114Swan, The North-West Coast, p. 96.

115The company did not enter the coast trade in order to "protect its monopoly," as Gibson states, for it did not possess a monopoly against American traders, but to achieve a monopoly. Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 61.
Gibson states that the Americans voluntarily "abandoned," "quit," or "withdrew" on their own accord in about 1840 when sea otter disappeared and the fur trade of the North West Coast dwindled to "insignificance." It is true that by 1840 both the sea otter and the Americans had left the coast, but American traders had long since (circa 1800) diversified their North West Coast trade to include land furs, principally beaver and land otter, and falling fur returns did not constitute a good reason for their departure. Land furs available on the North West Coast did not diminish in quantity or quality for many years; in 1841 10,000 beaver and land otter were still available annually on the North West Coast, a valuable harvest. Combined profits of Fort Simpson and the Beaver after 1842 were as follows: £3,721 in 1843; £4,285 in 1844; £6,696 in 1845; £6,428 in 1846; and £8,176 in 1847. There is nothing insignificant about these figures.

These pelts found their way not as previously to Canton in the holds of American vessels but to London in the holds of Hudson's Bay Company vessels; profit went to British capitalists not Boston merchants. Gibson's notion of equanimous withdrawal is confounded by statements by American traders such as Wyeth and Dominis (quoted above), and by the continuing attempts of American captains to obtain land furs on the coast in the 1830s. Moreover, Gibson's assertion that the "complacent and conservative" Hudson's Bay

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117 Ibid., 61, 62, 66, 133-6, 204, 240-2, table 7, p. 315.

118 Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, in HBRS 29, pp. 66-67. In 1855 Anderson wrote that "traffic with the interior tribes ... was, and still is, a source of profit" to the Indians on the North West Coast. Anderson, "Notes on the Indian Tribes," p. 75.

119 McLoughlin to Simpson, 20 March 1845, HBCA B.223/b/32, fo. 93; Douglas and Ogden to Simpson, 19 March 1846, HBCA B.223/b/34, fo. 28; Douglas and Ogden to Simpson, 15 March 1847, HBCA B.223/b/36, fo. 20; Ogden and Douglas to Simpson, 16 March 1848, HBCA B.223/b/37, fo. 16; Simpson to G&C, 24 June 1848, HBCA A.12/4, fo. 143.
Company falsely "claimed to have driven off the 'Boston pedlars' from the coast" is not supported by the evidence.\(^{120}\) As Gibson suggests elsewhere, American traders were simply outcompeted for the valuable peltries available in the Indian trade of the North West Coast by the company's combination of extensive capital resources, assertive shipping, and experienced personnel based on the Beaver and at such posts as Fort Simpson.\(^{121}\) When the Hudson's Bay Company, famous for its fur trading expertise on much of the continent, entered the maritime fur trade of the North West Coast, the Americans decided they had better things to do. They were, McLoughlin stated in 1843, "mere Adventurers without capital," no match for the company's skill and resources.\(^{122}\)

Narrative sources from the 1830s document the disappearance of American trading competition from the whole of the North West Coast south of Russian territory. "Five Vessels, well officered, manned & equipped in every respect" were on the coast in the

\(^{120}\)By contrast, [to American traders] the monopolistic Russian American Company was complacent and conservative. To a lesser extent so was the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly in the late 1830s, when it claimed to have driven off the 'Boston pedlars' from the coast. In fact, the latter had long before largely abandoned a business that had become increasingly unprofitable because of overhunting." This is mere assertion unsupported by fact. Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 224. Gibson's conclusion that the overall decline in the coastal and continental fur trades made the company's capture of the coast trade "rather a hollow victory for Simpson" is equally questionable; (Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 82): the decline in the continental fur trade did not begin to lower dividends until 1838 (McKay, The Honourable Company, p. 328), and the fur trade on the North West Coast itself remained profitable for many years afterwards. Gibson leans toward the "Boston pedlars" and sources relating to them, and his assertions betray a lack of awareness of Simpson's larger economic and political strategies on the North West Coast in particular and the Columbia Department in general.

\(^{121}\)For a discussion of some of these policies and advantages see Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 73-83, 123, 158.

\(^{122}\)McLoughlin to Simpson, 20 March 1843, quoted in Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 82.
summer of 1831, according to Finlayson. Simpson expected seven American vessels that year. In 1835 two American vessels were on the North West Coast, and in 1836 at least one. In 1837 the company’s shipping department engrossed the old North West Coast of the maritime fur traders beneath a scheduled web of activity. In 1837 and 1838 there were no Americans on the coast. In 1838, Douglas stated that the Beaver and forts McLoughlin and Simpson were "fully adequate to the protection of the Trade" on the coast. "Our Trade now embraces almost every accessible portion of the Coast as far as the Russian Line of Demarcation," he wrote. At the end of the decade, Simpson spoke proudly of the company’s measures of protection as "amounting to a strict Coast Guard."

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123 Finlayson to McLoughlin, 10 September 1832, HBRS 4, p. ? Gibson’s figures for the 1830s are different (pp. 308-10): there were eight American "Trading and Hunting Vessels on the Northwest Coast" in 1830; eight in 1831; eight in 1832; two in 1833; five in 1834; three in 1835; eight in 1836; three in 1837; two in 1838; four in 1839; four in 1840; and one in 1841. "In fact," he observes (p. 76), "American traders did ply the coast in 1833 and 1837, but increasingly, as British competition intensified and fur bearers diminished, they were freighters of supplies to the Russians at Sitka rather than traders of goods to the Indians."

124 Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1832, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 431-36.

125 Finlayson to Hargrave, 29 February, 1836, in ibid., p. 230; Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fos. 17d-23d; also in HBRS 4.


127 Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBRS 4, pp. 245-46; see also Douglas to Chief Factors and Chief Traders, New Caledonia and Thompson’s River Districts, 9 November 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 36d.

128 Douglas to Simpson, 18 March 1838, HBRS 4, p. 274.

129 Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBRS 4, p. 245.

130 Simpson to G&C, 8 July 1839, HBCA D.4/106, fo.47.
Former clerk John Dunn summarized the company's policies on the North West Coast in his *History of the Oregon Territory*, published in 1844:

The extension of the company's trade northward, along the line of coast from Cape Flattery, and their establishment of a chain of trading stations, coast wise and inland, became the necessary consequence of their mercantile importance, enterprise, and rivalry with the few American traders who hovered in those seas. . . . The consequence is . . . the Americans, who twenty years ago carried on an extensive trade with the natives . . . [and with the Russians] are now totally shut out from both.  

When an American vessel did venture south of Russian territory, as in August 1839, the company was prepared. "The trade of the coast received a rude shock," Douglas said, "from the arrival, in August, of an American vessel, the Thomas Perkins of New York, she was vigorously opposed in the Fur market and left the coast, after a stay of three weeks at Fort Simpson, without visiting any other harbour." And he told Hargrave that:

An American vessel made her appearance in August at Fort Simpson; but met with no encouragement: furs were scarce and we were constantly at their elbow to buy up the few that were in circulation; such treatment they no doubt considered harsh; it however answered our object and had the effect of shortening their stay, at a place where they were neither welcome, nor their presence much coveted.

So effective was the company's policy that the next non-British vessels to trade on the coast were not "North West Coasters" from Boston in search of land furs, or whatever sea otter remained, but commercial whalers. A French whaler visited the west coast in the

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133 Douglas to Hargrave, 26 February 1840, in Glazebrook, *Hargrave Correspondence*, p. 311.
summer of 1841 and two American whalers visited Neweete in 1842.\footnote{134} In October 1843, Captain Alexander Duncan of the Beaver found two American whaling vessels "lying at Newitte," and at the end of October Douglas reported the visit to Simpson as follows:

They have been cruiszing the Coast all summer and made only about 500 barrels of oil apiece. One of these vessels carried an assortment of trading goods, but fortunately so much inferior in quality to ours, that the Indians would not buy them. The American told Duncan that he had picked up about 70 skins, and judging from the Beaver's trade, I presume his statement is not far from the truth. This is an ominous visitation, and I am not without a feeling of alarm about the effects it may have upon our business. If whales are found in the Sounds and Bays of the Coast, the circumstance, when known, will attract so many vessels to these shores as to endanger the security of our trade.\footnote{135}

Douglas's alarm turned out to be unfounded, though the company afterwards kept a close watch on American whaling activity.\footnote{136} Once they learned that the canals and inlets were not whale breeding grounds, whalers did not threaten the company's established trade.

The company's extension of trade to the North West Coast had several results beneficial to the company's larger interest in the Columbia Department. First and most

\footnote{134}Simpson to G&b, 1 March 1842, HBRS 29, p. 110; HBRS 7, pp.

\footnote{135}Douglas to Simpson, 23 October 1843, HBCA D.5/9, fos. 114-121, quoted in "Whales and Whaling" search file, HBCA. These vessels "Lay off the north end of Vancouver's Island" from August 1843 until March 1844 but caught only two whales. McLoughlin to Simpson, 7 April 1844, HBCA B.223/b/31, fo. 156; see also HBRS 6, pp. 176-177, HBRS 7, p. 51. "The coast was visited last summer by several whalers, in search of fish, who fortunately were not provided with trading goods, or they would have caused considerable loss. . . . The last season was I believe a decided failure owing to the want of fish, so the Masters of several whalers, with whom our vessels fell in at sea, reported." Douglas to Ross, 12 March 1844, Ross Papers, BCARS. On these whalers' visits see also Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company, p. 451 n.5 and Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 82-3.

\footnote{136}Three more whalers visited Cape Flattery (Neah Bay) in 1845, but their catches were small. Douglas met their captains at Fort Victoria, learned that they had each taken less than 800 barrels of whale oil owing to a "want of whales," and sold them 120 bushels of potatoes. Douglas to G&b, 16 December 1845, HBCA B.223/b/35, fos. 5-6. Finlayson to McLoughlin, 23 October 1845, HBCA B.226/b/1, fo. 39, quoted in HBCA search file "Whales and Whaling."
importantly it led to the disappearance of American competition on the coast and the company’s acquiring of an important and valuable new trade. Without this commercial control of the North West Coast the company would have been powerless to stop the drift of interior furs from New Caledonia and elsewhere to the coast. Second, control of the coast enabled the company to contemplate, in safety, the formation of provision and export trades on the North West Coast, such as potatoes, timber, and salmon. Such control also enabled the company to contemplate the formation of agricultural establishments on the south coast to supply the Russians with foodstuffs safe from the threat of American competition in the entire region north of the Columbia. Finally, control of the coast would give the British a solid economic base upon which to initiate the formal British colonization of Vancouver Island.
CHAPTER 6
EXTENDING THE FUR TRADE: THE SOUTH COAST AND COLUMBIA RIVER

You know the Fur Trade is all in all, and every minor object must yield to its requisitions.

James Douglas to William Kittson, 1838

On the coast and interior south of the North West Coast the Hudson’s Bay Company put into effect a similar set of policies against American fur trading competition, though here the competition was not so much by sea as by land. This southern region, unlike the North West Coast, led to interior districts where American fur traders operated. There were four main districts south of Cape Mudge: the south coast; the lower Columbia; the upper Columbia and especially its major tributary, the Snake; and the country surrounding the rivers draining into the Pacific between the Columbia and the Sacramento. The company’s sent fur trapping and trading brigades to these regions from its Fort Vancouver headquarters. The company’s actions in this entire southern region were aimed, as on the North West Coast, at preventing interior furs from reaching the coast via Native trade routes, and at creating a "fur desert" on the upper tributaries of the Columbia to discourage American overland commercial interest in the region. Before 1843 the company’s actions eliminated American fur traders from almost every place they came in contact.

The coasting trade between the base of Puget Sound and Cape Mudge (which went without a single name but which will be referred here to as the south coast) included the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the Gulf of Georgia, the lower Fraser River, and Puget Sound. Posts

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1Douglas to Kittson, 20 November 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 37d.
in the region were forts Langley (1827), Nisqually (1833), and Victoria (1843). This was a mild and temperate region compared to the North West Coast, a region of generally poor fur returns and impressive potential for farming, livestock, fishing, and mining. The company engrossed the fur trade of this region as a preliminary to developing a broader range of resources. In the mid-nineteenth century this region became the heartland of British and American settlements on the Pacific coast.

Fort Langley had a number of functions from the start. The post emerged as the centre of the coastal provision trade, the major fur-producing post on the south coast, and a potentially the departmental depot. Fur, as always, was the first priority, and the post drew from a large catchment area (Map 8). In 1830, Archibald McDonald wrote that the fort drew furs from a vast interior and coastal territory extending from the Chilcotin, Thompson's River, and New Caledonia districts in the east; from the foot of Puget Sound in the south; from the end of the Gulf of Georgia to the north; and from the inside coast of Vancouver Island and lower Fraser to the west. He wondered why, with such a large area, the fort’s beaver and otter trade had increased by only 400 pelts over the two previous years. "A superficial glance over this immense space," he wrote, "... naturally led to very high expectations." He blamed the poor returns on recent American competition, on resulting high fur prices, and on the "the unproductive nature of much of the Country itself." Beaver did not thrive in a mountainous country with tumultuous creeks and rivers. "To the Northward of Barrard's Canal the face of the Country is still more Mountainous than hereabouts and of consequence yields but few returns."²

²McDonald to Governor and Council, Northern Department, 25 February 1830, HBCA D.4/123, fos. 66d-72. The fort commanded, in trade, a "vast extent of sea line:" McLeod, Peace River, p. 108. Beaver pelts from Lake Cowichan on Vancouver Island were traded to Yale at Fort Langley. Hayman, ed., Robert Brown, p. 64.
Map 8. The Columbia Department, 1843.
"Fraser’s River does not come up to original expectations," McDonald repeated in 1831, and again he blamed it on the mountainous terrain. Explorations revealed only mountains, lakes, and rapid rivers. In 1827, from Kamloops, Francis Ermatinger had explored the Lilliwit (Lillooet) River; in 1829, McDonald explored the lower lengths of the Pitt and Silliwhite (Lillooet, that is, Harrison) rivers, and Annance explored the Oussaak. McDonald named the Harrison after Benjamin Harrison, a member of the London committee. In 1830 he sent Mr. Yale and eight men to explore the Harrison which turned out to be simply an extension of the Lillooet. Yale concluded that there was "no prospect of drawing Beaver from a country so perfectly inaccessible with the mountains" as the country between Harrison and Thompson rivers.

Gradually, however, the fort’s returns increased as the Boston traders left the south coast. In January 1832, McDonald reported that their absence (since 1830) had caused "a considerable increase of Trade—Fort Langley this year is up from 1400 to 2500 Beaver." And Douglas told McLeod in March of the same year that "Your friend Archy has been doing wonders at Fort Langley, he has collected about 2000 Beaver, and is not a little vain of his feat." Nonetheless, McDonald developed export trades in salmon and timber, and he and his successor Yale developed a farm that supplied the post and the coasting trade; in

3Quoted in Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 50.

4McDonald to Governor and Council of Northern Department, 25 February 1830, HBCA D.4/123, fo.67; same to same, 10 February 1831, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 112-21; 114.

5"Here we got rid of our opposition—a very fortunate circumstance—we are gaining by it in many respects, but none more substantial than a considerable increase of Trade—Fort Langley this year is up from 1400 to 2500 Beaver—tariff rose from one to two skins [per] 2 1/2 pt. Blkt—which I trust will be found a good start for one year." McDonald to McLeod, 15 January 1832, McLeod papers, NAC.

6Douglas to McLeod, 12 March 1832, McLeod papers, NAC.
1834, for example, the fort (along with Fort Nisqually) raised provisions for forts Simpson and McLoughlin, and John McLoughlin warned Yale that he might even draw on Fort Langley's farm in busy years. "There is an excellent farm in the immediate neighbourhood," Simpson wrote on his 1841 visit; "the produce of which with fish and venison maintains the establishment, and assists in provisioning some of the others on the coast."8

The arrival of the Beaver caused numerous changes to Native fur trading patterns on the south coast. Yale, like Manson at Fort McLoughlin, feared that the Beaver would intercept interior furs that previously had gone to Langley.9 The fort's territory included the Gulf of Georgia, and Yale wanted to keep it that way. As a result, McLoughlin prohibited the vessel from trading in Puget Sound or the Gulf of Georgia in November 1836. As he told Work,

You will please give instructions that the Steam Boat does not trade from where the Coals are in Vancouvers Island to Nisqually unless actually accompanied by an opposition, as it would interfere with the trade of Langley and Nisqually—Indeed if there is no opposition it would not be necessary as you know to send her much about.10

Yale also feared the effect of the Beaver selling guns and ammunition in the Gulf of Georgia. "As you state," McLoughlin told Yale in March 1836, "it is evident that the steamer must interfere with your trade, but situated as we are it is impossible to prevent this at present

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7McLoughlin to G&C, 28 May 1834, HBRS 4: 118-19; McLoughlin to Yale, 2 October 1834, HBCA B.223/b/10, fo. 51.
9McLoughlin to Yale, 6 March 1836, HBCA B.223/b/18, fo. 22.
10McLoughlin to Work, 26 November 1836, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 110.
however the steamer will sell no guns or ammunition unless there is an opposition on the
coast as it arms the Indians and renders them formidable. The company had artificially
inflated the price of guns and ammunition at Fort Langley to lessen the likelihood of warfare
among the people in the area and to increase the security of the fort itself.

Native traders, however, could not be prevented from going further afield in search of
what they wanted. Thus, eight years after American competition disappeared from the south
coast, Native competition appeared. In June 1838, Douglas complained that the "the Traders
of that Post" had exchanged furs with the Coquilts for arms and ammunition obtained at Fort
McLoughlin. Douglas was distressed that they had done so at a lower rate than they had
been accustomed to pay at Fort Langley, and he responded to this Native trading competition
by restricting the sale of guns and ammunition at forts McLoughlin and Nisqually. If the
plan should fail, Douglas told Yale, he should form "an active trading party, which might
occasionally visit the natives at the mouth of the River, and buy up their furs."

Despite the growing success of the Fort Langley salmon trade in the 1830s, Douglas
urged Yale to extend the fur trade as far as possible. "Furs constitute the grand
desideratum," he told Yale in August 1838, "and all branches of the business dependent on
Trading Posts are valued only in proportion as they increase the quantity." In May 1839
he advised him that:

It would be proper to fit out small parties of Indians to trap in your neighbourhood,
and if, they want means or appear unwilling to purchase traps, you may lend one or

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11Yale had also opposed moving the fort because it would have "so injurious an influence
on the salmon and fur trade." McLoughlin to Yale, 6 March 1836, HBCA B.223/b/18, fo. 22.

12Douglas to Work, 21 June 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 16d.

two, each, to such trusty men of good character as you think deserving of such indulgence. Our object in so doing is to call forth the dormant energies of the Cowechins; we hope that a relish for the active and manly duties of the chace will grow upon them, & when they have tasted its sweets, they will follow it for its own sake, and do Cheerfully, what they are now constrained to attempt. The plan has been found to work well, both here and at Fort Nesqually, & I see no cause to prevent it succeeding at your post.\textsuperscript{14}

On his 1841 visit, Simpson analysed Fort Langley’s fur trade as follows. The post, he said, "is intended to collect the trade of the numerous tribes inhabiting the mainland coast and east coast of Vancouver’s Island, from Latitude 48° to Point Mudge in Latitude 50°, and from Longitude 121° fifty to Longitude 124°" (Map 8). The country, he said, had "been closely wrought for many years, the returns in furs are gradually falling off; but the increasing marketable produce of the fisheries makes up for that deficiency." Fur returns amounted to about £2,500 and salted salmon returns to about £800. Annual profit was about £1600.\textsuperscript{15}

Extension of the company’s trade to the North West Coast and the south coast increased the number of company vessels entering the Strait of Juan de Fuca (company captains avoided the treacherous west coast of Vancouver Island), with the result that in the 1820s and 1830s Cape Flattery maintained something of the role it had acquired in the maritime fur trade, the difference being that the British traders replaced the Americans. Located on the cusp between the Nuu-cha-nulth (Nootka) and Salish peoples, Cape Flattery was ideally situated to capture the diverse trades of Vancouver Island, Puget Sound, the Olympic Peninsula, and the coastline between Cape Flattery and the Columbia River (Map 7). Fur from the Gulf of Georgia, Fraser River, and inland points had been traded to Neah

\textsuperscript{14}Douglas to Yale, 10 May 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo. 14.

\textsuperscript{15}Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, in HBRS 29, pp. 73-74.
Bay before the construction of Fort Langley. After Fort Langley's construction company vessels traded regularly at Cape Flattery, especially at Neah Bay.\textsuperscript{16}

These vessels traded for fur, fish, oil, haiqua, and slaves.\textsuperscript{17} Cape Flattery oil, also known as lamp oil and whale oil, appears in the record in January 1832 when McDonald reported that he had descended to the trade in "Oil & Blubber" at Fort Langley.\textsuperscript{18}

Thereafter Cape Flattery oil appeared regularly in country produce inventories of coastal forts and vessels, in quantities of up to 160 gallons.\textsuperscript{19} A mollusc from the west coast of Vancouver Island, haiqua (dentalia), was the principal form of currency in the Native economy of the entire ethnographic Northwest Coast, and of much of the interior. The Hudson's Bay Company traded extensively for this shell at Cape Flattery, and its use of haiqua west of the mountains mirrored the company's territorial expansion.\textsuperscript{20} "At Friendly

\textsuperscript{16}Such trading visits, and the occasional visits of American traders, prompted McLoughlin in 1829 to propose that the company keep a vessel at Fort Langley "constantly going between that place and De Fuca Straights." This plan did not materialize probably because the company's coasting business generated enough regular traffic in the straits to capture the trade. McLoughlin to Heron, 20 July 1833, HBCA B.223/b/9, fo. 16; McLoughlin to G&C, 5 August 1829, HBRS 4, pp. 78-79. By the 1830s and 1840s the people of Cape Flattery also obtained trade goods from Fort George on the lower Columbia. James Gilchrist Swan, The Indians of Cape Flattery, at the Entrance to the Straits of Fuca, Washington Territory (Washington, D. C., Smithsonian Institution, 1870), p. 31.

\textsuperscript{17}Simpson stated that only American traders engaged in the slave trade. Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, HBRS 10, p. 80. See Gibson, \textit{Otter Skins}, pp. 233-7, 277-8 for a discussion of slavery on the coast, mainly at an earlier period.

\textsuperscript{18}McDonald to McLeod, 15 January 1832, McLeod Papers, NAC.


Cove," Scouler wrote, "Maquinna came on board and . . . gave us a present of those beautiful shells which the northwest Indians value so much as an ornament. The natives call them hyaquass, and they are not only the jewels, but the currency of the country; and with a sufficient supply of these shells we may purchase any thing the country affords." In 1830, Captain Simpson obtained haiqua from the Cape Flattery Indians, and in 1838 Douglas approved of a plan to have "the Ship call at the Trading Ports in the Straigts." Every means, he said, "of encreasing our intimacy with the inhabitants of the coast are desireable." He instructed Captain Brotchie to stop at Cape Flattery on his way from Fort Vancouver to forts Langley and Nisqually. "Circumstances favouring," Douglas said, "you may touch there for the purpose of trading Furs and Oil with the natives, both on the outward and return voyage." And in 1839, Douglas ordered Captain Scarborough to trade furs, oil, and haiqua at Cape Flattery. So frequent were Scarborough's stops that Neah Bay was known to the fur traders as Scarborough Bay.

The company's Cape Flattery and Fort Langley trade did not guarantee that American traders would stop entering Puget Sound. By 1821 the sea otter trade of this southern region had been seriously depleted, but American merchants still visited in search of land furs and


22Douglas to Kittson, 1 August 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fos. 22-22d.


24Douglas to Scarborough, 13 May 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo. 15.

the remaining sea otters. In 1831, for example, Aemilius Simpson noted that "In the years 1829 & 1830 two vessels from Boston visited the Columbia & Gulf of Georgia but have now left the Coast, it had not for many years previous been the practice of American Traders to go there & I do not think it likely they will soon visit it again & from the Competition that has been carried on by vessels in different interest & the scarcity of Sea Otters. The profits of their Trade is I learn so small that I think it probable they will soon relinquish it." 26 The American ships were the Owhyhee and the Convoy. 27

A permanent establishment was needed to deter such visits. Fort Nisqually was formed on the southeast shore of Puget Sound in 1833 as part of the drive to rid the coast of American traders, and specifically to attract the vulnerable fur trade of Juan de Fuca Strait and Puget Sound southward into the company's hands. McDonald of Fort Langley had tried to redirect this trade eastward and northward to the Fraser without success. In April 1830, McDonald wrote, "the American" (Captain Dominus) had been active in Puget Sound where "the existing opposition is particularly felt." McDonald was distressed at his "total inability to annoy our rivals in the Sound," and proposed to send a mobile trapping party there. 28

McLoughlin had also sent trapping parties to the sound from Fort Vancouver, but the leader of one of these parties, clerk Alexander Mackenzie, and four of his men, were killed by the Clallam people over the winter of 1827-28. 29 The construction of Fort Nisqually prevented the need for such risky expeditions, gave the company a permanent base in the

26 Aemilius Simpson to C. O'Gorman, 7 January 1831, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 103-104.

27 See Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company, p. 99 and Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 308.

28 McDonald to Governor and Council, Northern Department, 25 February 1830, HBCA D.4/123, fos. 66d-72.

29 See "Old Memo Book and Journal of Edward Ermatinger," Ermatinger Papers, NAC.
sound, and allowed forts Langley and Vancouver to concentrate on their respective districts—while precipitating the formation of a new fur trade district at the same time (Map 8). Fur that previously had found its way south to Fort Vancouver was now traded at Nisqually, and the new fort reduced in size Fort Langley’s fur-catchment area by attracting fur from Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

McLoughlin wrote in June 1833 that Fort Nisqually was formed "to relieve us at this place from the necessity of keeping a party constantly in that quarter at the same time it will serve for the trade of Fort Langley and if necessary as a Depot." He put Francis Heron in charge. The soil was poor, he told Heron, "But you will recollect that the main object of the Establishment is not farming and that it is formed in consequence of the American Coasters of late years frequently visiting the Straights of De Fuca which obliged us to keep a party constantly in Puget Sound—and if by being stationary it can also attend a farm so much the better." Initial results were promising. In the eight and a half months before March 1834 Heron traded 1800 beaver and otter, "not a bad beginning."

McLoughlin had hoped the soil at Fort Nisqually would be productive enough to contribute provisions for the North West Coast posts, but in 1835 he decided that self-sufficiency was a more realistic goal. "The soil of your part of the country seems to be very poor," he told Heron’s successor William Kittson, "but I am of your opinion that you

31McLoughlin to Heron [at Fort Langley] 18 June 1833, HBCA B.223/b/9, fo. 12.
32McLoughlin to Heron, 20 July 1833, HBCA B.223/b/9, fo. 16.
33Heron to Hargrave, 1 March 1834, in Glazebrook, Hargrave Correspondence, p. 137.
34McLoughlin to G&C, 28 May 1834, HBRS 4, p. 119; McLoughlin to Governor, Chief Factors, and Chief Traders, Northern Department, 29 August 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 41.
are in the best situation for trade." Like other posts on the south coast, Fort Nisqually’s fur trade did not grow as expected. New posts in this region tended to experience a flurry of fur trading activity as local and usually limited fur supplies were disposed of; thereafter, when fur was obtained, it tended to come from elsewhere (usually inland) in trade. Gradually the futility dawned of attempting to trade fur from Native people who were not primarily hunters, whose inland trade routes were increasingly constrained by the company’s operations in those same interior locations, and whose coastal trade routes and intertribal relations were disrupted by the company’s scheduled traffic. When warfare broke out between the people of Puget Sound and the Gulf of Georgia in 1837 and 1838, the epigrammatic and zealous Douglas simply exhorted Kittson to greater efforts:

> These are, however, the mere accidents, inseparably connected with our business, and must not enfeeble our efforts, or damp the ardour of a bold mind in the pursuit of a worthy object, which would justify a much heavier outlay. We have begun the career of reform, and there must be no pause or indecision in our movements.⁶⁶

In 1841 Simpson defined Nisqually’s catchment area as follows: "The fur trade of Nisqually extends along the coast and interior country to Cape Flattery, likewise the shores of Puget Sound, and north as far as the northern end of Whidbey’s Island; the returns amounting to about £1500, the profit on which is about £700 per annum." (Map 8).

Though the fur trade was not spectacular, and the soil was poor, Fort Nisqually was found to

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³⁵McLoughlin to Kittson, 5 February 1835, HBCA B.223/b/10, fo. 93. [Kittson had just traded a lot of hyaquois].
³⁶Douglas to Kittson, 3 July 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fos. 19-20.
³⁷Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBRS 29, p. 74. Simpson’s recollection that by 1840 "the fur trade was almost extinct in that quarter" was an exaggeration. Simpson to Douglas, 8 January 1852, HBCA A.12/6, fo. 7.
be suitable for grazing and stock-raising. In 1838 Douglas landed 634 Californian sheep at
the fort’s proposed "pasture Farm." ¹³ In charge of the post was Kittson, who eight years
before had stated "I hate every thing that comes in the way of Beaver." He cannot have
been too impressed. ³⁹

The lower Columbia was no richer in furs in 1841 than Simpson had found it on his
first two visits. In 1829 and 1830 the same American vessels (the Owhyhee and the Convoy)
that had traded on the south coast had also entered the Columbia River, but had gone home
disappointed in the shortage of furs and the company’s competition. ⁴⁰ In the 1830s the
company continued to trade fur at Fort Vancouver from Columbia freemen, that is, French
Canadian and Métis guides, trappers, or hunters who had left the company in order to farm
and trap in the Willamette Valley or elsewhere. ⁴¹ Simpson stated in 1841 that Fort
Vancouver’s returns had fallen off because Fort Nisqually had captured the furs that
previously had gone south, but he added that "The Indian trade, however, is but a very small
branch of the business at Fort Vancouver, the operations of which are varied and
extensive." ⁴² By the 1840s the fur trade of the lower Columbia was rarely mentioned in the
voluminous correspondence generated at Fort Vancouver. ⁴³

¹³Douglas to Chief Factors and Chief Traders, New Caledonia and Thompson’s River
Districts, 9 November 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 36d.

³⁹Kittson is quoted in Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 17.

⁴⁰A. Simpson to C. O’Gorman, 7 January 1831, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 103-4.

⁴¹Simpson wanted to build a depot at Willamette in 1832 in part for the "Willamette River
fur trade." Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1832, HBCA A.12/1, fo. 436.

⁴²Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, in HBRS 29, p. 78.

⁴³Though in 1842, Simpson lamented, two American vessels had "[R]emained in the river
about 5 months directing their attention to the fur trade and fisheries, in which they have been
so successful that I fear their visit will be repeated. . . ." Simpson to G&C, 21 June 1843,
From forts Vancouver and Simpson the company also conducted its extraordinary "Sea Otter Adventure," a sea otter hunt designed to prevent the Americans from trading the last sea otter on the North West Coast and on the coast of California. Fort Vancouver was the base of this venture. Traditionally, sea otters were hunted by the people of the coast, traded to Americans or Russians, and sold in the Sandwich Islands or Canton, where they were in great demand. Dalrymple and Mackenzie's plans had called for a union of British commercial interests in which the sea otter trade of the North West Coast would figure prominently. By the early years of the nineteenth century this trade, however, was on the decline, and the failure of the North West Company's and Simpson's "China ventures" had been due in part to the poor quality of pelts sent to Canton: such shipments contained fewer and fewer sea otters.

Simpson, up to date on such matters, was not willing to abandon the sea otter trade without first learning its exact extent. At first he hoped that an extended coastal trade would reap a sea otter bonanza, but in 1829 he learned that the annual American catch on the North West Coast "for some years past" had not exceeded 600 of the animals. Sea otter were simply disappearing through overhunting. Scouler and Dunn had found that the Nootka had

HBCA A.12/2, fo. 171.

44See Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 6-7, 13, 20, 179, 181, 259-60, 277. In 1862 Dr. Wood described the animal as follows: "The Sea Otter, Enhydra Marina, is found throughout the north-west coast of Vancouver [Island]. The skin is much sought after, being an extremely valuable fur. The skin of a full-sized one, undressed, and measuring 6 feet, commands the price of thirty blankets—£12 to £14. They are sent to England, and, when dressed, forwarded to China, where the finest specimens sometimes fetch 100 dols. (American) apiece." Charles Bigland Wood, "Remarks on the Natural History of British Columbia and Vancouver Island," in Mayne, Four Years, pp. 413-22; 414. See A. Ogden, The California Sea Otter Trade, 1784-1848 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941).

45Simpson to G&C, 5 September 1827, HBCA D.4/91, fo. 4; Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, HBRS 10, p. 78.
only few to dispose of, and in 1831 Aemilius Simpson reported that sea otter were scarce in
the Gulf of Georgia and in the lower Columbia. Nonetheless, sea otter survived on the
North West Coast and on the coast of California, and the company hoped to capture this
trade. In 1825 McLoughlin wanted to send a vessel to Spanish ports such as San Francisco
and Monterey. "There are a good many Otters killed about those places," he said. As
late as 1835 and 1836, the Columbia Department produced a total of 404 sea otter pelts for
export to London. These were obtained in the coasting trade, in coastal forts, and at the
Honolulu agency. These pelts were not sent westward to Canton because—as McLoughlin
told Honolulu agent George Pelly in 1836—"We are not authorized to send Furs to any other
but the English market."  

While the company extended its trade vigorously on the coast and in the interior, the
Russians and the Americans chased the remaining Californian sea otters. Aemilius Simpson
reported on the Russians’ activities in 1831:

You are no doubt aware that they have an establishment in the Vicinity of this place
(Ross or Bodega Bay) & also a few people residing on the Favallones a small group
of Islets of St Francisco & usually two of their vessels visit this part of the coast,
their object it is said is to collect grain for the establishments & at the same time
barter for sea Otters &c at present it may be said they hold the right of hunting sea
otters on this part of the coast, as a Citizen of this place has obtained a grant from the
local government to hunt to a certain distance along the coast for a limited period

244. Aemilius Simpson to C. O’Gorman, 7 January 1831, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 103-4.

47McLoughlin to G&C, 6 October 1825, HBRS 4, p. 22. In 1836 McLoughlin sent a fur
trader to California to obtain a permit to hunt sea otter on the Californian coast. McLoughlin
to J. A. Forbes, 5 December 1836, HBCA B.223/b/fo. 114.

48HBCA A.63/5, fo. 115.

49McLoughlin to George Pelly, 17 June 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fo. 44d.
which will likely be renewed from time to time & he employs the Russians who only
pay him a certain (I believe) a small proportion of the produce of their hunts.\textsuperscript{50}

American methods were less scrupulous. General Figueroa stated in 1833 that the
Americans, "without any permission are constantly hovering about the Californian Coast, for
the purpose of hunting the otter." Finlayson reported in 1834 that an American ship had
returned to Oahu from Kaigani with a Native crew on their way to hunt sea otters on the
coast of California, and that another American vessel with "25 Kyganni indian hunters on
board" had taken 650 sea otters in the summer of 1833. Upwards of 900 more were
collected by other American vessels. This, Finlayson hypothesised, ". . . clearly prove that
these valuable animals have migrated from the NW Coast to that of California."\textsuperscript{51} What is
clear in all this is that American traders had started to hire Native hunters at ports such as
Kaigani for the offshore sea otter hunt. The company proposed a similar strategy in 1836
when McLoughlin and Work devised a plan to send the \textit{Nereide} out from Fort Simpson
"with Indians to hunt the sea otter," but they abandoned the plan in favour of sending the
vessel to Honolulu with a load of lumber.\textsuperscript{52}

The company's involvement in the sea otter trade began in earnest in January 1837
when the American brig \textit{Lariat}, captained by John Bancroft, arrived at Fort Vancouver with

\textsuperscript{50}A. Simpson to C. O'Gorman, 7 January 1831, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 103-4.

\textsuperscript{51}Finlayson to Smith, 11 January 1834, HBCA B.223/b/9, fos. 51-52. There were, in fact,
two distinct species and distinct populations of the animals—a northern and a southern (or
California) sea otter, of which the northern was much more valuable. James R. Gibson, "The

\textsuperscript{52}"In regard to the Nereide if you can dispense with her services, on the Coast you will
exchange Captains . . . and instead of sending her to hunt the sea otter you will send her direct
here [Fort Vancouver], without putting Indians on board. . . ." McLoughlin to Work, 8
December 1836, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 117.
sea otters for sale. McLoughlin was impressed that Bancroft was an Englishman and that he had "been frequently engaged in hunting the sea otter on the Coast of California for the Americans." The two men struck a deal: Bancroft would buy the Lama from the company for $5,500 if McLoughlin would grubstake Bancroft with an outfit of trade goods for the sea otter trade; but because Bancroft did not have this much cash, McLoughlin agreed to accept part of the potential catch of sea otter skins as payment. The Lama was an English ship, and Bancroft an Englishman, so all seemed well.

Bancroft was to collect part of his outfit at Fort Vancouver and part at Fort Simpson, and he was to hunt sea otter on the North West Coast and deliver his catch to Fort Simpson or to the company’s Oahu agency. The arrangement was not unlike Bancroft’s earlier deals; he simply changed from an American to an English vessel, and took his orders from Fort Vancouver instead of Boston. By March 1838 Bancroft was at "Kygarney" hunting sea otters for the company, and the arrangement was extended for the winter of 1838-39. Douglas again forwarded supplies for Bancroft’s sea otter hunt to Fort Simpson, and he instructed George Pelly at Oahu to pay Bancroft $35 for a large prime sea otter, $20 for a

53McLoughlin to Bancroft, 16 and 17 January 1837, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 126. The Lariot was Slacum’s ship: see HBRS 4, p. 185.

54McLoughlin to Simpson, 20 March 1837, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 146.

55McLoughlin to Robert Cowie, 5 June 1837, HBCA B.223/b/17, fo. 12d. Before his death, Bancroft had paid $4,750 of the purchase price: Douglas to Pelly, 24 October 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fos. 33d-34.


57Douglas to Bancroft, 24 October 1838, HBCA B.223/b/, fos. 35-35d.
middling prime, $12 for a small prime, and $1 for pups—which Douglas noted were "not worth purchasing." Nothing was heard of Bancroft until April 1839, when Pelly notified the Governor and Committee that:

The NW Indians employed in your former Brig the Lama hunting for Sea Otters on the Coast of California mutined and shot Capt Bancroft and his wife who was with him Capt. Bancroft was killed and his wife lingered until her arrival here she is since dead, the Pirates then compelled the Mate to take them back in the Lama to Kygarnee on the NWst Coast and having then plundered the Brig of everything of value they then very unexpectedly permitted her to return here.59

After this disaster, the company reverted to trading sea otter pelts on the coast and at the Sandwich Islands. In 1838, for example, Pelly bought a parcel of beaver ("of a good quality for Southern Skins," possibly from the Sacramento), and the next year McLoughlin authorized Pelly to spend up to $1,500 on sea otter at the islands.60 Around this time Governor Vallejo lamented that sea otter had been exterminated on the Californian coast; he blamed the Russians for it.61 Sea otter purchases at Oahu continued right up until 1843. In March of that year the company's agents paid $925 for twenty-five sea otter pelts.62 McLoughlin, who called them "a very fair quality for southern skins," instructed agents Pelly

58 Douglas to Bancroft, 6 December 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 43; Douglas to Pelly, 24 October 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fos. 33d-34.

59 Pelly to Smith, 30 April 1839, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 52. The murderer's name was Yeltenow. "Graydon" was also killed. J. Molteno to E. Grimes, January 1839, in The Hawaiian Spectator 2:2 (April 1839), pp. 236-38.


61 General Vallejo in HBRS 7, p. xxvii.

62 Pelly and Allan to McLoughlin, 22 March 1843, HBCA B.223/b/30, fo. 22.
and Allan to "continue to lay out our spare funds in the purchase of any good skins that may fall in your way."\textsuperscript{63}

Fort Vancouver was also the depot for an extensive interior fur trade. As in the 1820s, the company sent out annually from Fort Vancouver two well-equipped and highly-professional trapping, trading, and hunting parties, each of about fifty men (Map 5). The first went up the Columbia and southeast down the Snake River; the second went up the Willamette and overland to San Francisco Bay. A visitor wrote that "the hunters are equipped with hunting instruments, firearms, traps, etc., each outfit amounting to between £40 and £50 per man."\textsuperscript{64} For the better part of the 1830s these parties comprised the only non-Native presence in much of what is now the western United States.

The Snake River was the richest of the two hunts. Edward Belcher wrote that the Snake River brigade hunted as far as the headwaters of the Sacramento River; a London official thought it went as far as "the Head Waters of the Rivers falling into the Bay of San Francisco," while Tolmie recalled that it went as far as a "point called the Rendezvous in the Rocky Mtsns where American trappers had at a certain period of the year to congregate and sell their furs to the highest bidder."\textsuperscript{65} (See Map 8).

\textsuperscript{63}McLoughlin to Pelly and Allan, 3 August 1843, HBCA B.223/b/30, fo. 30.


The purpose, as before, was to create a fire guard against American fur traders.66 John McLean, who was in New Caledonia in the mid 1830s, summarized the company’s Snake River policy as well as anyone:

The primary object, however, is not so much the trade, as to keep brother Jonathan in check . . . , and to deter him from forming any establishments on the coasts; there being a just apprehension that if once a footing were obtained on the coast, an equal eagerness might be manifested for extending their locations into the interior. Strong parties of hunters are also constantly employed along the southern frontier for the purpose of destroying the fur-bearing animals in that quarter; the end in view being to secure the interior from the encroachments of foreign interlopers.67

The one serious American competitor was Nathaniel Wyeth of Boston who in 1834 built Fort Hall on the Snake River nine miles above the Portneuf River. McLoughlin deployed one the strategies he had learned with the North West Company in its fight against the Hudson’s Bay Company before 1821; he established Fort Boise on the Snake specifically to compete with Wyeth. This post was so successful that in 1836-37 Wyeth vacated the country and McLoughlin bought his entire fur trading operations west of the Rockies.68

The company rebuilt Fort Hall in adobe and added it to its Snake River operations.69

66See Innis in HBRS 3, pp. lxxiv; xxvii; lxvii.

67McLean, Notes, p. 4. It was the company’s policy, McLean wrote, (p. 351) to destroy the fur-bearing animals "along the whole frontier," "to lay waste the country, so as to offer no inducement to petty traders. . . . " On the Snake parties see also Hammond, "Marketing Wildlife," p. 17.

68HBCA search file, Fort Hall. On Wyeth’s activities see also Galbraith, Hudson’s Bay Company, pp. 101-107.

69Simpson later referred to "Forts Hall and Boisee-known as the Snake Country." Simpson to G&C, 1 July 1847, HBCA A.12/3, fo. 439. When McLoughlin went on leave in 1838, he told Douglas to maintain Fort Hall, to reduce the price of traps on the Snake to induce the Indians to hunt, and to trade with trappers who "hunt beyond our reach" only if they could pay for their supplies. McLoughlin to Douglas, March 1838, HBCA B.223/b/18, fos. 25-27d.
1839 Wyeth described, with knowledge and respect, the company's advantages to an American congressional committee as follows:

I will observe that the measures of the Hudson's Bay Company have been conceived with wisdom, steadily pursued and have been well seconded by their government, and the success has been complete without any gross violation of existing treaties. Experience has satisfied me that the entire weight of the company will be made to bear on any trader who shall attempt to prosecute his business within its reach, in proof of which is the establishment at Fort Boise after Fort Hall had been set up, and the fact that a party was kept within the vicinity of Fort Hall with an especial view to injure its trade. No sooner does an American concern start in these regions than one of these trading parties is put in motion, headed by a clerk of the company whose zeal is stimulated by the prospect of an election to a partnership in it. He is fitted out with the best assorted goods from their ample stores and given men who have long been in the service of the company and whose wages are in its hands as security for fidelity. Under these circumstances we come in contact. If there are furs in the hands of the Indians, their superior assortment of goods will obtain them.70

Thus the company's competitive strategies along the Columbia River were just as effective as along the North West Coast. The company's "scorched-earth" policy on the American frontier of the Columbia Department was so successful that fur returns from the company's Snake Expeditions declined from 2,099 large beaver in 1826 to 800 in 1836, in the process rendering the region uninteresting to American traders trapping from the east.71

The second trapping party was known as the Southern Party and as the "Bonaventura Expedition" after the earlier name of the Sacramento River. It was led by Michel Laframboise, John Work, and others between 1832 and 1844.72 Tolmie wrote that it "went south thro' Oregon and Northern California to certain parts of San Francisco Bay, where


71Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company, pp. 95-96.

72Alice Bay Maloney, "California Rendezvous," The Beaver 275 (December 1944), pp. 32-37.
Beaver, then very high priced, greatly abounded. The mouth of the Sacramento was the chief place for beaver. At first outfitted and sent overland from Fort Vancouver, after 1841 the Southern Party was outfitted from the company's short-lived agency at San Francisco Bay (See Map 8).

Before it was famous for its gold, the Sacramento River was known for its beaver. It took the company about fifteen years (1829-1843) to exhaust this resource. These fur traders did not notice the gold in the river. In 1833 Finlayson received permission from the Spanish authorities to hunt, free of charge, in the Sacramento Valley. This cleared the way for further hunts in the interior of California. On his departure in 1838, McLoughlin instructed Douglas to pay particular attention to the Sacramento Valley, and to send Laframboise as far south as Trinidad Bay in the spring to hunt. Laframboise was also "to explore the entrance to the Colorado in the Gulf of California which is said to abound in Beaver and the Head waters of the Feather River."

Both McLoughlin and Douglas took a keen interest in the Sacramento and San Francisco Bay, an interest that led them to establish their Yerba Buena (San Francisco) agency in 1841. In the spring of 1840 Douglas obtained a license from General Mariano Vallejo for "permission to trade and hunt furs in any part of the Mexican territories, paying a

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73 Tolmie, "History of Puget Sound and the Northwest Coast." "In 1821, getting hold in the West, the HBCo sent trapping and trading parties north, east, and south. During the first half of the thirties . . . John Work led the party going to California." Tolmie to James Swan, 27 March 1884, Swan papers, UBC. A company official, possibly Simpson, noted that this expedition hunted "the country situated between the Columbia and the bay of San Francisco towards the Coast." "Memo. left with Lord Melbourne and the Right Honble. Charles P. Thompson," 20 December 1837, in Klotz, Certain Correspondence, p. 28.

74 Finlayson to William Smith, 11 January 1834, HBCA B.223/b/9, fos. 50-51.

75 McLoughlin to Douglas, March 1838, HBCA B.223/b/18, fos. 25-27d.
duty of half a dollar per skin on our returns. . . .” Later that year, McLoughlin instructed Douglas to secure "an exclusive right to hunt the Bay of St. Francisco and the Gulph of California" and "a tract of Country some distance from St. Francisco where we might establish a Rendezvous for our people.”

In January 1841, Douglas visited Monterey to ask for Alvarado’s cooperation with the company’s "projected commercial enterprises" in California. Alvarado allowed him to send a party of thirty beaver hunters to California "in order to extend their hunting operations into every part of the country." General Vallejo, meanwhile, was writing that the interior fur trade of California had been devastated by the company. "The [sea] otter and beaver which abounded in California, have been exterminated, the first by the Russians, and the latter by the Columbians who still continue to trap them to the point of extinguishing the species, as the Russians have done the otter.”

Simpson, unlike McLoughlin and Douglas, had a dim view of the prospects of the Sacramento fur trade and of California’s commercial potential and ordered the termination of both the Bonaventura Expedition and the California agency on his 1841-42 visit.

The Hudson’s Bay Company’s invasion of the Pacific slope of North America was an impressive feat by any standards. "When the Company first went into the disputed territory of Oregon," Edward Ermatinger wrote in 1857, "they found the trade in the hands of the

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76Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBRS 29, pp. 77.

77McLoughlin to Douglas, 27 November 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 108.

78Douglas to Juan B. Alvarado, Governor General of Upper and Lower California, 11 January 1841. Alvarado stipulated that half the men in the [Southern] party were "Natives of the country." Alvarado to Douglas, 13 January 1841, ibid, fos. 25-29.

79General Vallejo in HBRS 7, p. xxvii.
Americans & Russians; they contested it with them & drove both Russians and Americans from the field in every part of the continent that belonged to or was claimed by Great Britain. Ermatinger's memory was accurate. In 1843, the company controlled the fur trade of the North West Coast, Queen Charlotte Islands, Vancouver Island, Gulf of Georgia, Puget Sound, the watersheds of the Stikine, Nass, Skeena, Fraser, Thompson, Columbia, Willamette, Umpqua, Siuslaw, Rogue, Snake, and Sacramento rivers, and the interior of the entire continent west of the continental divide, excluding Russian territories. Boston and Missouri traders had abandoned the interior and the North West Coast, though in 1842 an American ship traded for fur in the Columbia River. American fur traders, with equal access and legal status in the region, were no match for the expertise, facilities, or capital of the British fur trade.

The extension of the trade had several important results: spatially and politically it gave the company carte blanche and kept other merchants away from the coast and interior; commercially, it enabled the company to develop export trades unhindered by competition and with complete access to Native trading networks, resources, and labour. During this period, of course, all pelts from this region continued to be sent annually by ship to London for auction, in a pattern identical to the company's much older fur trade on Hudson Bay. The extended fur economy of the coast was distinct, however, from the evolving regional non-fur economy of the same region, a new economy that required its own shipping, expertise, and markets.

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80Ermatinger, "Notes," p. 113. "After 1825 American competition from the east was insignificant, and after 1830 American sea captains had ceased to be a menace." Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company, p. 177.
CHAPTER 7

NEW MARKETS FOR NEW EXPORTS

A more indefatigable and enterprising man [John McLoughlin] it would have been difficult to find. With an energetic and indominate spirit, his capacious mind conceived and pushed forward every kind of improvement for the advancement of commerce and the benefit of civilization. With only seven head of horned cattle, and others which he imported from California, by good management and perseverance he stocked the whole of the Oregon territory until they had increased to thousands. He built saw mills, and cultivated an extensive farm in the beautiful prairie of Fort Vancouver. . . . By every means in his power he promoted trade and commerce with other countries. To Sitka, the company exported produce—chiefly wheat, to the Sandwich Islands lumber and salmon, and to California hides and tallow.

Edward Ermatinger, 24 August 1857

Between Simpson's second and third visits to the coast, the company did more than extend the fur trade. By itself that trade extension was impressive, but it was only the beginning of the story. Extension of the trade and eviction of foreign traders gave the company sole access to the commerce of the region. Under Simpson and McLoughlin, the Hudson's Bay Company took advantage of the Pacific position it inherited from the North West Company. Transport, market, and labour conditions favoured the rise of export trades

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1Ermatinger, The Hudson's Bay Territories, p. 19. Knowledge of the company's diversification on the west coast is woven through the historiographical fabric of the Columbia Department fur trade. See e.g. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 308; Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, p. lii; Lamb's introduction to HBR 6, pp. xlvi-xlix; Ormsby, British Columbia, pp. 73, 78, 81; Alfred L. Lomax, "Dr McLoughlin's Tropical Trade Route," The Beaver 294 (Spring 1964), pp. 10-15; Arthur L. Throckmorton, Oregon Argonauts Merchant Adventurers on the Western Frontier (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1961), p. 5; Margaret Ormsby's introduction to Hartwell Bowsfield, ed., Fort Victoria Letters, 1846-1851 (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1979), p. xli ("policy of economic development"). Gibson has explored these themes in most depth. "Activities like farming, fishing, lumbering, mining, and manufacturing, rudimentary under the fur trade, had to be developed further to sustain the company:" Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 77; see also pp. 18, 198; Gibson, "A Diverse Economy."
on the west coast. The Kingdom of Hawaii, Mexican settlements in California, and the
Russian American Company's headquarters at Sitka emerged after 1829 as the company's
Pacific markets for Columbia produce (Map 6). At first the company conducted a general
commercial business in Oahu and Yerba Buena through the British consuls; later, the
company opened agencies in those places, neither of which was yet American. After 1839
Sitka was the market for the company's agricultural exports from Puget Sound. I will
discuss the opening and purpose of these markets in turn before discussing, in the next two
chapters, the exports themselves.

Simpson had suggested, on his 1824-25 visit, that the company's vessels could be put
to work in the dead months of winter trading to Canton and to South American markets. He
was right, but he need not have looked so far abroad. Hawaii became the company's
dominant market on the Pacific, the answer to Simpson's 1825 scheme and, after the
relaxation of the East India Company's monopoly in 1834,2 the answer to Dalrymple and
Mackenzie before him. Regardless of their potential as a market for Columbia Produce, the
Sandwich Islands promised also, in 1821, to occupy a central place in the trade of the North
Pacific. Since Cook's visit in 1778, the islands had increased in importance in the Pacific
and North West Coast trades.3 They were one end of a "quadrilateral trading circuit" in the
maritime fur trade including the islands, the coast, Canton, and Boston; they "not only

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2Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 28.
3A solid body of writing relates to the HBC's activities in Hawaii. See Alexander Simpson,
The Sandwich Islands (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1843); G. V. Bennett, "Early Relations
of the Sandwich Islands to the Old Oregon Territory," Washington Historical Quarrelly 4 (April
1913), pp. 116-126; William P. St. Clair, Jr., "Beaver in Hawaii," The Beaver 272 (September
1941), pp. 40-42; Lomax, "Tropical Trade Route;" Alexander Spoehr, "Fur traders in Hawai'i:
The Hudson's Bay Company in Honolulu, 1829-1861," The Hawaiian Journal of History 20
furnished supplies, but eventually furnished several opportunities for the maritime fur traders to increase their profits.\textsuperscript{4} Fur traders entered the Sandalwood trade at the islands, and the islands became the base of the North Pacific whaling fleet.\textsuperscript{5} The largely Native population of the islands in 1835-36 was reported to be 107,954.\textsuperscript{6}

As it happened, the islands were also the closest overseas market to the Columbia River, and later to Vancouver Island. On average they were a three week trip from the coast, but they could be reached in as few as sixteen days from the mouth of the Columbia; London, by contrast, was a six month voyage from Honolulu.\textsuperscript{7} It is important to bear in mind that the Americans did not have a permanent foothold on the Pacific until they obtained Oregon and California in 1846 and 1848, and that through the Hudson's Bay Company the British commercial presence on the Pacific coast of North America was more permanent than the American until that time. This meant that the closest American ports, markets, and centres of production were on the eastern seaboard, a long and tedious voyage around Cape Horn. The Sandwich Islands were centrally-located on the routes between the Orient, the


\textsuperscript{6}Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1842, HBRS 29, p. 130 n 2. See Gibson, \textit{Otter Skins}, p. 287 for similar population estimates.

\textsuperscript{7}See e.g. "List of Vessels at Oahu, from July 5, to Nov. 22 1835," and "Arrivals at Oahu, Sandwich Islands, Jan 1 Aug 1 1836," HBCA A.11/61, fos. 3; 16. A passage of forty days from Fort Victoria to Honolulu was considered a "very long voyage." Pelly and Allan to G&C, 1 February 1846, HBCA A.11/62, fos. 88d-90. A passage of eight months from London to Fort Vancouver was considered "protracted." The three week figure is from Gibson, \textit{Otter Skins}, p. 208.
south and central Pacific, the Columbia River, and the North West Coast and possessed abundant provision supplies.8

The company’s long involvement there began in November 1827 when McLoughlin asked Aemilius Simpson of the Cadboro to report on the timber market in the "Owhyhee Islands."9 Simpson finally reached Oahu in January 1829 with a cargo of lumber from the company’s new sawmill near Fort Vancouver. The lumber got a good price.10 While there, he recruited Richard Charlton, since 1825 the British Consul at Oahu, as the company’s agent. Charlton was dismissed in 1833 when it was discovered that "he was engaged in the fur trade of the North West Coast."11 In 1835—after being replaced as agent—Charlton recalled that he had accepted the agency for patriotic reasons:

I beg to state that I never solicited the Agency for the Company—when Captain Simpson first asked me I refused, but afterwards upon asking me again I considered that I might benefit the Commerce of my Countrymen by accepting it, though the Company in London (it appears by a letter I have lately received) have stated I was never an agent for the Hudson’s bay Company. I therefore enclose a copy of Captain Simpson’s letter a duplicate of which Captain Simpson forwarded to London.12

George Simpson was enthusiastic about this new trade which was, after all, a variation on his Canton vision of 1824. On his second visit, he and McLoughlin embarked

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8On the islands’ important role in provisioning the maritime fur traders see Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 44-7.

9McLoughlin to Aemilius Simpson, 13 November 1827, HBCA B.223/b/3, fo. 23.

10G. Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, HBRS 10, p. 110.

11Simpson to George Pelly, 26 November 1833, HBRS 4, p. 353; McLoughlin to G&C, 18 November 1834, HBRS 4, p. 124. Charlton, in all probability, was buying fur obtained on the North West Coast from Boston traders and shipping it to Canton.

on a scheme to develop markets for Columbia produce in the north Pacific. He convinced the Governor and Committee in March 1829 that timber and salmon when "united with the Fur Trade" of the coast would become a "very profitable branch of business:"

During the dead Season of the Year, say from October until March, when little can be done on the coast, we purpose employing the Vessels in carrying Timber, either to the South Coast wherever a market can be found for it, or to the Sandwich Islands, which yield a very handsome profit.

Their scheme called for the appointment of agents at these markets "so that we may have merely to deliver our Cargoes, and return in time for the Fur Trade to the Northward." So confident was Simpson that he embarked on the project without waiting for the Governor and Committee’s approval:

We are therefore satisfied, that your Honors will see the expediency of connecting this branch of business with the Fur Trade, and as much valuable time (3 years at least) would be lost by transmitting the information we have collected to England, and waiting for your instructions thereon, we trust you will not consider that we are exceeding the limits of authority invested in us, by anticipating your approval of our design, and by our acting accordingly. 13

Presented with a fait accompli, the Governor and Committee could only acquiesce. That fall, McLoughlin repeated the plan to open a timber trade with Oahu in the dead season, added a compelling political reason. "[W]e must avail ourselves of all the resources of this Country if we have to compete for the trade of it with the Americans as we may depend they will turn every thing they possibly can to account." 14 As it happened, the

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13Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, HBRS 10, pp. 75; 84; 86-87.
14McLoughlin to G&C, 5 August 1829, HBRS 4, p. 77.
threat of American commercial competition at Oahu was much more serious and immediate than the threat of American competition on the Columbia River.\footnote{American traders developed what Gibson calls a "New Northwest Trade" at the Sandwich Islands before about 1830 and their activities led to a "commodification" of the islands' Native trade. Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 251-8, 281-4.}

One by one other commodities joined timber as Columbia exports. McLoughlin's plan was a success. Charlton sold the 1829 lumber immediately and at a good price, prompting McLoughlin to write that "Salmon also might be made an Article of trade—this would require an Increased Establishment."\footnote{McLoughlin to McLeod, 1 February 1830, McLeod Papers, NAC.} By 1832, when Finlayson visited the islands, he found that barrelled salmon from the Columbia and Fraser rivers was selling much better than timber, and he continued:

> In the months of March & October, the period at which the Whalers visit this place, 400 Bushels of potatoes would command a dollar each—200 Barrels of Flour of about 196 lbs each, would sell at not less than 9 dollars pr Bbl, & from 20 to 30 firkins Butter at about 30 @ 35 cents pr lb. These are all the productions of the Columbia I could discover likely to command a market here.

> It is hardly necessary to observe that the advantageous situation of these Islands, will, at some future period, render them of some importance to the Commercial world. . .

\footnote{Finlayson to McLoughlin, 2 August 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fos. 40-43; fo. 41d.}

So substantial were the company’s sales of Columbia produce in 1832 that Finlayson bought for the coasting trade Captain McNeill’s brig Lama, paid for principally, Finlayson wrote, "from the proceeds of the timber & salmon sent to that market."\footnote{Finlayson to Hargrave, 21 February 1833, Glazebrook, Hargrave Correspondence, pp. 104-106.}
Word of these events got back to London at about the same time as the East India Company finally relaxed its opposition to the presence of any other British company in its monopoly area. In October 1833, the Governor and Committee resolved, on Simpson’s advice, "that it is essential the Company should have an Agent at Wohao." They appointed Governor John Pelly’s cousin George Pelly to the position at a salary of three hundred pounds a year.19 Previously (and perhaps significantly) a captain in the East India Company, Pelly became acting British Consul at Oahu in the 1830s and Hawaiian agent for Lloyd’s of London. He remained in sole charge of the agency until 1841.20 His mandate was to superintend the company’s affairs at Oahu and "the finding of an outlet for, and effecting sales of Timber Salmon and other articles . . . [and] the providing freight to fill up the Company’s Ships on their Return Voyages to England."21

Known for most of the 1830s as "Woahoo," the Oahu agency was, until 1844, attached to the Columbia Department and nominally was under McLoughlin’s direct supervision.22 The company was one of seven leading business houses at the islands.23 The company’s store was located, until 1846, in Honolulu on the corner of King and Nuuanu streets, where it occupied a two-storey building.24

19HBCA A.11/62, fo. 91.


21Simpson to George Pelly, 26 November 1833, HBRS 4, p. 353.

22Lomax, "Tropical Trade Route," p. 30.

23Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1842, HBRS 29, p. 126.

24St Clair, "Beaver in Hawaii," p. 41; Spoehr, "Fur Traders," p. 34.
The Governor and Committee appreciated the commercial and political value of the islands. In 1833, they summarized their reasons for opening the agency:

"The growing state of importance of the Sandwich Islands as a place of resort and refreshment for shipping engaged in the Whale and Pearl Fisheries of the South Seas, and in the New Zealand, Spanish Main and North West Coast Trades, likewise that of China, arising from the late changes, which have been made with regard to the East India Company's Charter, leads to the hope that it may become a favourable outlet for timber, cured Salmon and other articles which may be provided for these markets at our Establishments on the North West Coast. . . .

Timber and cure salmon can be provided from the Honble Companys Establishments on the North West Coast to any extent for which an outlet at a remunerating price is likely to be found and as the Sandwich Islands produce no Timber, and the population of the Spanish American Coast are unaccustomed to the severe labour of hewing and rafting, all that is used in these Islands, and the greater part of what is required on that Coast are imported from the United States and New Zealand, but the facilities which the Honble Company possess for preparing the Timber at their Establishments, and sending it to market on their shipping at a Season of the year when they can not be employed in the Fur Trade or in any other useful service, afford the Company such a decided advantage over these People in that branch of business, that if well conducted there is every probability of its following entirely into the Company's hands: and the Towns and Settlements on the Spanish American Coast being chiefly by Catholics, and the Waters of those Countries being unproductive in Fish, it is thought that, an extended trade if judiciously pushed, may in the article of cured salmon be opened in that quarter.

You will therefore be pleased, to direct your attention particularly to the opening of a Trade in those Articles. . . ."25

It took several years to make shipments of Columbia produce profitable. In June 1835, Simpson complained that although shipments of lumber and salmon had not yet made

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25They also told McLoughlin "on no consideration sell on Credit, but effect sales at such prices as you can readily obtain on prompt payment in Specie or for such Goods in Barter, as are likely to command prices by Shipments to England or elsewhere." G&C to McLoughlin, 4 December 1833, in HBCA search file "Timber."
money, he was willing to give the business a fair trial. Later that year the Governor and Committee urged McLoughlin to send all varieties of Columbia produce to Woahoo, and added a political reason for wanting to push this trade:

With regard to the Sandwich Islands Timber trade . . . we think that a large stock, say a year's consumption, should be always kept up in the hands of Mr George Pelly which would very soon put a stop to the further importation of Timber by the Americans, a large stock of Salmon for the Spanish market should likewise be kept on hand there, likewise Flour, Malt Cheese Butter Beef Pork Potatoes and other farm produce, in short anything that will sell and pay the expenses should be sent, whether the trade yields a profit or not, as it enables us to maintain a large Establishment of People [at Fort Vancouver] which on particular occasions might be of the utmost importance to our interest, and would always command respect both in the eyes of Strangers & the Natives.27

The Beaver's arrival liberated a ship or two, and McLoughlin had a vessel constantly employed in taking valuable shipments of Columbia produce to Oahu. In the fall of 1836 Pelly received permission to build a lumber shed and to keep "a small assortment of goods .

26"Our Timber and Salmon Trade to the Sandwich Islands and to the Southern coast of America has not hitherto been productive, nor are we yet sufficiently informed as to the extent of the demand, it will however have a fair trial, and I am in hopes will be found to answer." Simpson to G&C, 10 June 1835, HBCA D.4/102, fo. 16.

27G&C to McLoughlin, 8 December 1835, HBCA B.223/c/1, fos. 44-48d; 45d-46.

28McLoughlin to Edward Ermatinger, 1 February 1836, Ermatinger Papers, NAC. In January 1837, the Governor and Committee responded to McLoughlin's concerns about the viability of the agency: "We are concerned to observe that the Sandwich Islands do not present such a favourable market for Columbia produce as could be wanted. We nevertheless think it advisable to furnish a constant & regular supply at such low prices as to put down competition and prevent others from interfering in that branch of business, and by so doing we have no doubt that in due time that market will become dependent on us, as in the articles of Timber, Salmon, Grain & other Provisions, no one can afford to undersell us." G&C to McLoughlin, 25 January 1837, HBCA B.223/c/1, fos. 53-62d; 58d-59.
as a medium of payment for the stores I may be required to procure for the service of the Columbia Department and your shipping." 29 Pelly embarked on the retail trade in 1837. 30

Trade, naturally, worked in both directions. Many commodities originating in the Pacific, Caribbean, and Indian oceans, and required on the coast, were cheaper at Oahu than in London, just as Columbia produce was on the whole cheaper at Oahu than similar produce of those markets. Vessels returned to Fort Vancouver having delivered their Columbia produce to Oahu and picked up commodities needed in the company's coastal operations or for the Indian trade, principally salt, molasses, tobacco, and rice. Such goods, whether they originated in the Hawaiian Islands or not, were known at the company's agency as "Island Produce." 31

The Sandwich Islands' most lasting export to the west coast were Sandwich Islanders or Kanakas, who previously had been employed occasionally as crewmen by maritime fur traders on the North West Coast, and also by the North West Company and Pacific Fur Company on the lower Columbia. 32 There was nothing systematic in these earlyhirings, however. Pelly extended and enlarged upon this precedent by hiring Kanakas in large numbers at Honolulu; in 1840, for example, he sent "[S]eventy Natives they are fine young


30"I am happy to see . . . that the retail system was to be begun as the experiment can only cost the board of Mr Sangster." McLoughlin to Pelly, 10 January 1838, HBCA B.223/b/18, fos. 11; 12d.

31Pelly and Mactavish to G&C, 10 January 1849, HBCA A.11/62, fo. 346.

32They were known in the 1820s and 1830s as "Owyhyees" or "Owyhees" after the island of "Owyhee" or "Woahoo" (Oahu), but by the late 1830s the terms "Sandwich Islanders" and "Kanakas" appeared at the same time as the islands stopped being referred to "Woahoo." "Hawaii" and "Hawaiians" were not seen until the 1850s. On Kanakas see also Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 151, 212-3, 291.
athletic men and engaged to serve the Company for three years... Many such men stayed on the coast. Kanakas were a nearer and cheaper form of labour than Lower Canadians or Scots, and their employment was one of many strategies of economy promoted by Simpson. "There are from three to 400 natives employed on the Columbia River," a spectator observed in 1844; "in the service of the Hon. Hudson's Bay Co. on that coast. They are generally engaged for a period of three years, and gain $10 per month. They are never sent east of the Rocky Mountains." Later they gave their name to many places in British Columbia, notably "Kanaka Row" (Humboldt Street) in Victoria and Kanaka Bar on the Fraser. Thus the social history of the west coast fur trade originated in the interstices of its economic fabric.

Most exports from Oahu were of the inanimate variety, and salt was the most important. In an era before refrigeration, salt was required for preserving salmon, beef, pork, and butter. As early as 1825 McLoughlin was low on English salt and considered the Sandwich Islands as a source; in 1827 he needed 300 bushels of salt beyond what came from

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34Spoehr, "Fur Traders," pp. 32-34 provides the most recent discussion of Kanaka labour on the coast.

35"In consequence of the extension of trade on the other side of the Mountains, there is a constant demand upon us for men which we cannot meet without serious inconvenience to the districts on this side as our Complement at every Establishment has been reduced to what is absolutely required for the transport of Outfits and Returns." Simpson to G&C, 25 July 1827, quoted in HBRS 3, p. lxx.

36The Friend (Honolulu), 1 September 1844, p. 79. This figure of three or four hundred is probably too high and may represent the total number of Hawaiians sent to the coast by the company. They were paid £10 a year not $10 a month.
England, and 150 bushels the next year. 37 Salt springs were found on the Willamette River, and salt could be made at Fort Vancouver, but McLoughlin stated in 1828 that "to make it here will cost 20/-pr. Bushel and we cannot even make the quantity we require." 38 In the same year, Simpson asked the Governor and Committee to fill up the spare cargo on the supply ship with salt, which he called "a very necessary article, of which, we cannot have too much as what may not be required for our own consumption can be well applied in curing Salmon for the Spanish Settlements." 39 Excellent sources of salt existed on the island of Oahu. 40 With the appointment of Charlton as Oahu agent in 1829, the Sandwich Islands replaced England as the major source of salt, and ever-increasing quantities were needed for the diverse coastal trades.

The major salmon fisheries on the Columbia and Fraser rivers created the greatest demand for salt. In 1832, Fort Langley alone received 620 bushels direct from Oahu, and two years later McLoughlin asked Pelly to fill with salt every ship bound for the Columbia. 41 This was easier said than done. In March 1835, Pelly told McLoughlin that: "There is much difficulty in procuring Salt here, the King and Chiefs having determined not

37 McLoughlin to G&C, 6 October 1825, HBR 4, pp. 20-21; McLoughlin to G&C, 14 November 1827, HBR 4, p. 54; Simpson to G&C, 10 July 1828, HBCA D.4/92, fo. 68. Cite beef salting recipe.

38 And McLoughlin continued, "the want of Salt will injure us very much..." McLoughlin to A. Simpson, 24 June 1828, HBCA B.223/b/3, fo. 4. McLoughlin sent a party to make salt in 1827: McLoughlin to G&C, 11 August 1827, HBR 4, pp. 4: 51. Tolmie recorded the Willamette salt springs on 8 May 1825. See Tolmie, Journals, p. 175.

39 Simpson to G&C, 10 July 1828, HBCA D.4/92, fo. 68.


41 Finlayson to Captain Grave, 2 August 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 38; McLoughlin to Pelly, 18 November 1834, HBCA B.223/b/10.
to allow it to be sold under two dollars per Barrel. . . ." Pelly had, however, "secured 800 barrels at one dollar & a quarter, which will make you independent of this restriction for some time." In 1835, the Columbia and Fraser River fisheries each received 1,000 bushels, though this was in excess of annual salt requirements; in 1838 McLoughlin estimated the "annual supply" from Oahu should be 1,800 bushels. Shipments increased enormously in the 1840s with the expansion of the company’s salted salmon and salted beef trade on the coast.

It is hard to distinguish between goods obtained at Oahu that were destined for the Indian trade and those destined for the company’s own workforce. Some staples, notably tobacco, tea, rice, and molasses, were destined for both. The sources do indicate, however, that the company filled a void in the coastal trade caused by the withdrawal of the Americans from the coast. Starting in 1830, Charlton began to buy tobacco (leaf and plug) and rice at Oahu for the coastal fur trade. In 1832, Finlayson purchased 11-12,000

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42Pelly to McLoughlin, 21 March 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 115.

43McLoughlin to Commander of the HBC’s Ship from England, 4 June 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 18; McLoughlin to Yale, 4 June 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 19; McLoughlin to Pelly, 10 January 1838, HBCA B.223/b/18, fo11; 12d. Shipments of salt from Fort Vancouver to Langley between 1838 and 1841 ranged from 600 to 840 bushels: HBCA C.7/177, fos. 64d; 68; 79; 84-85.

44See Simpson to G&C, 6 July 1842, HBRS 29, p. 159.

45See for example the 1834 Fort McLoughlin trade tariff, which included molasses and rice, in Tolmie, Journals, p. 312. On rice as a trade item see also Walbran, British Columbia Coast Names, p. 65. Sugar was also obtained at the islands. Ladd & Co was the "principal manufacturer" of sugar at the islands. Pelly and Allan to G&C, 28 October 1843, HBCA A.11/62, fo. 6. On earlier (pre-1830) exports of molasses, rice, tobacco, cloth, beads, etc. to the coast (from Boston) see Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 185-6, 215-28.

46"I forward you a list of a few articles we will require by the return of the Vancouver." McLoughlin to Charlton, 18 November 1830, HBCA B.223/b/6, fos. 21-22.
pounds of rice, 6,000 pounds of molasses, and from 1,000 to 1,500 pounds of plug tobacco at Oahu. One of the Oahu merchants proposed buying these commodities in South America. In 1833, Finlayson bought 30,000 pounds of rice, fifty tuns of rum, fifty tuns of molasses, 200 pounds of vermilion, 20,000 yards of American domestic bleached sheetings, and fifty pairs of black American handkerchiefs. He described these as trade goods:

which are absolutely necessary for the prosecution of our business to advantage on the Coast, as the departure of the opposition therefrom has thrown a greater demand of these articles upon us than we anticipated, and I am happy to find that its reappearance thereon is not at present expected.

In January 1838, McLoughlin estimated the "annual supply" needed at the islands as 1800 pounds of coffee and 100 pounds vermilion. Such exports were already staples of the North West Coast fur trade developed by the Bostonians, and in later years exports of these items from Oahu to the coast would increase enormously.

The victory over American traders on the coast threw other business into Pelly's hands. In 1835, Pelly entered into a contract with the American merchant, William French, of French and Company of Honolulu, to supply staple goods like salt and molasses and also

47Finlayson to W.G. Reid, 25 July 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo.37. "As regards the Tobacco, Molasses, & Rice, I shall bring you samples of them from the coast [of South America] with an estimate of what I can afford to deliver them to your agent here." W. G. Reid to Finlayson, 26 July 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fos. 37-37d. Finlayson replied that if Reid would those articles, "we would be most happy to give you preference in those articles, over any other contractor that might cast up." Finlayson to Reid, 27 July 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 37d.

48Pierce and Thomas D. Hinckley to Finlayson, 4 January 1834, HBCA B.223/b/49. These two merchants were on their way to Lintin.

49Finlayson to Smith, 11 January 1834, HBCA B.223/b/9, fos. 50-51.

50McLoughlin to Pelly, 10 January 1838, HBCA B.223/b/18, fos. 11; 12d.
items like tea, paint oil, treacle, cocoa, cordage, soap, rum, black camlet, linseed oil, claret, and prayer books.\textsuperscript{51} French & Co, in 1836, provided Pelly with Congo, Hyson, and Twanky tea from China, and also Chinese sugar.\textsuperscript{52} Tobacco was important: Pelly obtained leaf and plug tobacco from the United States via the islands.\textsuperscript{53} By the early 1840s, tea and rice from China and tobacco from the United States were staple demands of the Columbia trade,\textsuperscript{54} in addition to molasses, sugar, and salt. McLoughlin even put in a request for quinine or Peruvian bark, presumably for medicinal purposes.\textsuperscript{55}

Among more exotic trade items obtained at the islands were "Chinese boxes," made of sandal wood or camphor wood and popular as feast or potlatch goods on the coast. A visitor to a potlatch near Fort Victoria in the 1840s remarked on the "numerous beautiful Chinese boxes, which find their way here from the Sandwich Islands."\textsuperscript{56} Japanese sailors

\textsuperscript{51}This list of goods is from "Invoice of Goods shipped on board the Brig Dryad . . . June 9th 1835" [forgot source] and Pelly to Smith, 30 April 1839, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 51. In 1835, McLoughlin complained of the poor quality of goods supplied by French & Co and observed that some barrels had been filled with smaller amounts than they could hold. McLoughlin to Pelly, 30 September 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 55. French & Co. also traded supplies to the Russian American Company at Sitka. See Galbraith, \textit{Hudson's Bay Company}, p. 450 n 50. French had previously been in Canton. See Gibson, \textit{Otter Skins}, p. 96.

\textsuperscript{52}Mcloughlin to Pelly, 5 June 1837, HBCA B.223/b/17, fo. 14. Quantities on card.

\textsuperscript{53}Pelly to McLoughlin, 20 January 1836, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 123.

\textsuperscript{54}See McLoughlin to Pelly and Allan, 3 August 1843, HBCA B.223/b/30, fo. 28 and McLoughlin to Pelly and Allan, 1 July 1844, HBCA B.223/b/31, fo. 114. On the place of tea exports from Canton in the maritime fur trade see Gibson, \textit{Otter Skins}, pp. 92-4.

\textsuperscript{55}"As perhaps you may not be able to procure the quantity of Quinine I request, have the goodness to make up the deficiency by sending us thirty pounds of powdered Peruvian bark for every pound that is deficient." McLoughlin to Charlton, 27 October 1831, HBCA B.223/b/7, fo. 9.

\textsuperscript{56}Kane, \textit{Wanderings}, p. 153; see also Swan.
from a shipwrecked junk driven ashore on the coast south of Cape Flattery even found their way into the company’s accounting system.57

Coral was another unusual export from Oahu to the Columbia. It was burned to make lime, which in turn was used as a fertilizer, or whitewash, or an ingredient of mortar, which was needed in the foundations of buildings including sawmills. Finlayson sent a shipment of coral to Fort Vancouver in 1832 with the following instructions to McLoughlin:

The coral shipped on board the Eagle is sufficient to make 300 Bbls of Lime. The larger the kiln, the smaller it is pounded or broke down, & the sooner it is burnt after being landed, the more productive it is. It must not be exposed to Rain before burning it, as in that case it is very perishable. It does not require so much firewood as the common limestone, but in every other respect the same process is used in burning it.58

Limestone was found on the Willamette in 1833 but did not replace coral. In 1835, McLoughlin asked Pelly for load the Ganymede with a load of coral as ballast "by every trip she in future makes, till we have the quantity we require." "I have only sent 12 fathoms of Coral," Pelly replied, "the Chiefs demand an unreasonable high price for it, but at such prices as they choose to dictate."59 Vessels were ballasted with coral in 1837 and 1838.60

The Oahu agency also had a commercial life of its own in the regional economy of the north central Pacific. English industrial goods were sold in large quantities after 1837,


58 Finlayson to McLoughlin, 2 August 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 42d.

59 McLoughlin to Pelly, 3 October 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 70; Pelly to McLoughlin, 20 January 1836, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 130.

60 McLoughlin to Pelly, 6 June 1837, HBCA B.223/b/17, fo. 16d; McLoughlin to Pelly, 10 January 1838, HBCA B.223/b/18, fo. 13d.
when Pelly opened a retail store and stocked it with English naval stores for the North Pacific whaling fleet. In return, Pelly loaded the ships for England with items such as mother-of-pearl shell and whalebone. This London-Oahu trade in naval stores and other commodities is significant in that it had little directly to do with the Columbia Department fur trade or with shipments of Columbia Department produce; it was simply the result of a desire to capitalise on an unexpected new commercial opportunity.

Ships, most of them part of the two hundred-strong North Pacific whaling fleet, as well as British, French, Russian, and American men-of-war, stopped at Oahu for refit or repair.\(^6\) They required specialised naval stores and hardware that the Hudson's Bay Company, trading directly with London, was in an ideal position to supply. The company's annual vessel bound from London to Fort Vancouver arrived at Honolulu every spring after a voyage of 135 to 160 days.\(^7\) This meant that special cargoes of what were known in the accounts as "European Manufactures" or "Imported Goods" could be sent annually to Oahu. Herman Melville's *Moby Dick or The White Whale* (1851), based on the author's work on an American Pacific whaler between 1840 and 1842, is set at this time, but Melville does not mention the merchants from Hudson Bay.

Whaling ships provided the principal demand for naval stores. "So much depends on time in this limited and fluctuating market," Pelly wrote in 1839, "our Sales are much influenced by the arrival of the Ships in May and Novr, particularly the Novr Fleet, which

\(^6\) "There is a large amount of capital invested in the Northern Pacific Fisheries, there being upwards of 200 vessels, from almost every commercial country in Europe and America, at present, engaged in it." Douglas to Ross, 12 March 1844, Ross Papers, BCARS.

\(^7\) Spoehr, "Fur Traders," p. 31.
generally refit here and take in their supplies for their next cruise.” The demand in 1838 was very great for sheet copper and sheathing nails: "Thirty or forty crates would meet a ready sale at all times from thirty eight to forty four cts. per Pound," Pelly said. In 1839, he asked for a shipment of "Staple articles" which "would return the Company a handsome profit," such as anchors, anchor chains, copper sheathing, rolls of canvas, and Stockholm tar. Black and white paint, he said, "would always sell to good advantage." And in 1840, Pelly ordered sheet copper, ship’s paint (black and white and fancy colours), brown canvas, tar, pitch, varnish, paint brushes, iron hoops, copper bolts, rivets for hoops. He thought that English salted pork and beef would sell well to the whalers, and that arrow root (a starch) would obtain a high price at the islands. Pelly also imported Arrowsmith’s Pacific charts and English nautical almanacks for his shop. In addition he kept up an active commercial correspondence with McLoughlin concerning commodities required by the

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63 Pelly to Smith, 30 April 1839, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 52.

64 Pelly to Smith, 22 December 1838, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 48. For a complete breakdown of quantities etc see [List of Goods shipped from Honolulu to London, 22 December 1838, HBCA B.191/z/1, fo. 66. Naval stores were also required in the company’s growing “naval establishment” on the coast. In 1834, McLoughlin had chastised the Governor and Committee for sending from England molasses and salt (which McLoughlin could readily get at Oahu) instead of blankets and naval stores (which he could only get from London). McLoughlin to G&C, 18 November 1834, HBRS 4, p. 123. On the company’s entry into retail merchandising at Oahu see also Spoehr, "Fur Traders," p. 53.

65 Pelly to Smith, 21 March 1840, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 53.

66 Pelly to Smith, 30 April 1839, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 51-52.

67 "2 Setts of Arrowsmith’s Charts of the Pacific Ocean & Islands including the China Seas and Straits of Sunda and Malacca. 6 Nautical Almanacks for 1848 . . . and as late as procurable," in "Requisition for the Sandwich Islands. Outfit 1847. Shipment 1836," HBCA A.11/62, fos. 101-106d.
whalers. "Do you manufacture Tar," he asked him in 1835; "as it is always an article in
demand here."68

There was little point in sending vessels home with a light if valuable cargo of fur and
a few other items (such as isinglass and castorum) for the English market if space remained
on the vessel, and Pelly found supplementary or ballast cargoes at the islands. Whalebone
traded from American whalers by the company’s agents was sent to London in small
quantities (1,347 lbs in 1842) after 1840.69 Whalebone had a number of industrial uses
including the manufacture of women’s corsets. The company’s London secretary, Archibald
Barclay, made some inquiries in the London market, and reported to Pelly and Allan that:

Good whalebone is a saleable article here. Columbia [Outfit] 1843 realised £15 per
Cwt. Tortoiseshell is worth 23/- to 24/- per lb, Mother of Pearl Shells also sell well
say £20 per ton for unpicked, in that state therefore they may be purchased pretty
freely if an opportunity offers.70

Pelly and Allan replied that "Whale bone is principally American caught and they prefer
sending it to the United States."71

Even more incongruous than the trade in naval supplies and whale bone was the
Hudson’s Bay Company’s trade in mother-of-pearl shell (used in the manufacture of buttons
and furniture inlay) from Honolulu to London. In 1838 Pelly sent the Columbia to London

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68Pelly to McLoughlin, 21 march 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 118.

69Between 1840 and 1843 four batches of whale bone were exported for a total value of
£123. Fort Vancouver Account Book, 1836-1860, HBCA B.223/d/212. The 1842 figure is
from HBCA A.53/1.

70Barclay to Pelly and Allan, 18 September 1844, HBCA B.191/c/1, fo. 1.

71Archibald Barclay to Pelly and Allan, 18 September 1844, HBCA B.191/c/1, fo.1; Pelly
and Allan to G&C, 30 November 1845, HBCA A.12/62, fo. 79.
with a cargo containing 27,514 pounds of mother-of-pearl shell (worth £4 a ton) as ballast, as well as furs, slush (waste fat), tallow, and bullock hides and horns. Such exports continued in the 1840s.

During his time in charge of the Columbia Department, in 1838-39, Douglas showed the same enthusiasm for the Oahu agency that he showed for everything else connected to his job. He wrote that he was forcing out competition for salmon and timber at Oahu by undercutting the competition; he would raise prices once the competition had gone. "I will not fail to pour in supplies, of Columbia produce, by every opportunity, and endeavour, by that means, to confirm, the impression already produced." The company's trade had become so extensive by the late 1830s that in 1839 Simpson decided to extend its retail function and provide Pelly with a colleague. He instructed his cousin, Alexander Simpson of Moose Factory, to go to the Sandwich Islands "for the purpose of assisting Mr Pelly in forming a commercial Establishment there," and he took steps to extend the company's operations. He told the Governor and Committee that:

We have in Council directed our attention particularly, to the Sandwich Islands Trade, and are of opinion a commercial establishment on a more extended scale than any that has yet been formed there, would be successful in commanding all good business in that quarter; and are further of opinion, that those Islands now present a good field for mercantile enterprize.

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72Pelley to Smith, 22 December 1838, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 48. For a complete breakdown of quantities etc see [List of Goods shipped from Honolulu to London, 22 December 1838, HBCA B.191/z/1, fo. 66. The ballast reference is from Pelley to Smith, 30 April 1839, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 51. On this shipment see also Spoehr, "Fur Traders," p. 123.

73Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBR 4, p. 267. A week later Douglas told Pelly to close the Oahu accounts at the same time as the rest of the Columbia Department Fort Vancouver's. "This method will save trouble & prevent confusion." Douglas to Pelly, 24 October 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 34.

He wrote that "Country Produce of different kinds will be forwarded from the Columbia likely to meet a ready sale."\textsuperscript{75}

The agency also served a larger financial purpose in the islands, helped undoubtedly by the fact that George Pelly's cousin Sir John Pelly served simultaneously in the 1840s as Governor of the Bank of England and of the Hudson's Bay Company.\textsuperscript{76} The well-capitalised Hudson's Bay Company acted, in effect, as banker to the Hawaiian government.\textsuperscript{77} The company possessed the financial stability and ties in the City of London to finance a £10,000 loan to the Hawaiian government in 1842.\textsuperscript{78} "Knowledge of markets, shipping practices, and foreign finance were matters of daily routine," Alfred Lomax writes.\textsuperscript{79}

Simpson was impressed by his visit to Oahu in 1841-42. "This port," he wrote in March 1842, "is more over becoming an entrepot for a portion of the South America, California, Manilla and China markets:"

For country produce from the Columbia and North West Coast, such as timber, salmon, flour, &c, and a few other articles, there will always be a demand, as we can furnish most of those supplies at a cheaper rate than they can be obtained from elsewhere . . . it is advisable to maintain our establishment here . . . [which] will afford an outlet for country produce and freight for the shipping. . . ."

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75}Simpson to G&C, 8 July 1839, HBCA D.4/106, fo.14.
\item \textsuperscript{77}St. Clair, "Beaver in Hawaii," p. 41.
\item \textsuperscript{78}Spoehr, "Fur Traders" p. 37.
\item \textsuperscript{79}Lomax, "Tropical Trade Route," p. 14. On the role of "bills of exchange" (essentially cheques drawn on English banks) in the Pacific economy at an earlier date see Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 249.
\end{itemize}
Regarding Pelly’s agency, Simpson wrote: "It has not been characterised by a business like finish or neatness, but I consider . . . that great zeal has been manifested throughout this Agency. . . ." The 1841 requisition was for about £2,500 worth of British goods; and on his 1841 visit Simpson estimated that requisitions of English goods should amount to between £4,000 and £5,000 a year. In his short stay at the islands, Alexander Simpson recommended "the shipment from England of British goods, to the value of upwards of ten thousand pounds." No doubt he referred largely to naval supplies for the retail trade.

Simpson noted that the company rented its premises from King Tuanoa himself and that a retail store had been commenced "for the convenience and accommodation of the public." Always on the lookout for a new way to make a dollar, Simpson investigated the possibility of opening a trade between the islands and London in the article of "Kukui, or Candle Tree Oil."
By 1843, even the hidebound accountants on the Bay were impressed by the rapid creation of a Pacific outlet for the company's goods—though they had a hard time making sense of accounts redolent with lumber, ships' anchors, barrelled salmon, flour, coral, mother of pearl, and talk of Kukui Oil and Twankey Tea. As Dugald Mactavish said in April 1842,

A handsome profit appears to have been made upon the transactions at the Islands for Ot 1841—of that Amount however there is about £ 800 merely nominal, the rest is good. We do not have sufficient time to examine particularly the Accounts received from the Islands—or rather their Accounts do not sufficiently explain—upon what the profit has been made—but I strongly suspect it has been principally upon the Timber & other Country produce sent there from the Columbia.\(^6\)

Some very substantial cargoes made their way from the Columbia and Fraser rivers. The *Dryad* landed a cargo worth $5,054 in December 1835, and the *Ganymede* arrived a month later with $4,898 worth of salmon and lumber.\(^7\) In the first six months of 1836, Pelly sold $6,976 worth of Columbia produce; in September, he had about $7,000 cash in hand.\(^8\) In August 1843 Pelly and Allan had on hand Columbia produce valued at £3,907 ($19,535, at an exchange rate of 5:1).\(^9\) A detailed account of agency sales from July 1843 to February 1844 survives and is shown in Table 1:

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n. 1.

\(^6\)Dugald Mactavish to Hargrave, 2 April 1842, Hargrave Papers, NAC.

\(^7\)McLoughlin to Pelly, 5 June 1837, HBCA B.223/b/17, fo. 14.


\(^9\)Pelly and Allan to G&C, 10 August 1843, HBCA A.11/62, fo. 5.
Table 1

Oahu Sales of Country Produce and Imported Goods ($), 1843-1844\(^{90}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Country Produce</th>
<th>Imported Goods</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1843</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>663.39 1/2</td>
<td>518.42 1/2</td>
<td>1181.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>1150.75 1/2</td>
<td>292.97 1/2</td>
<td>1443.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>881.03</td>
<td>434.75</td>
<td>1315.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>194.10</td>
<td>5.12 1/2</td>
<td>199.22 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>1353.62</td>
<td>248.00</td>
<td>1601.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>693.06</td>
<td>433.52 1/2</td>
<td>1126.58 1/2</td>
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<td>January</td>
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Pelly's statement that business at the islands revolved around the arrival of the whaling fleets in May and November\(^{91}\) is apparent in these figures. It is likely that by 1843 the agency made about £2,000 annually in profit.

By 1843 the agency was a permanent commercial fixture in the island economy. Native Hawaiians, resident Europeans and Americans, and visiting merchants and whalers grew to depend on the company's high-quality and regular imports of Columbia produce and English naval stores.\(^{92}\) The Polynesian, a Honolulu newspaper, wrote later that the company's agency "was for years a sort of commercial moderator, a mercantile balance

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\(^{91}\) Pelly to William Smith, 30 April 1839, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 52.

\(^{92}\) The American whalers' business, by contrast, was seasonal and less enduring. Lomax, "Tropical Trade Route," p. 11; Spoehr, Fur Traders," p. 31.
wheel when fluctuations seized on others." This resulted from the regularity of the company's imports, from its extensive shipping department on the Pacific, and from the proximity of the agency to the coast. "[T]he Company's control of its own shipping," Spoehr writes, "meant that the Agency could depend on a fairly regular shipping schedule. This gave a competitive advantage to the Agency and benefitted the community through the dependable arrival of imports."

California was the second Pacific market explored by the company. Mexico had achieved independence from Spain in 1821; California remained a province of Mexico until 1848 when the Americans took it over. Until the 1840s, California's sole exports were cattle hides and tallow. Hides produced leather while tallow produced soaps, candles, and axle grease. The Californian market was, however, limited. The hide and tallow trade did not attract other industries or a large population, and Californians had an unfortunate reputation for indolence, apathy, and commercial backwardness, at least in the eyes of the pushy traders from the Columbia. Dugald Mactavish, who spent two months in Monterey in 1846 during its seizure by the United States, wrote that:

The Country is a beautiful one and most fertile—but nothing has been done for its improvement by the late possessors of it, who were altogether too indolent & proud to turn their attention to any thing but killing Cattle and living upon what the hides & tallow would produce in the market.91

88The Polynesian is quoted in St. Clair, "Beaver in Hawaii," p. 42.


90Monterey had been captured by the Americans in 1846.

91Mactavish to his mother, 14 November 1846, Hargrave papers, NAC. See also Herman Leader, "HBC in California," The Beaver 279 (March 1949), pp. 3-7. (on brigades, sheep, cattle) and James Alexander Forbes' book.
The American side of the California hide and tallow trade has been immortalised by Richard Henry Dana. An undergraduate at Harvard College, Dana dropped out owing to poor health and signed on as a crewmember of a Boston hide and tallow ship. He left Boston in 1834 on the Pilgrim, owned by Bryant & Sturgis, and spent the years 1835 and 1836 collecting and curing bullock hides in California. His book, Two Years Before the Mast, describes the journey. Unfortunately Dana did not record meeting his rivals from the Columbia. He did, however, share the Anglo-American view of Californians:

The Californians are an idle, thriftless people, and can make nothing for themselves. The country abounds in grapes, yet they buy, at a great price, bad wine made in Boston and brought round by us, and retail it among themselves at a real (12 1/2 cents) by the small wine-glass. Their hides, too, which they value at two dollars in money, they barter for something which costs seventy-five cents in Boston. . . .

In 1830 the company knew little about California except that, like Oahu, it was a potential market for Columbia Produce. After initial and unsuccessful attempts to market Columbia lumber or salmon there, the company entered the hide and tallow trade in 1833, and in 1841 established an agency at Yerba Buena to barter English goods for hides and tallow in a cashless economy. California also became an important source of livestock, particularly sheep and cattle, for the company's farms to the north.

The company's first foray occurred in December 1830, when McLoughlin sent Aemilius Simpson to the "Spanish Settlements" with a cargo of deals and salmon. "The object of my present visit to this place," Simpson told a Monterey merchant in January 1831,

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92Richard Henry Dana, Two Years Before the Mast. A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1981; First Published 1840). On Bryant & Sturgis's involvement in the California hide and tallow trade see Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 260.

93Californian missions had provided supplies of wheat to the maritime fur traders. Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 19, 259-60.
"is to endeavour to find a market for Deals & Salt Salmon as it is the intention of the HBCo to encourage the fisheries at their establishments on the Coast & to erect Saw Mills to saw Deals if these commodities will pay. In Upper California I find the demand is very limited for these articles. . . ."94 George Simpson noted that his cousin's trip had been a disappointment; that timber and salmon were not in great demand; that money was short; that hides and tallow were the sole media of exchange. "It does not appear that any profitable branch of business can be opened in that quarter." Simpson thought, however, that the company could profitably enter the coastal "barter trade" in hides and tallow.95

McLoughlin wanted to examine the markets even further south, and made plans in 1831 to send Aemilius Simpson in the next dead season "to the coast of Mexico or Peru with a cargo of Salmon and Deals."96 Simpson's death, however, destroyed the plan, and it was not until October 1833 that Finlayson left Fort Vancouver with a full cargo of timber and salmon bound for "the California and Wahoo Markets." He was unable to sell any of the lumber or salmon and he was forced to pay cash for some 15,500 lbs of tallow required in

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94Aemilius Simpson to C. O'Gorman, 7 January 1831, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 103-4, reel 3M54. This was probably Mr. O'Gorman, later McLoughlin's son-in-law. See Burt Brown Barker, ed., The Financial Papers of Dr. John McLoughlin (Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society, 1949), p. 68.

95Aemilius Simpson discovered that "The demand for those articles is not great, consequently the prices low, that the duties are high, and that payments are made in Hides & tallow, there being little or no specie in circulation, so that it does not appear that any profitable branch of business can be opened in that quarter." George Simpson to G&C, 18 July 1831, HBCA A.12/1, fos. 370-418; 378-379. That hides and tallow were the circulating medium was apparent in 1831, when Captain Simpson could only dispose of boards at San Francisco "payable in hides at 2 dollars each." McLoughlin to McDonald, 4 June 1831, HBCA B.223/b/7, fo. 2. The first mention of hides as a possible export was 1826. McLoughlin to G&C, 1 September 1826, HBRS 4, p. 30.

96McLoughlin to G&C, 20 October 1831, HBRS 4, p. 231.
the company's own trade. Finlayson recruited James Alexander Forbes, the British consul, to act as the company's agent.

George Simpson summarized the findings of Finlayson's voyage in July 1834, showing an early caution (which reappeared in 1841) about extending the company's trade too extensively on the shores of the Pacific:

The object of Chief Factor Finlayson's voyage to California and the Sandwich Islands, was, to ascertain if any advantageous branch of trade could be opened at the former place; and to dispose of timber and other country produce. . . . Chief Factors McLoughlin and Finlayson seem to think that sufficient Tallow and hides, to fill up the annual ship for England, might be purchased on advantageous terms there . . . but I am opinion that we have quite enough of business on our hands at present on the shores of the Pacific, and am therefore averse to entering on any fresh branch of trade, until our affairs are put on a more regular and uniform footing than they at present appear to be.

McLoughlin was not prepared to give up so easily, and in May of 1834 he sent Captain Langtry with a cargo of deals and spars on an adventure to the "Ports of California or South America." Langtry was to sell his cargo by private sale or public auction; to announce that the company would make three voyages a year; and to try the market of San Diego with his lumber. "You will please to observe that if the timber pays we intend to make a regular business of it—and in course of time would undertake to supply any quantity

97"Our object in touching at San Francisco was to procure tallow—for our establishments, and to ascertain if any market could be found there for our timber and Salmon—In the former we have been tolerably successful, having purchased 62 Bags of 250 lbs each at the comparatively trifling cost of about 1 1/2 d per lb; but no encouragement whatever was given for the sale of the two latter." Finlayson to Smith, 11 January 1834, HBCA B.223/b/9, fos. 50-51.

98Again in 1842 Simpson told Rae to employ Forbes "as an Agent for the sale of goods & purchase of Hides throughout the Bay and along the Coast. . . ." Simpson to Rae, 12 January 1842, HBRS 7, p. 76 n. 1.

which might be required from us. . . ." Langtry was to invest the proceeds from lumber sales in a cargo of hides and tallow.\textsuperscript{100}

McLoughlin was aware that the company’s vessels were frequently needed for the important North West Coast fur trade, and that his tallow adventures should not interfere with the northern fur trade. In May 1834 he told the Governor and Committee that the 1829 plan to export lumber and salmon as far south as Valparaiso and Lima "may be superfluous," because "we have been so constantly employed with the coast (which required our first attention) that we have never been able to send to those places till now." Nonetheless he hoped to send the \textit{Eagle} in the fall of 1834 to "some port to the south of this" with spars and salmon, and to send McNeill in the \textit{Lama} to San Francisco for a cargo of tallow, which as well as being in demand in London was needed at Fort Vancouver for a number of uses including the manufacture of candles.\textsuperscript{101}

Accordingly, in July 1834 McLoughlin instructed McNeill to go to San Francisco, or Monterey if necessary, to salt eighty barrels of beef as provisions and to trade the rest of his cargo for tallow. "For any further information," he told McNeill, "I beg to refer you to Don Diego Forbes who was employed by Mr Finlayson in managing his sales at San Fransisco. .

\textsuperscript{100}McLoughlin gave Langtry letters of introduction to British merchants John Yates of Lima and Walford & Green of Valparaiso; these had been sent by the Governor and Committee in 1829 with the warning that "you will use your own discretion about them." McLoughlin to Captain Langtry, May 1834, HBCA B.223/b/10, fos. 19-21.

\textsuperscript{101}McLoughlin to G&C, 28 May 1834, HBR\textsuperscript{S} 4, pp. 120-125. Later, McLoughlin stated that he sent the \textit{Lama} because the vessel was not required for the coast. McLoughlin to G&C, 18 November 1834, HBR\textsuperscript{S} 4, p. 125. "I am informed that you sometimes trade a considerable quantity of Tallow, please send us some, we require it to make Candles, and we will send you Ox tallow in the place:" McLoughlin to Work, 18 July 1837, HBCA B.223/b/17, fo. 25d.
McNeill's adventure, McLoughlin reported in November, "I am happy to say turned out very well," and he told the Governor and Committee that:

I have shipped some of the Tallow procured at St. Francisco with the account current of the adventure, and if your Honors decide on continuing the business, it will be necessary for you to send us by return of the Vessel the requisition herewith of goods adapted for the California Market.

The Governor and Committee approved of McNeill's adventure, and told McLoughlin that "The California trade should . . . be pushed if it pays at all, as it will afford a freight to our Country Vessels, and a filling up freight in the article of Tallow to the Homeward Ship of the season . . . " Thus in 1834 the California hide and tallow trade looked promising and had the active support of the London committee, though Simpson remained sceptical.

Sporadic trading adventures continued in the late 1830s. Over the winter of 1836-37 the Lama collected hides and tallow on the coast of California, but returned from San Francisco having collected only 3,000 pounds; it was not the tallow season, McLoughlin said. Despite the poor showing, McLoughlin sent his son-in-law William Glen Rae in

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102 "[Y]ou may also employ if you require him [Forbes] allowing the same remuneration. . . say 5 p cent on all sales." McLoughlin to McNeill, 30 July 1834, HBCA B.223/b/10, fo. 27. Similarly, in December 1836, McLoughlin told McLeod, who was on his way to California to attempt to obtain a permit to hunt sea otter on coast of California, that he was to deal with Forbes if possible. McLoughlin to James A. Forbes, 5 December 1836, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 114.

103 McLoughlin to G&C, 18 November 1834, HBR 4, pp. 125; 129. In December 1835, the Dryad left the Sandwich Islands for London with "Twenty Casks Tallow" and with "Five Hundred Eighty Six Bullock Hides." HBCA A.11/61, fo. 4.

104 The Governor and Committee contemplated the exchange of Columbia produce and English goods with the Russian post in California. G&C to McLoughlin, 8 December 1835, HBCA B.223/c/1, fos. 44-48d; 46. Reel IM 384.

105 "[I] . . . understand the Lama was on the Coast of California collecting Hides & Tallow which she will probably deposit here for your homeward bound vessel in the Autumn." Pelly
August 1837 on "an adventure to St. Francisco." "As you know the object of your voyage is to procure Tallow, of which we require about 12 M lbs," he said. Rae was to go to Monterey if he could not get enough in San Francisco. "If you find you could trade more Tallow and Hides than the Cadboro could bring, and that you could send your purchases to Oahu, you will do so..." Rae seems to have succeeded in this task: in 1840 the *Vancouver* left for England with nearly 16,000 lbs of tallow valued at £133.107

In the late 1830s the local management of the Hudson's Bay Company persuaded Simpson and the Governor and Committee to open an agency in California to be modelled after the Oahu agency; it was to exchange English manufactures for hides and tallow, and was also to serve as a base for the company's fur expeditions up the Sacramento River.108 In June 1839, Simpson and the Northern Council instructed an officer to go to California "to direct his attention to the Commercial operations of that Coast with a view of enabling us to form a Commercial Establishment there hereafter."109 Chief Factor Douglas made the trip.

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106 McLoughlin to Pelly, 19 August 1837, HBCA B.223/b/17, fo. 29d. Ibid fo. 32d. to Simpson 30 August 1837 called it "a trading expedition;" McLoughlin to W. G. Rae, 17 August 1837, HBCA B.223/b/17. (In 1833, Rae had been part of a sheep-buying expedition from Red River to the United States. Hedlin, "Reluctant beginnings"). A bill of lading of goods shipped from Oahu to London in December 1838 included 979 bullock hides, 4209 bullock horns, and 8 barrels tallow 1840 lbs. Pelly to Smith, 22 December 1838, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 48; bill of lading, HBCA B.191/z/1, fo. 66.


108 In 1844 Simpson recalled that McLoughlin had formed the California establishment largely "to facilitate the business of our trapping parties in that country. Simpson to G&C, 24 February 1844, HBCA A.12/2, fo. 338.

"We also have other objects of a political nature in view," Douglas wrote in his journal. He was to buy sheep and cattle, to secure licenses to trade and hunt furs in the Mexican territories, to buy a "building lot or a suitable building" at San Francisco. Alternately he was to buy Bodega (Fort Ross) from the Russians.

While at Monterey Douglas wrote to General Alvarado about the company's projected commercial enterprises in California. He said the company intended to "embark in the general commerce of this country." He wanted to sail one or more vessels under the Mexican flag and to buy a building lot "in a convenient position for shipping and receiving goods" at San Francisco. Alvarado agreed to these requests. Douglas proposed to exchange hides and tallow for English manufactures at this agency. "[W]e ought to confine our attention to the wholesale business," he wrote in his diary, "supplying the country merchants with goods, and receiving payment for them, in hides, tallow, and grain. By pursuing this plan, we would be secure from great risks." Douglas's negotiations, conducted in French, were an unqualified success.

Rae returned to California in the summer to establish the agency at Yerba Buena, and in September 1841 he bought, for $4,600, a lot from Jacob Primer Leese in what is now the

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110 Douglas is quoted in Donald Sage, "Swirl of Nations—The HBC on the Pacific Coast in the Mid Nineteenth Century," The Beaver (Spring 1963), pp. 32-40; p. 36.


112 Douglas to Jaun B. Alvarado, Governor General of Upper and Lower California, 11 January 1841; Alvarado to Douglas, 13 January 1841, ibid, fos. 25-29.

central business district of San Francisco for the company's premises. Great expectations were held out for this establishment, both for its wider commercial possibilities and for its utility to the Buenaventura trapping expedition. "At California," Dugald Mactavish told Hargrave in April 1842, "handsome returns are expected in the way of Hides which are as valuable as Beaver in the London Market."  

Simpson, however, ordered the post's closure in 1842 as part of his reorganization of the Company's Pacific business toward the northern regions of the coast. McLoughlin ignored his order. He instructed Ray to keep trading tallow even after being warned by the Governor and Committee. By December 1842, Rae had collected 20,000 lbs. of tallow, 5,000 hides, 3,000 fanegas of wheat, and a few hundred beaver skins. After a bitter struggle with McLoughlin over the agency's worth, and Rae's suicide in 1843, the property was finally closed and sold in 1846. A few years later gold was found on the Sacramento River and Yerba Buena became the major city on the west coast of North America. "To think how such a place could have sprung up in so short a space of time," one fur trader

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115 Mactavish to Hargrave, 2 April 1842, in Glazebrook, ed., Hargrave Correspondence, pp. 383-384.

116 "We will require to come by the Columbia spring 1844 15,000 lbs hard tallow," McLoughlin told Rae in May 1843. McLoughlin to Rae, 29 May 1843, HBCA B.341/c/1, fo. 2.

117 G&C to McLoughlin, 27 September 1843, HBRS 6, p. 314. Earlier the Governor and Committee had told McLoughlin that they approved of Simpson's plan to discontinue the "business in California" because sales of the company's hides had not been favourable: "remittances of that article are less productive than you seem to have anticipated." G&C to McLoughlin, 21 December 1842, HBRS 6, p. 298.
wrote, "and what a contrast it now presents to its appearance a few years ago—when nothing but the hide and tallow trade was carried on."\textsuperscript{118}

Sitka, the Russian American Company’s settlement in Norfolk Sound, was the third market developed by the Hudson’s Bay Company and supplied with Columbia produce. It was closed to the company until 1836, when Finlayson met the Russian Governor at Sitka for general discussions. The gist of the problem was that the Russians were able to grow little more than garden vegetables at Sitka. They got much of their wheat through their post (Fort Ross) in California, but the supply of California wheat was precarious.\textsuperscript{119}

The two companies were united by a desire to rid the North West Coast of American traders who provided the Russian company with wheat and other provisions, and who also traded alcohol to Native people to the disruption of trade at Sitka, Fort Wrangell, and Fort Simpson. Finlayson suggested that the Hudson’s Bay Company’s farms on the Columbia were now so productive that the company could supply the Russians with Columbia produce for less than the Boston traders. Such provisions could be taken up the the coast on the \textit{Beaver} and stored at Fort Simpson if necessary. Finlayson informed McLoughlin that the Governor of Sitka "fully agreed with me that an understanding of this nature between the two companies would be beneficial to both," and furthermore that "It will show the American adventurers that we have entered the Sitka market. . . .\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{118}Thomas Lowe to John F. Kennedy, 5 June 1852, in Thomas Lowe, Letters Outward 1852-1859, BCARS.

\textsuperscript{119}See "New Archangel—Feeding the Population," in Pierce, Russian America, p. 6

\textsuperscript{120}Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fos. 17d-23d; also HBRS 4. On the Americans’ earlier provisioning of Sitka and the background to the Hudson’s Bay Company’s "provision contract" with the Russians see Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 79-80, 260-4.
Thus a union of Russian and British commercial interests was envisioned. In 1838, Douglas reported that while the Russians appeared content to receive their supplies from a merchant house in Boston, "It would be very satisfactory to furnish supplies on terms mutually beneficial. . . ." An agreement with the Russians would rid the coast of American vessels engaged in the supply trade, just as the company's trade extension had rid the coast of American fur traders. At the same time, Simpson was in Hamburg negotiating with Baron Wrangell of the Russian American Company for a supply of grain. In their extensive bargaining sessions, Wrangell said he could get the grain from Chile; Simpson countered boldly that he could supply Sitka with Columbia grain for less.122

There is no more impressive indication of the success of the company's farms than the agreement Simpson reached with Wrangell in Hamburg in February 1839. The Hudson's Bay Company was to supply the Russian American Company with Columbia produce and peltries for a period of ten years in exchange for a lease of the coast and the interior country between Cape Spencer and Latitude 54° 40' (now roughly the Alaskan Panhandle). In exchange, Simpson agreed to provide 2,000 sea otter skins from west of the mountains and 3,000 land otter skins from east of the mountains, or their equivalent value. In addition, he agreed to sell the Russians 2,000 fenagos (126 tons) of wheat in 1840 and 4,000 fenagos annually thereafter; as well as 300 cwt. salted beef, 160 cwt. wheat flour, 160 cwt. salted butter, 130 cwt. pease, 130 cwt. grits and hulled pot barley, and 30 cwt. pork hams.123

121 Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBRS 4, p. 263.

122 Alice M. Johnson, "Simpson in Russia," The Beaver 291 (Autumn 1960), pp. 4-12; p. 11.

Fifteen years before such exports would have been unthinkable. The companies also agreed to ban the sale or trade of liquor on the entire coastline. This contract, which was met in the 1840s, opened a new market to the Hudson’s Bay Company and simultaneously forced the Americans out of the provision trade.

The company’s extended commercial and financial business at Oahu, Sitka, and San Francisco belies assertions that the Hudson’s Bay Company was a fur-trading concern in the pre-1870 years. Rupert’s Land was not the crucible of all new developments in Hudson’s Bay Company commercial practice. Clerks stationed at Oahu or on the west coast subsequently returned to Rupert’s Land where they put their extensive commercial knowledge into practice. The demands of commerce, before industry, produced corporate change in the nineteenth century fur trade. Although these ventures took place well in advance of those in the company’s other departments, their existence has gone largely unrecorded. Fur trade historians, by and large, have chosen to ignore the extensive and interesting workings of the company’s Pacific commerce in favour of a narrow focus on fur exports to London.

By 1843, then, the company had capitalized on its new transcontinental operations by finding three Pacific markets for Columbia produce. Although Simpson had to abandon his wish, which Dalrymple and Mackenzie had shared, of marketing Columbia furs in Canton,


he found in the Sandwich Islands an outlet for the company’s non-fur exports from the west coast. A new regional export economy emerged in the 1830s in the wake of the company’s fur trade extension through the Columbia Department. The company’s success in Pacific markets resulted in part from the abundant resources and favourable exchange and labour conditions on the lower Columbia and Fraser rivers. I now return to the coast to trace the development of the company’s new Pacific exports.
CHAPTER 8
COLUMBIA RIVER EXPORT TRADES, 1828-1843

I am told a Gentleman on the other side said, the work of this place might be done with twenty five men. The Saw mill alone requires twenty, and besides, we have the farm, the Indian trade, the Salmon fishery, to load and unload vessels, to reinforce when required other places, the drawback caused by the fever, and to keep a set of tradesmen constantly employed such as Blacksmiths, Coopers and Carpenters, and it is certain, that whoever is the person that said that twenty five men would suffice for the work of this place proves by his asserting this, that he is ignorant of what is done here.

John McLoughlin, 1835

McLoughlin thus defended himself against a rumour that Fort Vancouver was overstaffed. Depending on the time of year, between 100 and 200 men were required at Fort Vancouver. They worked, Simpson wrote, "the regular hours, say from 6 to 6." This sizeable labour force resulted largely from the company’s embarkation, between 1828 and 1843, on provision and export trades in salmon, lumber, and flour on the lower Columbia River. To support this extensive business Fort Vancouver possessed a sawmill, gristmill, blacksmiths' shop, coopers' shop, carpenters' shop, and tinsmiths' shop, in addition to a

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1 McLoughlin to Pambrun [Fort Nez Percés], n.d [September 1835], HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 31. In 1838, seventy-four "tradesmen" worked at the fort, namely "Saw Mill 26 Forge 9 Coopers 4 Millers 2 Cattle & Dairy 7 Swine Herds 3 Shepherd 1 Farm labourers 10 Hospital 1 Bakers 3 Carpenters 3 Stores 1 Domestics 4." Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBRS 4, p. 260.


3 Simpson to Hargrave, 1 July 1843, Hargrave Papers, NAC.

4 "Inventory of Goods Fort Vancouver Depot Spring 1844," HBCA B.223/d/127, fo. 158.
"Sale Shop" for visitors and Willamette settlers and an "Indian Shop" for the fur trade and other Indian Trades.

Two aspects of the company’s mastery of the fur trade in the Columbia Department promoted the rise of export trades on the Pacific coast. First, the success of Simpson’s policy of self-sufficiency in foodstuffs meant that export trades could be embarked upon with the solid backing of local provision trades; second, monopoly conditions resulting from dominance of the fur trade, combined with the seasonal nature of the coastal fur trade and the possibility of year-round ocean transport, resulted in a winter "dead season" when vessels and personnel were available for alternative commercial activities. The spare time that resulted allowed local company employees to develop export trades in provisions and commodities known collectively as "Columbia Produce."

Self-sufficiency in agricultural provisions (a secure subsistence programme) was a prerequisite to all commercial developments including, as Innis stressed, the trade in fur. As Simpson said in 1824, "It has been said that Farming is no branch of the Fur Trade but I consider that every pursuit tending to lighten the Expense of the Trade is a Branch thereof." Fort George was built on rocky and uneven land, but Fort Vancouver possessed the finest farm on the coastal portion of the department. Simpson selected the site late in 1824 with self-sufficiency and economy in mind. "He considers the soil and Climate of this Place," J. H. Pelly wrote in December 1825, "to be so well adapted for Agricultural pursuits, that in the course of two or three years it may be made to produce sufficient Grain and Animal Provisions to meet not only the demands of our own Trade but to almost any

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\text{Simpson to G&C, 1824, quoted in Ormsby, \textit{British Columbia}, p. 60.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{6}}\text{See Leechman, "Garden Seeds," pp. 31-34 for a good general introduction to farming on the Columbia.}\]
extent that may be required for other purposes. . . ." To this end Simpson depended on McLoughlin who was, Rich noted, "a far-sighted and competent agriculturalist." That he was brought up on his grandfather's seigneury on the St. Lawrence, and that his father was a farmer, might have had something to do with McLoughlin's passion for this farm on the north shore of a great river. McLoughlin recalled that "[H]ad it not been for the great expense of importing Flour from Europe, the serious injury it received on the voyage, and the absolute necessity of being independent of Indians for provisions, I never would have encouraged farming in this Country, but it was impossible to carry on the trade without it. . . ."

So successful was agricultural output that by 1829 Fort Vancouver was self-sufficient in foodstuffs and no longer required English provisions. "[T]he main object in view has been attained," Simpson wrote, "that of rendering ourselves independent of Foreign aid in regard to the means of subsistence, which is here, perhaps more than anywhere else, the Main Spring of the business." The Columbia offered a longer growing season than

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7 Pelly to Canning, 9 December 1825, quoted in Klotz, Certain Correspondence, p. 12. For the company's political motives behind the creation of this agricultural base see G&C to Simpson, 16 January 1828, HBRS 3, p. lxvi, and below, ch. 9.


11 Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, HBRS 10, pp. 68-69; 235.
available on the Bay or at Red River. The Governor and Committee were delighted with McLoughlin's accomplishment and responded as follows:

We notice with much satisfaction the success which has attended your exertions in Agricultural pursuits and raising Stock, and trust you will continue to prosecute these objects, indeed your whole management is marked by a degree of energy zeal and activity highly creditable to yourself, important to the interests of the Service and meeting our warmest Commendations.12

McLoughlin's Fort Vancouver wheat production increased from twelve bushels in 1826 to 3,000 in 1832; potato production from 600 to 6,000 bushels in the same years.13 Fort George had a herd of seventeen cows in 1824; Fort Vancouver's herd stood at between 400 and 450 seven years later.14 Fort Vancouver's example was emulated elsewhere with the result that employees received, ideally, a balance of Native provisions and introduced foodstuffs. Archibald McKinlay recalled that: "there were never better fed working men in any country. They had graham flour, sometimes horse-meat, potatoes, turnips, dried salmon, fresh salmon, bear meat, grease, ducks, and all other kinds of game, usually unbolted flour, never tea, coffee, or sugar. They had milk and butter."15 A distillery was built at Fort Vancouver in the 1830s but was dismantled after producing 300 gallons owing to its "bad effects."16

12G&C to McLoughlin, 28 October 1829, HBRS 4, p. 97 n 1.
13Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 38.
14McLoughlin to McLeod, 1 March 1833, McLeod Papers, NAC; see also Innis: 301.
15Archibald McKinlay, "Narrative of a Chief Factor in the Hudson's Bay Company," ms., 1878, BCARS. McKinlay was in the Columbia Department from as early as 1837. This description is similar to the provision supply at Kamloops. See Locke, "No Salmon, No Furs: The Provisioning of Fort Kamloops," pp. 17-18.
16McLoughlin to G&C, 31 October 1837, HBRS 4, p. 208.
By the late 1820s Fort Vancouver was able to provide provisions for the company’s extended coastal operations on land, for its growing marine service, and for the Snake and Sacramento brigades. Rival American fur traders on the North West Coast and on the Columbia River system, outfitted from the Missouri or, as in the maritime fur trade, from New England or Honolulu, pointed to the enormous advantage gained by the company in having a local headquarters and provision centre. One of them, Nathaniel Wyeth, wrote in 1832 that the "capital and facilities" of the British fur traders on the Columbia "virtually destroys our trade there . . . whereas the British trade is effected by posts and their vessels have nothing to do but to discharge and re-load." The British, not the American, fur traders possessed the skills, strategies, and resources to operate successfully by land and sea on the Pacific after 1821. Simpson summarized Fort Vancouver’s advantages in 1834:

The Farm at this place is an object of vital importance to the interests of the business on the west side the Mountains, generally, as it has enabled us to dispense with imported provisions, for the maintenance of our shipping and establishments, whereas, without the farm, it would have been necessary to import such provisions, at an expense that the trade could not afford. The Farm was unusually productive last year, yielding upwards of 10,000 Bushels Grain of all Kinds, and we are beginning to dispose of some of our surplus produce at the Sandwich Islands to advantage.

The following year Simpson reported a situation that could never have arisen on Hudson Bay: "The Farm at Fort Vancouver continues productive, and cattle are now so numerous that . . . it will no longer be necessary to provision the Ships from England for the homeward voyage, as an abundant supply may be depended on from Vancouver."

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17Wyeth to Leon. Jarvis, 6 February 1832, in Young, The Wyeth Correspondence, p. 32 (quoted already in ch5).

18Simpson to G&C, 21 July 1834, HBCA D.4/100, fo. 11.

19Simpson to G&C, 10 June 1835, HBCA D.4/102, fo. 7.
Visitors from the other side of the Mountains were impressed with what they found on the lower Columbia. On his arrival in 1839, Dugald Mactavish wrote to his brother that: "The Company have got an extensive farm here and a large complement of men is required, so that the business may be properly carried on. The Fort is so very large that on first arriving a stranger is almost apt to imagine himself in the civilised world." The fort possessed storage facilities on a large scale, including a wheat store, a beef store, and four others.

So extensive was the post that McLoughlin found it difficult to manage on his own. In 1837, when he wanted to go on leave, McLoughlin argued in favour of two chief factors for Fort Vancouver. "Mr Finlayson ought to have remained," he told Simpson, "as the business of the place is became so extensive, and I may say so complicated that there ought always to be two Commissioned Gentlemen attached to this place, intimately acquainted with the business—that in case of accident to one the business would still go on...." Nonetheless, the Governor and Committee in 1838 appointed Douglas to the sole interim management not just of Fort Vancouver but the whole Columbia Department. Before his departure in 1838, McLoughlin reminded Douglas that: "As you well know the Business of the Place may be classed under four heads the Farm, the Depot, the Indian Trade and the saw mill." The farm, McLoughlin continued, was the most important of the four

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20Mactavish to William Mactavish, 19 October 1839, in Glazebrook, Hargrave Correspondence, p. 307.

21Louis R. Caywood, "Excavating Fort Vancouver," The Beaver 278 (March 1948), pp. 4-7.

22McLoughlin to Simpson, 20 March 1837, HBCA B.223/b/15, fos. 74d-78d; 78.

23The Governor and Committee appointed Douglas to "the principal management of the Establishment of Fort Vancouver and the other Posts &c on the Coast, and of the Trapping Expeditions likewise of the Shipping." McLoughlin to Douglas, March 1838, HBCA
branches of business. "I have always considered the farm as an object of primary
consideration as without provisions the different Branches of the Business cannot be carried
on."24 Douglas echoed McLoughlin’s sentiments in one of his first dispatches to London of
March 1838:

The prosperity of the general business, is so intimately connected with the agricultural
operations, and depends, so much upon the possession of an ample and regular supply
of Provisions, that it long since became a desideratum with us to secure
independently of the rising crop, a full years provisions, in advance, and it is now
attained, as our barns contain a sufficient quantity of the more useful kinds of grain to
meet the home and outward demand . . . for the next eighteen months.25

Having achieved self-sufficiency in foodstuffs, McLoughlin was at liberty to branch
out into other economic activities: namely a salmon fishery on the lower Columbia, and a
sawmill, built in 1828. Salmon and lumber joined fur as staple exports from Fort Vancouver
in the 1830s; markets included Oahu, Monterey, San Francisco, and Valparaiso;
transshipments reached such places as the Seeward Islands, Manila, China, London, and
Boston (Map 6).

Salmon was the first commodity considered for export. Like fur, salmon was traded
from Native people, for whom it was a staple food; the company did not employ its own
European fishermen. Paul Kane wrote that "Salmon is almost the only food used by the
Indians on the Lower Columbia River, the two months’ fishing affording a sufficient supply
to last them the whole year round."26 He painted (in 1847) a party of Chinook fishermen

24 Ibid.


26 Kane (1847) Wanderings, p. 219.
dipnetting salmon at Castle Rock near Fort George. Gabriel Franchère left one of the earliest descriptions of Native fishing methods on the lower Columbia:

Salmon is caught in nets or with a spear. Their nets, made of strong nettle fibres, are from 80 to 100 fathoms long. Their harpoons or spears are made of two small pieces of curved bone in the middle of which they put a small iron point about half an inch long. These two pieces of bone are tied firmly together and are separated at the top to admit a long forked pole, to the end of which they attach the spear—points, which are held to the handle by a strong cord a yard long. When they strike a fish the two spears sink into the flesh and as the handle, which is weak, would break with the jolt that the fish gives when it feels itself struck, they pull it out and the barb of the spear being held to the handle by the cord, they let the fish swim until its strength is exhausted and they can land it without damaging the harpoon.27

Josiah Sturgis, an American maritime fur trader, noted on his 1818 visit to the Columbia that salmon were "the best in the world" and were caught in "great plenty."28 After its abundance the most appealing thing about Columbia salmon was its price. In 1825 David Douglas wrote that a fine thirty-five pound fish could be bought for half an ounce of tobacco worth two pence, while George Simpson put the figure at seven pence.29 This and the nutritional value of the fish made it an excellent provision, and salmon formed the principal food of the Pacific, North West, and Hudson's Bay companies in the region, though the North West Company seems to have been the first corporate concern to exploit the Native fishery systematically. Home-grown potatoes came next in importance. The weekly ration at Fort Vancouver was twenty-one pounds of salmon and a bushel of potatoes a

27Lamb, Franchere's Journal, p. 100.

28"Extract from the Journal of Josiah Sturgis" quoted in Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 205.

Salmon was also the mainstay of the brigade from Fort Vancouver to New Caledonia. Such an abundant and excellent food was too good for the provision trade alone, and soon after Simpson's first visit the Hudson's Bay Company contemplated an export trade in the fish. In 1826 John McLoughlin estimated that the Columbia fishery could produce 1000 barrels for export to California a year:

We can purchase Salmon in the Columbia at an Average of 3 1/2 to 5d. Each with the advance of 70 p. Cent, and thirty of these will fill a Barrell and I am given to understand it would sell well in New California—If you sent us Eight to Ten Barrels Salt for the purpose we might Salt forty of fifty Barrels, send them to Monterrey, Exchange them for all the Salt we want, sell the Remainder and see if any thing could be done in this way. . . . the Experiment would not cost much. If the Business was well managed we might Salt a thousand Barrels p. Annum in the Columbia—I understand Salmon is more abundant in Frasers River than here.

The salmon export trade began over the winter of 1828-29, when Aemilius Simpson visited Monterey where salmon, he learned, would sell for twenty dollars a barrel. George Simpson promptly estimated that about a thousand barrels of salmon could annually be sold in California and the Sandwich Islands for twenty dollars a barrel, but his prediction took fifteen years to fulfill.

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30 Wolfenden, ed., "John Tod."


32 McLoughlin to McMillan, 19 October 1827, HBCA B.223/b/3, fo. 20. "I do not think it worth while sending any Salt Salmon to Owhyhee and you will keep what you have got to serve as provisions to the party below in the winter." McLoughlin to Manson, 18 August 1829, HBCA B.223/b/5, fo. 16.

33 McLoughlin to G&C, 1 September 1826, HBRS 4, p. 37.

34 McLoughlin to McDonald, 31 March 1828, HBCA B.223/b/4, fo. 2.

35 Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, HBRS 10, p. 75.
In the early 1830s patterns of procurement, storage, and transport emerged in the lower Columbia salmon trade. The trade depended entirely on the Native salmon fishery. Company personnel never fished for salmon on the lower Columbia, though they did enter into agreements with Native people: in one year six young Kliketats seined salmon on shares with the company at Fort Vancouver. From the main Native fishery at the river mouth and estuary, salmon was taken by canoe to Fort George and Pillar Rock where it was traded to company officials. At least at first this trade was based on small trade goods, rather than blankets, which were reserved for the fur trade itself. "[W]ere we to take payment in fish for Blankets the value of the latter would be so reduced in the Eyes of the Natives, we would have some difficulty in getting furs from them," McLoughlin wrote in 1825.37

Columbia salmon came from Fort George, Pillar Rock, and the Willamette River (Map 7). The main fishery at Fort George originated during the post’s days as the North West Company’s departmental depot. Though abandoned between 1825 and 1829, by the mid 1830s Fort George had become, John Dunn wrote, "now only a small outer depot, belonging to the company’s head quarters at Fort Vancouver, and kept up for the convenience of the trade with the Indians towards the mouth of the river; and for the salmon


37"As to the Indians wanting Blankets for fish it is certainly true we might get more fish or meat for a Blanket than for the same value in any other kind of Goods But as Blankets [are] one of the few Articles held in Estimation by the Natives about this place [Fort George] and for which we will only take Furs—were we to take payment in fish for Blankets the value of the latter would be so reduced in the Eyes of the Natives, we would have some difficulty in getting furs from them." McLoughlin to John Dease, 23 July 1825, HBCA B.223/b/1, fo. 17.

38James Keith to Colonel Perkins, 13 April 1821, Keith Papers, University of Aberdeen.
fishery. In 1839 Douglas referred to the fort as Fort Vancouver's "outpost." Pillar Rock, a seasonal fishing camp, was attached to Fort George for accounting purposes. The Willamette fishery provided salmon for Fort Vancouver's domestic supply. Salmon was considered a "return," and profits or losses from the salmon fishery were credited and debited to a post's fur trade. This meant that the annual "returns" of posts like forts George and Vancouver did not derive solely from the fur trade, though traditionally returns meant exactly that.

At Fort George and Pillar Rock, salmon was processed and packed in barrels or vats, presumably by company labourers and perhaps, as at Fort Langley, by Native women. Processed salmon awaiting export or domestic use was stored at Fort George or upriver at Fort Vancouver. Prior to export, "Fort George Salmon" was kept apart from "Pillar Rock Salmon," though in Oahu both were known as "Columbia Salmon." The company's Oahu agent bought and sent the necessary salt to the Columbia, usually in the spring; it was stored


40 Douglas to Chief Factors, Chief Traders, Northern Department, 6 September 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo. 37d.

41 Tolmie stated in 1833 that Fort Vancouver salmon came from the Willamette. Tolmie, 8 May 1833, *Journals*, p. 175. For other references to the Willamette salmon fishery see McLoughlin to Birnie, 3 July 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 41 and McLoughlin to Tolmie, 24 September 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo.77. Both these references may, however, refer to the fishery conducted there in 1840 by an American, Captain Couch.

42 For example, in July 1832 McLoughlin asked Birnie to "keep an account of the Salmon Trade, so as to ascertain its costs, & to credit your Beaver Trade." McLoughlin to Birnie, 6 July 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fos. 8d-9. East of the Rockies small trades such as isinglass and castor oil were also counted in a post's "fur returns," but they tended to be small value compared to fur.

43 Douglas to Birnie, 1 August 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 23.
in barrels at forts George or Vancouver for use later in the year.\textsuperscript{44} Salt destined for the Fraser River fishery was stored at Fort George at the mouth of the river,\textsuperscript{45} or taken directly to Fort Langley.

Country-made barrels were supplied from Fort Vancouver, though undoubtedly Fort Langley barrels also found their way to the Columbia. Salt and barrels, not salmon, were scarce in this trade. "We must salt all the Salmon we can, & on the return of the Broughton she will be sent to you with a Load of empty Barrels, & so on till we have sent all we have," McLoughlin told James Birnie of Fort George in July 1832.\textsuperscript{46}

These patterns continued. At the end of June 1835, for example, McLoughlin sent a party led by John Dunn to salt salmon at Pillar Rock.\textsuperscript{47} This fishery continued into August, when McLoughlin sent a vessel downstream to pick up "all the Salt Salmon and Empty Barrels &c at the Pillar Rock."\textsuperscript{48} This seasonal pattern persisted. "On arrival at Fort George," Douglas told Captain Brotchie, who was on his way down the river on 4 June 1838, "you will land a sufficiency of Salt to complete the summer curing, and be regulated

\textsuperscript{44}HBCA C.7/177, fo. 40. See also McLoughlin to Kipling, 14 March 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 4: "On your return [from Woahoo] to Fort George, you will land three hundred Bushels Salt there; and put three Hundred Bushels Salt in barrels & land it at the Pillar, taking care the barrels be tight, and placed high above the high water mark."

\textsuperscript{45}"800 Bushels salt to be embarked at Fort George." HBCA C.7/177, fo.51.

\textsuperscript{46}McLoughlin to Birnie, 6 July 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fos. 8d-9.

\textsuperscript{47}McLoughlin to Kipling, 30 June 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 30.

\textsuperscript{48}McLoughlin to Kipling, 10 August 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 34; see also McLoughlin to Dunn, 29 August 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 29.
by the same rule in passing at Pillar Rock."\textsuperscript{49} In August, Douglas ordered an incoming vessel to collect the Pillar Rock salmon for Fort Vancouver.\textsuperscript{50}

The strictest economy was observed in this trade. On 23 June 1839 Douglas told Birnie that "Our salmon casks are all full, and we are now filling all the old water casks about the place; and I must entreat you to follow the same plan, in order to secure every ounce of provisions that can be scraped together."\textsuperscript{51} In August, Douglas asked Birnie for all the fish cured at "the lower fishery & pillar Rock" and all the unused salt remaining at Fort George.\textsuperscript{52} And at the end of the season, on 29 August, he ordered Birnie to:

[S]end the vessel back immediately with . . . 200 Blls Salt, all the Pillar Rock Salmon, and as many Barrels of Fort George fish as she can conveniently receive. The "Vancouver" when she is passing at Fort George will land 4 or 5 hundred Bushels of Salt for the fishery of next year.\textsuperscript{53}

Despite Douglas's "hands-on" involvement, Fort Vancouver's salmon operations were actually supervised by George Harvey, a tradesman.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{49}Douglas to Brotchie, 4 June 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 14.

\textsuperscript{50}Douglas to Birnie, 16 August 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 25; see also Douglas to Humphreys, 8 September 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 25?. Similarly, at the end of May 1839, Douglas forwarded Birnie "a number of Salmon Barrels; part filled with Salt to remain at Pillar Rock, and the others will be taken on at Fort George." And he continued, "A man is likewise sent to assist in the former fishery, and you will send up Kenneth McKay to manage the trade." Douglas to Birnie, 29 May 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo.20.

\textsuperscript{51}Douglas to Birnie, 23 June 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo. 24d.

\textsuperscript{52}Douglas to Birnie, 2 August 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo. 29d.

\textsuperscript{53}Douglas to Birnie, 29 August 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo. 33.

\textsuperscript{54}On Harvey see British and American Joint Commission for the Final Settlement of the Claims of the Hudson's Bay and Puget Sound Companies, The Governor and Company of Adventurers Trading into Hudson Bay . . . Submit the Following Memorial and Statement of their Claims upon the United States, N.p., [1865], p. 4.
Because barrels were in short supply, Birnie made a "salmon box" at Fort George in 1840 for the temporary bulk storage of salmon. In July, he emptied the Pillar Rock salmon into the Fort George salmon box and returned the empty barrels to Pillar Rock "so as to continue to salt salmon as long as possible." In August, McLoughlin advised Birnie to keep the pickle in the salmon box until he could send some casks from Fort Vancouver. Later the salmon box was lined with English sheet lead.

An indication of how highly the company regarded its Columbia fishery was given in 1840 with the killing of Kenneth McKay at Pillar Rock. On 19 August, McLoughlin sent a circular letter to the missionaries in the valley and also to the Willamette settlers stating that "One of our men Kenneth McKay and an Indian boy have been murdered by the Indians at Pillar Rock." McLoughlin, who referred to McKay's "peaceful conduct" at the Rock, asked for, and got, the participation of all non-Native people in this punitive expedition. The expedition (like the Clallum Expedition of June 1828) achieved its object; Michel

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55 McLoughlin sent Birnie the hinges for the salmon box and a man (Gunn) to caulk the box. McLoughlin to Birnie, 3 July 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 41; McLoughlin to Birnie, 13 July 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 45.

56 He also sent one Michel "in case you require any one to go to Chinook Bay." McLoughlin to Birnie, 3 August 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 51; McLoughlin to Birnie, 13 July 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 45. By September, Tolmie was also making a bin with lumber. McLoughlin to Tolmie, 24 September 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 77.

57 The sheet lead to line the salmon boxes sent to the Columbia cost more than £500, and the Governor and Committee asked McLoughlin to take notice of the probable cost of items when ordering from London. G&C to McLoughlin, 21 December 1842, HBRS 6, p. 302.
Laframboise shot the Native murderer through the head and another Indian was hanged. Similar expeditions occurred regularly over the next twenty years.

The first export of salmon from the Columbia River took place in November 1830, when McLoughlin sent Aemilius Simpson to California with a shipment of lumber and sixty barrels of salmon. McLoughlin had wanted to send the vessel "to the South to Lima, touching on her way at California and perhaps at Acapulca with Salmon or Boards to ascertain the demand and prices of these articles," but the vessel was needed to open the post at Nass the following spring and as a result was unable to visit Lima or Valparaiso. No one in Monterey wanted the salmon, and the company never found an opening for it in California. However, a small sample of Fort Langley salmon sent simultaneously to Oahu met with an instant demand, and the Sandwich Islands thereafter became the principal market.

The October 1831 consignment of thirty-three large barrels to Oahu was a success; the shipment sold out. Promising overseas shipments followed late in 1831 or 1832, when Richard Charlton, the company's Oahu agent, sent samples to Manilla and China with the Oahu merchant Mr. French, and Duncan Finlayson reported that "Mr Short, one of the

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58 McLoughlin to Blanchette et al., 19 August 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 57; 60-68. Two months earlier, Birnie had told McLoughlin that the Native people refused to give him salmon unless he gave them rum, and McLoughlin had told him "on no account give them rum." McLoughlin to Birnie, 15 June 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 34. On the Clallum expedition see Maclachlan, "The Founding of Fort Langley," pp. 24-25 and Francis Ermatinger, "Earliest Expedition Against Puget Sound Indians," Washington Historical Quarterly 1:2 (January 1907) (cited in Maclachlan p. 25).

59 McLoughlin to G&C, 11 October 1830, HBRS 4, p. 88; McLoughlin to G&C, 24 November 1830, HBRS 4, p. 95.

60 1831 barrels were about twice the size of those of 1830. McLoughlin to Charlton, 27 October 1831, HBCA B.223/b/7, fo. 9; HBCA 239/d/491, fo. 56.
Table 2
Columbia River Salmon Exports, 1830-1843

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Vessel</th>
<th>River</th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Barrels</th>
<th>HlfBl/Tcs</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<td>Nov. 1830</td>
<td>Dryad</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Cal.</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>Ganymede</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td>$20 BBL</td>
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<td>FR; CR</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td>$15 BBL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 1833</td>
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<td>CR</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>128 T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1834</td>
<td>Nereide</td>
<td>Cal.</td>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>66 H</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Columbia</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>Feb. 1838</td>
<td>Nereide</td>
<td>FR; CR</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>10 H</td>
<td>$8-9 BBL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 1838</td>
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<td>Oahu</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1839</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>CR; FR</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>110</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 1839</td>
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<td>FR; CR</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>170</td>
<td></td>
<td>$8-11 BBL</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1840</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1840</td>
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<td></td>
<td>400</td>
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<td>1842</td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>Cowlitz</td>
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<td>London</td>
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<td>Jan. 1843</td>
<td>Canton</td>
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<td>140</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 1843</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gentlemen of the Catholic Mission, exchanged a Barrel with the Captain of an English
Whaler, which was sold in London for £4 Sterling, & was highly esteemed. . . ."62

Sensing a good thing, in June 1832 McLoughlin sent another 180 barrels, consisting of
eighty barrels of Columbia and one hundred of Fraser salmon, and in July Finlayson went to

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61 All figures are from HBCA C.7/177 except: 1833 see also York Factory Country Produce
Account Book, 1828-36 (9 October 1833), HBCA 239/d/491, fo. 56; November 1836 see also
Pelly to Smith, 1 January 1837, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 20; 1838: Columbia District Country
Produce Inventories Outfit 1837," "Remaining at Oahu," [31 May 1838] HBCA B.223/d/106,
fo. 8; June 1840: McLoughlin to Spalding, 19 June 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 36; 1842
Vancouver: St Clair, "Beaver in Hawaii," p. 41; 1842 Cowlitz: Fort Vancouver Account Book,
1836-1860," HBCA B.223/d/212. (£250 @ 5 dollars to the pound); January 1843: Pelly and
Allan to McLoughlin, 12 January 1843, HBCA B.223/b/30, fos. 18-19.

62 Finlayson to McLoughlin, 2 August 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fos. 40-43; fo. 41-41d.
Oahu to market this fish and other Columbia Produce. He found the islands full of commercial promise, and in a statement remarkably reminiscent of Simpson's 1825 thoughts on the China trade, said he was so confident that the salmon trade "will become a profitable Branch of our business, that I would not hesitate, if at liberty to do so, to embark all my earnings in speculating thereon."\(^{63}\)

Finlayson noted that the Fraser River fish was not yet up to standard of the older Columbia fishery. "The Columbia Salmon is much more esteemed, & meets with a much better market & price than that of Frazer's River. . . ." He also noted that some Columbia salmon had been sent to the eastern seaboard of the United States by an American merchant, who told Finlayson that Columbia salmon would command $16 a barrel in the United States.\(^{64}\) Salmon from the 1833 and 1834 shipments found its way to Lintin, Manilla, and London.\(^{65}\)

When the Governor and Committee heard of these transactions in 1833 they were delighted, and urged McLoughlin and Finlayson to push the salmon trade to California and the Spanish coast as well. They prohibited sales on credit, and urged McLoughlin and his agent to accept goods in barter—an important condition in an economy where goods were

\(^{63}\)Ibid.

\(^{64}\)Ibid. Reid had contemplated selling the salmon at Lima market, Valparaiso, and Calloa. Finlayson to Reid, 25 July 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fos.36d-37 and Reid to Finlayson, 26 July 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 37.

\(^{65}\)In 1833 McLoughlin sent 57 barrels and 128 tierces of salmon to Oahu, some of which was sent on to Lintin and Manilla. McLoughlin to Finlayson, 2 August 1833, HBCA B.223/b/9, fo. 18. "On my arrival at Lintin I intend to send to Manilla a Sample of the Salmon put up by the HB Company at the Columbia—If any quantity can be disposed of I shall inform you of it on my return." Pierce and Thomas D. Hinckley [Oahu] to Finlayson, 4 January 1834, HBCA B.223/b/9, fo. 49. In May 1834, the Nereide left for "California or S. America" with 108 barrels and 66 half barrels salmon, and in November 1834 the Eagle took six tierces and two barrels of salmon to London, probably as ship provisions.
first valued against and then exchanged for goods of an equivalent value.\textsuperscript{66} Cash had no
place in the production, transportation, and consumption of salmon.

At Oahu, the company's salmon entered the Native diet. One historian writes that
"This salt salmon soon became popular with the Hawaiians. They would slice it up into
small bits, and with the addition of tomatoes, green onions, water and ice would serve up a
tasty dish called \textit{lami lami} salmon."\textsuperscript{67} Sockeye was the preferred species.\textsuperscript{68}

By the mid 1830s the patterns of the trade were established. Every year about two
hundred barrels of salmon were sold in Oahu individually or by lot to local merchants, local
Natives, and to visiting whalers. The September 1835 salmon shipment was the largest yet
to leave the Pacific coast. Invoiced at $6 a barrel it was worth $2,082, and despite a
sluggish market in the summer of 1836, French offered to buy 200 barrels at $6 a barrel.\textsuperscript{69}
In November, the Columbia left Fort Vancouver with 200 more barrels. The company sent a
large shipment in February 1838, which arrived in March;\textsuperscript{70} in April, salmon was selling at
eight or nine dollars a barrel; by the end of May, all that remained was 78 barrels of Fort
Langley salmon and 22 barrels of "Cascade Salmon," all valued at $6 a barrel.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{66}G&C to McLoughlin, 4 December 1833, HBCA search file "Timber." Later they thought
that a stock of salmon for the Spanish market should always be kept at Oahu. G&C to
McLoughlin, 8 December 1835, HBCA B.223/c/1, fos. 44-48d; 45d-46.

\textsuperscript{67}St Clair, "Beaver in Hawaii," p. 40. See also James McCook, "Sir George Simpson in

\textsuperscript{68}Spoehr, "Fur Traders," p. 50.

\textsuperscript{69}Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fo. 24 and HBRS 4, p.

\textsuperscript{70}It arrived at Oahu on 31 March 1838: St Clair, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{71}Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBRS 4: 267; "Columbia District Country Produce
Douglas, who took over temporarily from McLoughlin in 1838-39, gave the impression in all his commercial transactions of efficient and competitive production and marketing. In 1838 he announced, in his distinctive staccato, his intention of forcing the Russian competition out of Oahu market by underselling and by raising prices which would then be raised once they had gone. "I will not fail to pour in supplies, of Columbia produce, by every opportunity, and endeavour, by that means, to confirm, the impression already produced." Accordingly, he sent 480 barrels of Columbia and Fraser river fish to Oahu in less than a year. "I have now disposed of all the various consignments made me from Fort Vancouver at good prices," Pelly wrote in March 1840. He sold it readily for 10 to 11 dollars per barrel. Production figures are missing for 1841, but in 1842 Douglas sent a massive shipment of 695 barrels valued at $4,170 to Oahu.

In 1841 and 1842 the company produced too much salmon for the Oahu market, and Pelly and McLoughlin took to selling it wholesale to visiting merchants. Packed in barrels the fish had a short shelf-life. In June 1840, McLoughlin sold 109 1/2 barrels to Captain Spalding of the Lausanne, from New York, part of a large order (a "speculation") for 400 barrels. Spalding planned to sell the fish in New York. McLoughlin, pleased with the idea of opening a "new market" for the fish, asked James Birnie and Kenneth McKay at Fort

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72 Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBRS 4, p. 267.

73 Pelly to Smith, 21 March 1840, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 53.

74 McLoughlin to Spalding, 19 June 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 36. "Capt Spalding tells me he is the person for whom Messrs Pierce & Brewer purchased from Mr Pelly four hundred Barrels salt salmon deliverable this fall . . . " McLoughlin to Alexander Simpson, 13 June 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 35; [fo. 67 says from New York].
George and Pillar to prepare all their bulk salmon for Spalding, who would fill his own barrels at six dollars each.  

The threat of American competition always remained as long as the international boundary remained unsettled. In 1826, when McLoughlin first considered developing a salmon export trade, he had argued that "It is certain if the Americans come they will attempt something in this way." In 1833 the Boston fur trader Nathaniel Wyeth proposed to combine the salmon fishery with his nebulous fur trading scheme. He pointed out quite correctly that the company's powerful opposition had ruined his attempt to embark in the coastal fur trade, and added "The Salmon alone without the fur I seem doubtfull." He also told his Boston backers that Native fishermen would take too long to get the fish to the traders: "salmon would in this case be from 6 to 30 hours out of the water which is far too long in this warm climate." Returning to Boston, Wyeth had second thoughts, and in November 1833 he wrote that:

Salmon have been brought from the Columbia to Boston and I think sold for about $16 per bbl. but I believe in not the best order which I suppose arose from their having been caught too long before they were salted. This I was told by persons who saw them put up. And if salmon are traded from the Indians there will always be

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75See McLoughlin to Pelly, 15 June 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 33; McLoughlin to Birnie, 15 June 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fos. 33-33d; McLoughlin to McKay, 16 June 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 36; McLoughlin to Spalding, 19 June 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 36. The burning of Fort Langley in April 1840 made it difficult to procure all of Spalding's fish, but the Columbia fishery was unscathed, and in November 1840 the Vancouver left for Oahu with "100 Barrels Columbia Salmon." McLoughlin to Pelly, 22 September 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo.76; HBCA C.7/177, fo. 82d.

76McLoughlin to G&C, 1 September 1826, HBRS 4, p. 37.

some difficulty in this respect, but if salmon will bring $12 per bbl. they will pay all the expenses of the vessell and leave a large allowance for the expenses of the post, at which they are caught. 78

In Boston, Wyeth formed the Columbia Fishing and Trading Company, in imitation of the Hudson's Bay Company's Columbia fur, salmon, lumber, and farming business, and returned in 1834. 79 He built Fort Hall on the Snake; began a farm in the Willamette as a provision base; and, in February 1835, prepared to cure salmon for the New York market. 80 That fall McLoughlin learned that Wyeth had salted about 300 tierces salmon, "but this is so much less and they cost so much more than he expected, that I am told by some, that he is going to drop the business." 81 Wyeth could not compete with the company's extended business on the Pacific, and in a gesture reminiscent of the North West Company's purchase of Astor's fur company, McLoughlin in 1836 bought Wyeth's entire operations. 82 Later McLoughlin wrote that he opposed Wyeth in the salmon trade "so effectively as to prevent his getting even half a cargo, and which destroyed his opposition at once. . . ." 83

In the summer of 1840, another American, Captain Couch, fished for salmon from his Brig Maryland at the falls of the Willamette. McLoughlin suspected Couch would fish at the mouth of the Columbia too, and he asked James Birnie of Fort George to watch Couch

78 Wyeth [in Cambridge] to Mr Henry Hall and Mess. Ticker & Williams, 8 November 1833, Young, Wyeth Correspondence, p. 76.
79 McLoughlin to G&C, 10 January 1838, HBCA A.11/61, fo.40.
80 McLoughlin to Ermatinger, 1 February 1835, Ermatinger Papers, NAC.
81 McLoughlin to G&C, 30 September 1835, HBRS 4, p. 141.
82 See HBRS 4, pp. 165-182.
carefully. To McLoughlin's pleasure Couch only caught a hundred and twenty barrels of salmon.

The lower Columbia fishery was in a prosperous condition in 1841-42 when Simpson made his final visit to the Columbia Department. American traders had not yet mounted serious competition, and the company produced at least 400 barrels annually for export, worth probably around $2,000 a year after the deduction of expenses. Simpson observed that with a view "of affording freight for our shipping, and of benefitting by the demand in the Sandwich Islands, a quantity of salmon, according to the state of the fisheries, is cured here for the market, besides what is required for the use of the establishment."

After Simpson's departure the company, to test new markets and remove some of the overstock caused by the Vancouver's 1842 shipment of close to 700 barrels, sent three large shipments, totalling 650 barrels, to London, Boston, and Canton. Simpson had recommended the London shipment. In May 1842 he told McLoughlin to load the Cowlitz

84 "I wish you would get 6 Casks of salmon salted with the back bone on them the head and the tail. I understand when the back bone is not taken out it is necessary to make a cut longitudonally in the tick of the fish to enable it to take in the salt, but if Capt. Couch goes down you will perhaps make it a point to see how he does and in this case you will be able to do it better. The main point to attend in salting fish is to take the blood out well, but what I am told and surprises me is that Capt Couch washes his fish in water to take the blood out." McLoughlin to Birnie, 3 July 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 41; McLoughlin to Birnie, 3 August 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 51.

85 McLoughlin to Governor, Chief Factors, and Chief Traders of HBC, 4 September 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo.38.

86 The company's salmon trade on the Columbia was threatened in 1842 when, Simpson reported that two American vessels remained on the river for about five five months. Simpson to G&C, 21 June 1843, HBCA A.12/2, fo. 171. They did not export any of their salmon to Honolulu. Pelly and Allan to G&C, 7 August 1844, HBCA A.11/62, fo. 20.

87 Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBRS 29, p. 79.
on the Columbia with a "return Cargo" for England of salmon and other Columbia
Produce. The shipment of 200 barrels was not a success. The ship passed through such a
hot climate that the fish, though heavily salted, deteriorated so much that the shipment sold
for an average of 22/- a barrel (about $5.00). Moreover, a new English tariff had been
placed on foreign salmon, and the Governor and Committee reported that too much blood
was left around the backbone of the fish for the taste of the London market. "There is
therefore no chance that this article will ever succeed here, and it must in future be reserved
for markets more within reach."89

In 1843 Pelly and Allan consigned large shipments to China and the United States. In
January 1843 they explained their actions to McLoughlin:

As for the Salmon we are absolutely overwhelmed with that article . . . and as the hot
season is now fast approaching, we have been induced to act upon your advice, and
consigned one hundred and fifty barrels to China on account of Vancouver Depot
having most fortunately found a vessel here bound [t]hence, we have also consigned
three hundred barrels to the United States, and are sorry to say no very favourable
results can be anticipated from either of these adventures. . . .90

McLoughlin replied that he hoped that there would be "an outlet at the Sandwich Islands for
our future exports of Salmon, which are likely to to be on the increase. . . . It will, in
short, be proper to test every market within reach of the Sandwich Islands, in order, if
possible, to obtain an outlet for Salmon."91

88Simpson to McLoughlin, 18 May 1842, HBRS 6, p. 289.
89G&C to McLoughlin, 27 September 1843, HBRS 6, p. 305. See also Pelly and Allan to
90Pelly and Allan to McLoughlin, 12 January 1843, HBCA B.223/b/30, fos. 18-19.
91McLoughlin to Pelly and Allan, 3 August 1843, HBCA B.223/b/30, fo. 28.
These two consignments turned out poorly not because of spoilage but because of the large commission and freight fees Pelly and Allan had to pay to shippers and to the Canton and Boston merchants who actually sold the fish. The company's great advantage at the Sandwich Islands was that it had to pay no such charges; it was itself the middleman. The company controlled the fate of the fish from the time they were traded from the Chinook and Coast Salish people of the Columbia and Fraser to the time they were sold to the indigenous people of the Sandwich Islands.

The 300 barrels sent to Boston sold for $7.25 a barrel, "which may," Pelly and Allan warned, "be considered a tolerably fair price but from that there remains to be deducted Freight, Charges, &c &c." After expenses the Boston consignment realised only $4.00 a barrel which, Pelly and Allan said, "does not hold out any inducement to continue our consignments to that quarter." The Chinese shipment of 150 barrels was consigned, meanwhile, to the Scottish merchant house Jardine Matheson & Co. of Canton. A year after the shipment Pelly and Allan finally heard from Jardine Matheson, but their "advices do not prognosticate great things." McLoughlin, meanwhile, feared that the Canton fish would turn a profit only if "the proceeds are invested in such of the Manufactures or productions of

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92 Pelly and Allan to G&C, 24 February 1844, HBCA A.11/62, fo. 15. Meanwhile McLoughlin asked them to invest the proceeds of the Boston sale in tea, rice, or tobacco. He anticipated that the price obtained for the salmon sent to Boston "will hardly cover cost & charges unless the proceeds be well invested in such American produce as we can dispose of at profit. It was with this view that we last year sent you an order for the purchase of tea, rice, & tobacco, the produce of China & the United States, in order not only to facilitate such transactions but also to render them more valuable." McLoughlin to Pelly and Allan, 1 July 1844, HBCA B.223/b/31, fos. 113d-114.


94 Pelly and Allan to G&C, 24 February 1844, HBCA A.11/62, fo. 15.
China as may sell to advantage at this place, or the Sandwich Islands. . . .”

Pelly and Allan promptly wrote to Jardine Matheson, requesting them "to invest the proceeds of the fish in teas, an article which is always in great demand in the Columbia." In March 1845 they finally heard the expected bad news from China:

We have just received the closing account of the consignment of 150 Barrels Salmon to China and are sorry to find that it has turned out very unsatisfactorily—the net proceeds being only an average of 3 dollars pr Barrel and which we have received in Tea for Columbia River.

"[T]he present prospects of salmon trade in foreign parts," Pelly and Allan concluded, "is not flattering." Thereafter the company concentrated on its salmon exports to the growing Sandwich Islands market, which by the end of the 1840s absorbed up to 2,000 barrels of salmon a year.

Lumber was the other major non-fur export from Fort Vancouver. Newcomers were impressed by the magnificent timber on the lower Columbia; Duncan Finlayson, for example, noted the "tall & stately timber" of the lower Columbia on his arrival in 1831, as did Tolmie and the Scottish naturalist Meredith Gairdner on their canoe along the Columbia in 1833. Tolmie, in his journal, described the "gigantic relics of the primaeval forest, which

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95Mcloughlin to Pelly and Allan, 1 July 1844, HBCA B.223/b/31, fos. 113d-114.
97Pelly and Allan to G&C, 5 March 1845, HBCA A.11/62, fos. 36-37d.
form a broad belt extending to the river's edge . . . the magnificence & grandeur of its colossal tenants was very impressive. . . ."99

The company's lumber trade originated in 1824-25, when Simpson suggested that fur trading vessels be put to work in the dead months of the winter trading salmon and spars to Canton and to South American markets.100 Nothing could be done until the coasting trade was in operation and until the company had a sawmill, but both were under way late in 1827 when Aemilius Simpson investigated the lumber market in California and the Sandwich Islands. He discovered that boards would sell at Monterey for forty or fifty Dollars per thousand feet. "[I]f you visit the Owhyee Islands," McLoughlin told him, "you will Enquire what price Deals will sell and the size most in Demand we are told they would bring sixty Dollars pr M feet."101

Construction of the mill began in 1827 on a small stream four miles upstream from Fort Vancouver.102 A few months later Simpson referred to this as "our present experimental Saw Mill," the annual expense of which was about £150.103 The mill possessed a single saw operated by a primitive "muley" system. Lumber was cut on the bank of the Columbia (probably by Native people) and floated right to the mill. Two yoke


100 A lumber export trade between the Columbia and London was not established, perhaps because a cedar log sent there (possibly as ballast) in 1825 or 1826 was reckoned to be "a species of soft Pine" of low value. G&C to McLoughlin, 20 September 1826, in HBCA search file "Timber."

101 McLoughlin to McDonald, 31 March 1828, HBCA B.223/b/4, fo. 2; McLoughlin to Aemilius Simpson, 13 November 1827, HBCA B.223/b/3, fo. 23.


103 Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, HBRS 10, p. 84.
of oxen hauled logs. The machinery was brought from England and installed by a
millwright, William Crate, who came overland specially for the purpose. He and an old
Astorian, William Canning, managed the mill. Eight Kanakas provided the labour; they
loaded lumber aboard the company's vessels which moored at the river bank in four fathoms
of water.\footnote{St Clair, "Beaver in Hawaii," p. 42. On the mill see also Spoehr, "Fur Traders," 48-49.}

The company initiated a lucrative and large-scale lumber trade from this new mill to
the Sandwich Islands in 1828. McLoughlin hoped that he could market the company's
lumber in Californian and South American ports, but he was mistaken, and by the early
1830s Oahu had become the company's major market.\footnote{Timber was a generic term; square timber consisted of baulks of timber hewn
approximately square with an axe; lumber was the product of sawmills and included deals (say
3"x9"x12 feet) planks (2"x7"x10 feet etc.) boards (7/8"x7"x10 feet). Minor commodities of
timber trade included staves, deal ends, laths, shingles. Wynn, Timber Colony: p. 3 n. On the
west coast lumber included boards, planks, deals, rafters, spars, masts, shingles, and logs, but
company employees, following the English usage, at first called most of these these things timber
until they adopted the Sandwich Islands usage. A "deal" was an English term for boards or
planks of softwood, usually fir or pine. Collins Dictionary, and Lomax, "Tropical Trade
Route," p. 13.}

"We now have a Small Saw
Mill a going," McLoughlin told the Governor and Committee in July 1828. The mill had
already produced a few plank, and he asked, "Would it be worth while to fill up the Vessel
with deals of this kind? We can procure them with little additional labour. . . ."\footnote{McLoughlin to G&C, 14 July 1828, HBRS 4, pp. 60; 62.}

McLoughlin and Simpson decided in 1829 to market the produce of this mill to offset the
high cost of embarking on the North West Coast fur trade. Simpson told the Governor and
Committee that his cousin had found markets for salmon and lumber in California and Oahu.
"To both these articles of Trade, particularly the former," he wrote, "our attention is
directed, and we think that a very profitable branch of business, may be made of it, united with the Fur Trade as will hereafter appear." He proposed that during the dead season, October until March, loads of lumber be sent on the company's vessels to the south or to Oahu with the promise of large profit:

Towards this object, a Saw Mill is already erected within Four Miles of Fort Vancouver which with only one Saw will give 300,000 feet of Deals p. Annum, and by removing it at an expense of about £100, twenty miles from hence, to the Falls of Wilhamet, where whole Forests of Timber can be floated into a very fine Mill Seat, which Dr. McLoughlin & myself have examined, Saws enough could be employed, to load the British Navy.

He estimated that the cost of shipping deals was about 10/-per thousand feet, and that if two vessels were engaged in the trade, a profit of about £5,000 a year could be expected after port dues, sale charges, and all other "Sacrafices and Expenses." Lumber exports would subsidize the company's coastal fur trade until American traders disappeared: "I entertain sanguine hopes," Simpson wrote, "that before the expiration of 5 years there will not be an American on the Coast; and the Timber business, in which the shipping will be employed when the Trade of the coast is over, will I trust make up the loss we shall incur at the outset of the Opposition."

He believed that the Californian and Spanish coasts offered the best potential, and proposed that the company employ English merchants in South America as agents to save expenses of marketing and distribution. John Baggs & Co of Lima seemed especially promising for this purpose:

107Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, HBRS 10, pp. 75; p. 84. For a restatement of this plan see McLoughlin to G&C, 28 May 1834, HBRS 4, pp. 120-125.

This House, if found perfectly respectable, might be a good channel through which to transact our business, as they are very extensively connected all along the California, Mexican and Peruvian Coasts. Indeed, if we go into the business, it is necessary that your Honors should make the appointment of Agents, and the more extensively connected on the Coast, the better, so that we may have merely to deliver our Cargoes, and return in time for the Fur Trade to the Northward, as great inconveniences and delay, might be occasioned, by hawking our Timber from Port to Port, along the coast.

So confident was Simpson that the Governor and Committee would approve of the plan that he and McLoughlin embarked on it prior to seeking their consent, on the grounds that it would take at least three years to exchange letters with London on the subject. The Governor and Committee agreed to this plan, and sent McLoughlin letters of introduction and credit to the English merchants Walford & Green of Valparaiso and Conception, and John Yates of Lima, "to whom you can consign any Timber, Salmon or other Produce you may wish to send to those Markets. . . . These houses will in all probability find an outlet at other parts of the Coast. . . ."109

Until 1838, the company's lumber came from the mill near Fort Vancouver.110 In March 1833 the Fort Vancouver mill was managed by Canning and staffed by a French Canadian, a Sandwich Islander, and four other men.111 In March 1835, James Douglas visited the mill and recorded in his journal that: "We landed at the Saw Mill, and remained there for nearly an hour. It works 12 saws, and cuts about 3500 feet of inch boards during

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109 G&C to McLoughlin, 28 October 1829, HBRS 4, p. 120 n.1. See also Northern Council minutes, July 1830, HBRS 3, p. 263.

110 Simpson tried repeatedly to convince McLoughlin to implement his 1829 plan of building a mill south of Fort Vancouver on the powerful falls of the Willamette River. See Simpson to G&C, 26 August 1830, HBCA D.4/97, fo. 37; McLoughlin to Simpson, 16 March 1831, HBRS 4, p. 228; Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1832, HBCA A.12/1, fo. 436.

111 "List of men at Fort Vancouver 21st March 1833," HBCA B.223/b/9, fo. 5.
the 24 hours." By 1836 the mill employed ten yoke of oxen and a crew of twenty-eight men. As the trade grew, large stocks of lumber had to be kept at the sawmill and dried awaiting export. At the end of October 1837, McLoughlin wrote that his policy since 1835 was to have a spare cargo of timber always "... ready to be shipped when we had a Vessel to spare for the purpose; at present we have Two Hundred Thousand Feet of sawn wood ready for Shipping." In 1835, the old Moose Factory sawmill was packed up and returned to England in preparation for shipment to the Columbia. By March 1838, just before he went on furlough, McLoughlin gave Douglas the following directions regarding the mill:

Though the Saw Mill is the last in the scale of duties of this place as it can from its nature be at times postponed still it is very important as it is necessary to have a sufficient quantity of wood to keep the vessels employed in transporting it to Oahu when they are not required for other objects.

Between February and October 1838, the sawmill, Douglas wrote, was rebuilt "on a new construction, having a double gearing, lighter frames, diminished cranks, with a greatly accelerated stroke. ..." Production began in the middle of February 1839, when the sawmill employed twenty-six men; within four months they had cut 90,000 feet of one inch

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112 Douglas, [3 March 1835], "Journal of a Journey from Fort Vancouver to York Factory and back 1835," ms., BCARS.

113 Clark, "Sawmill on the Columbia," p. 43.

114 McLoughlin to G&C, 31 October 1837, HBR S 4, p. 204.


116 McLoughlin to Douglas, March 1838, HBCA B.223/b/18, fo. 25d.
boards, of which 60,000 had been sent to the Sandwich Islands. This shipment realised $2,400 in the Sandwich Islands which, Douglas said, was considerably more than the sawmill’s expenses for the same four month period. The new mill worked from eight to ten saws and when in full operation employed "25 men classed as Hewers, carters, fodderers Rafters sawyers, and one overseer." Douglas thought he could double the quantity of lumber sold annually at Oahu, even though the new mill was still slowed down by breakdowns. An officer on the Wilkes expedition of 1840 noted that the mill was in constant operation, and that it cut from 2,500 to 3,000 feet every forty-eight hours. "They also keep scores of woodcutters," fur trader John Dunn wrote, "employed to fell timber, which is sawed up in large quantities—3,000 feet a day, and regularly shipped for the Sandwich Islands, and other foreign parts." Table 3 shows available lumber export statistics.

Oahu was the main market for Columbia produce, the principal place for vessels returning to England to obtain make-up cargoes, and the most important source of items such

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117 Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBRS 4, pp. 259-260. Douglas recollected that: "The saw mill at Fort Vancouver cut about nine hundred thousand feet of lumber annually—its money value it would be difficult to state, the price varying one year with another according to the demand, but I may here state that the prices were then ranging from fifteen to fifty dollars per thousand feet." Douglas’ evidence to the British and American Joint Commission (fo. 54 of Reel 237 A).


119 Thomas Jefferson Farnham [Oahu] to J.R. Poinsett [US Secretary of War], 4 January 1840, BCARS A/B/20/F 23. Wilkes recorded that about twenty men, Canadians and Sandwich Islanders, were employed at the mill. Charles Wilkes, Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition During the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841 and 1842 5 Vols. (London: Wiley and Putnam, 1845) (1840 Narrative cited in HBCA search file "Timber").

120 Dunn, History of the Oregon Country, p. 153. In a contemporary inventory, the mill was described as consisting of "1 (one) substantially built sawmill, 91 X 30 feet, capable of working a gang of 11 saws with an overshot wheel 16 feet diameter." "Inventory of Goods Fort Vancouver Depot Spring 1844," HBCA B.223/d/127, fo. 158.
Table 3

Columbia River Lumber Exports, 1829-1842

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Vessel</th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>[boards]</td>
<td>$100 @ 1000 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 1829</td>
<td>Cadboro</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>15,501 sq.ft.</td>
<td>$6,330.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1830</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>13,750 sq.ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1830</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>13,000 ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1830</td>
<td>Dryad</td>
<td>Monterey</td>
<td>35,930 sq.ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1831</td>
<td>Ganymede</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>25,653</td>
<td>$2,746.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1832</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>43,408 sq.ft.</td>
<td>$5,531.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1833</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>42,384 sq.ft.</td>
<td>$4,775.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1833</td>
<td>Dryad</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>18,180 ft.</td>
<td>$2,321.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1834</td>
<td>Nereide</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>[boards]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1834</td>
<td>Lama</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>[boards]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1834</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>121,842 ft.</td>
<td>$491.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1835</td>
<td>Dryad</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>41,562 ft.</td>
<td>$2,334.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 1835</td>
<td>Dryad</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>100,000 ft.</td>
<td>$50 @ 1000 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1835</td>
<td>Ganymede</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>121,842 ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1836</td>
<td>Ganymede</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>114,422 ft.</td>
<td>$45 @ 1000 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1836</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>160,000 ft.</td>
<td>$6,300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1836</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>34,230 sq.ft.</td>
<td>$1,368.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1837</td>
<td>Lama</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>41,141 ft.</td>
<td>$4,542.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 1838</td>
<td>Nereide</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>147,785 ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1838</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>58,000 ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 1838</td>
<td>Nereide</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>59,000 ft.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1839</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>[boards]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1839</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>100,000 ft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1840</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>[boards]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1840</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>[boards]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1842</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Oahu</td>
<td>boards</td>
<td>$307.20</td>
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</table>

121Most of these reference are from HBCA C.7/177. Those that are not, or which contain additional data, are: 1828: McLoughlin to McLeod, 1 February 1830, McLeod Papers, NAC; Nov. 1830 (Vancouver) McLoughlin to G&C, 24 November 1830, HBRS 4, p. 95; May and October 1833, November 1834, and September 1835: York Factory, Country Produce Account Books, HBCA 239/d/491, fos. 44; 56; 67; 68; 80; Sept. 1835: McLoughlin to Governor, Chief Factors, Chief Traders, Northern Department, 29 August 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 41; Oct. 1835: HBRS 4, p. 152 n1; April 1836: McLoughlin to Simpson, Chief Factors, Chief Traders, HHBC, 30 August 1837, HBCA B.223/b/17, fo. 32; June 1836 and Nov. 1836, Fort Vancouver, [Country Produce List], HBCA B.223/d/94; McLoughlin to Simpson, 5 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 66; May 1837, Feb. 1838, and combined value of Lama and Nereide cargo: "Columbia District Country Produce Inventories Outfit 1837," HBCA B.223/d/106, fo. 8; Nov. and Dec. 1838: Pelly to Smith, 30 April 1839, HBCA A.11/61, fo.51-52; Nov. 1839: Thomas Jefferson Farnham [Oahu] to J.R. Poinsett [US Secretary of War], 4 January 1840, BCARS A/B/20/F 23; 1842: 160 12 ft 4 inch planks, St Clair, "Beaver in Hawaii," p.41.
as salt and molasses required on the coast. Honolulu was also the company's closest market and, as a vital port in the growing Pacific trade, promised to be the entrepot for the transshipment of Columbia lumber even further afield. Moreover, the Sandwich Islands had recently been stripped of sandalwood by American traders during the sea otter trade. As Simpson's private secretary Manley Hopkins recalled in 1862, "Sandal wood abounded on the heights, but was lavishly cut down as an article of commerce, till the tree was nearly exterminated." 122

Lumber was much less perishable than salmon or flour, and since the destruction of their sandalwood forests the Sandwich Islands lacked good structural building materials. "The immense Douglas fir forests," Lomax wrote, "provided an unlimited source of a superior product for store buildings, houses, and bridges." 123 After the ravages of Pacific storms the whaling fleet required a supply of spars and masts on the islands, and the company was in a good position to supply them. 124 Competition came from the eastern seaboard of the United States, New Zealand, and "Norfolk Sound" (Sitka). But by the late 1830s the market was dominated by the Hudson's Bay Company, with smaller shipments coming from the Russian American Company's sawmill at Sitka. 125 Sporadic shipments (usually in the form of ballast or "make up cargo") from the United States and New Zealand

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125 On the Sitkas sawmill see Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 242.
could not compete in this distant market, though they served to glut it on occasion, and by 1843 the Hudson's Bay Company controlled the trade.

Charlton and his successor George Pelly devised transport and market arrangements for Columbia lumber. For example, the Dryad's cargo (in 1835) was placed on a raft and taken ashore, and a man on the beach counted the deals as they were taken off the raft. From the beach, Pelly said, the lumber was "taken in carts up to the Deal yards, not 40 yards from the Beach." They were counted again at the deal yards. Here they were sold by wholesale and later by retail.

The first export of sawn lumber from the Columbia River to Oahu occurred in the fall or early winter of 1828, when Aemilius Simpson took a sample to Oahu on the Eagle. He and Richard Charlton, the company's agent, immediately sold some of the boards for $100 per 1,000 feet. Charlton thought that 200,000 feet might be sold at Oahu immediately, though McLoughlin expected that this amount might be sent in the summer of 1830. Shipments followed (Table 3, above), and over the winter of 1830-31 Charlton sent part of it to the "Seeward Islands, where there is a good deal of building going on. . . ." McLoughlin sent another two shipments in 1830, telling Charlton in November that:


127Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, HBRS 10, p. 110; see also McLoughlin to G&C, 5 August 1829, HBRS 4, pp. 76-77. "We are led to Expect a Good Market for timber at the Sandwich Islands—we sold some Boards last year at 100 dollars pr. hundred We might have sold all we had at 75 Dollars but we would not." McLoughlin to McLeod, 1 February 1830, McLeod Papers, NAC. "[I]f you have no other employment for your men they would pay their wages by sawing boards. . . ." McLoughlin to McDonald, 17 June 1829, HBCA B.223/b/5, fo. 4.

The fall in the price of Deals is greater than we expected but as we intend to follow up the business and supply the Owhyhee Market with as many Deals as they will purchase providing the business pays, I send the schooner Vancouver with a small quantity as per accompanying invoice to ascertain if there is any appearance of a Demand sufficient to make us enter extensively on the business. . . .

In January 1831, Charlton responded to McLoughlin as follows:

In respect to the Lumber business from your River to these Islands I think it may be entered into to a considerable extent by having an assorted Cargo, say half boards, the remainder Oak plank logs and scantling: one fault found with the Columbia boards is their length, as they would be more saleable if they were longer say 20 feet: the scantling most saleable would be 3 by 4 1/2 Inches . . . the immense quantity of Lumber brought into this market during the last two years has of course lowered the prices.

In March 1831, McLoughlin reported Charlton's news to Simpson, adding that the Americans would drop the business as soon as they knew the company supplied the market from its Columbia posts. Distance made it unprofitable for American merchants to ship lumber regularly to Oahu from the Atlantic seaboard. In October 1831, McLoughlin sent a cargo of plank, rafters, and oak logs which Charlton found well suited to the market. After this success he sent a similar cargo in June 1832. "The present is of the same description," he wrote, "except that there is no oak, which is scarce in this quarter; however
in future we expect to be able to supply you with some." The cargo consisted of plank, board, logs, and rafters.¹³³

Duncan Finlayson, who accompanied the *Ganymede* to Oahu in October 1831, bought the *Lama* from Columbia produce sales there; the following August he reported to McLoughlin that:

The market has been overstocked lately with timber, that it is now become a mere drag. Cargoes of it have been landed from New Zealand, Van Diemen's Land, & a number of Ships from the United States fill up their Spare room therewith. The N.W. Coasters land a considerable quantity, principally Spars, & the Whalers exchange it with the Natives for supplies & Provisions. From this overstock, it has been sold so low as 20 dollars pr M feet [but] . . . it will again command from 45 @ 50 dollars per M feet, & the consumption at this place being according to the best information I can obtain, about 300,000 feet, you may readily perceive could we afford to compete for securing the market to ourselves, that our Lumber would pay, & yield a handsome profit.¹³⁴

McLoughlin promptly sent two large cargoes in 1833.¹³⁵ Finlayson, who returned to Oahu on one of the lumber carriers, reported in January 1834 that the number of buildings about to be erected on the islands would increase lumber demand considerably.¹³⁶ A building boom, however, did not happen, and in 1834 the market was depressed. McLoughlin sent

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¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Finlayson to McLoughlin, 2 August 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 40d.

¹³⁵York Factory, Country Produce Account Books, 1828-36, HBCA 239/d/491, fos. 44; 56; HBCA C.7/177, fo. 27 b.

¹³⁶"The Market here has for some time past been so overflowed with lumber, that it sold as low as 30 $ pr thousand feet, but the number of buildings now about to be erected will increase the demand considerably. . . ." Finlayson to Smith, 11 January 1834, HBCA B.223/b/9, fo. 52; Finlayson to Messrs Pierce and Hinckley, 17 January 1834, HBCA B.223/b/9, fo. 53.
only one small shipment of lumber in 1834. Rafters which should have sold for $2.00
had sold for only at 65 cents. With such low prices, McLoughlin doubted the future of the
lumber export trade, and he told Pelly in November that although prices had declined
steadily since 1828 he would send another shipment, and the "the price at which deals &c
sell will determine whether we continue the business or not as we cannot afford them at the
prices they have sold these two years. . ."138 Prices improved, and in 1835 McLoughlin
made another three shipments of pine boards, deals, spars, and rafters.139 In his covering
letter to Pelly, McLoughlin said:

Our saw mill is in full operation, and as we saw wood of any dimension required and
I would request you would inform me, which size is most saleable, as our timber has
sold so low of late at Woahoo we will only have about a cargo for the Dryad by the
time she returns [so] . . . give me your opinion of the quantity you think might be
sold annually at Woahoo, and the price it wd. probably fetch.140

Pelly, who complained of continuing imports from Norfolk Sound and New Zealand,
asked McLoughlin specifically for shingles and for ash logs for the manufacture of cart shafts

137For totals see HBCA C.7/177, fo. 36d and York Factory, Country Produce, Account
Book, 1828-36, HBCA 239/d/491, fo. 67.

138"[Y]ou will see by the accounts that from the first cargo sent there in 1828 they have been
constantly lowering in price but if we can obtain a fair remunerating price we will make a
business and undertake to supply any demand." McLoughlin to Pelly, 18 November 1834,
HBCA B.223/b/19, fo. 72. In May 1836 timber on hand at Oahu for the use of next outfit
amounted to £1400. Fort Vancouver Accounts Current 1835-36, HBCA B.223/d/81.

139For the March, September, and October 1835 shipments see York Factory, Country
Produce Account book, 1828-36, HBCA 239/d/49, fos. 68, 80; HBCA B.191/z/1, fo. 37;
HBCA C.7/177, fos. 38d, 44d; McLoughlin to Kipling, 14 September 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11,
fo. 46; HBRS 4, p. 152 n 1; HBCA A.11/61, fos. 2, 8, 18. The October shipment included
twenty-four pine spars from the Fort George area: McLoughlin told Work, who was in the Lama
at Fort George, to keep fifteen men "whom you will employ in cutting sufficiency of spars to
load the two Vessels." McLoughlin to Work, 17 December 1834, HBCA B.223/b/10, fo. 81.

140McLoughlin to Pelly, 14 March 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fos. 1-3.
and spokes, which were much in demand at Oahu. "If you could send 100,000 Shingles," Pelly said, "about 18 Inches long and well made they would meet a Sale at $8 a thousand."

"I will send you a shingle by way of a specimen of those in demand here the Russians seem very desirous of engrossing the whole Lumber supplies to this place and by the great improvement and extent of their saw mill are likely to become formidable competitors."

In October 1835 McLoughlin suggested that Pelly sell lumber by retail. "Deals have been sold latterly by wholesale," he told Pelly; "pray can none be sold by retail also, as it seems to me it would be the means of obtaining a better price for them." Pelly took his advice. The Governor and Committee watched these developments with interest, and in December 1835 suggested that McLoughlin flood the market to drive out the competition:

With regard to the Sandwich Islands Timber trade, instead of feeding the market sparingly in order to keep up the price, thereby affording a good market for Timber brought from the United States and New Zealand, we think that a large stock, say a year's consumption, should be always kept up in the hands of Mr George Pelly which would very soon put a stop to the further importation of Timber by the Americans. . .

By 1836 the company had a ship engaged full-time in the lumber trade, and in that year the lumber trade reached new levels. In June 1836 McLoughlin sent the Columbia

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141The Dryad's cargo did not arrive in time for Pelly to meet the French contract. In March 1835, Pelly referred to competition from Norfolk Sound lumber and New Zealand spars, but he stated that Columbia lumber could compete because no one else could afford to ship lumber to Oahu for five or six cents a square foot. The market was glutted with a year's worth of New Zealand spars. Pelly to McLoughlin, 21 March 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fos. 116-120.

142McLoughlin to Pelly, 12 October 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 74.

143G&C to McLoughlin, 8 December 1835, HBCA B.223/c/1, fos. 44-48d; 45d-46.

144McLoughlin told Ermatinger that he had "two Vessels in addition to the three posts on the coast and one vessel Employed in taking timber to Wahou." McLoughlin to Ermatinger, 1 February 1836, Ermatinger Papers, NAC.
to Woahoo with a cargo of pine boards, planks, and oak logs totalling about 160,000 feet, which made it the largest cargo of lumber ever to leave the west coast. McLoughlin remained optimistic about the company’s lumber exports because rival shipments from the United States, Norfolk Sound, and New Zealand remained, he said, "casual and unsteady." By the beginning of September Pelly had sold all the lumber except for the Columbia’s cargo of 160,000 feet. Two further lumber shipments of pine rafters, boards, and deals occurred in 1836-37, which Pelly advertised in the Sandwich Islands Gazette as "for sale, at wholesale and retail, in quantities to suit purchasers."

Success against other importers came in April 1838, when Pelly reported that the company’s lumber dominated the island market. "There was a large stock in the yards of

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145 McLoughlin to Simpson, 4 April 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fo. 28.
146 "I do not wish to exact unreasonable prices, but I may expect reasonable profits, as all branches of business to be inducted and continued successfully must become profitable in a less or more degree to the parties interested therein." McLoughlin to Pelly, 17 June 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fos. 42-46; 42-42d.
147 Pelly to Smith, 2 October 1836, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 14; McLoughlin to Simpson, 5 January 1836, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 67. French, who the company had supplied with lumber for several years, met Finlayson at Sitka in the summer of 1836 and offered to buy the company’s lumber at $40 per thousand. Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fo. 24 and HBCA B.223/b/18, fo. 11; 12. On French’s timber trade at Sitka in 1835 see Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 242.
148 The Columbia left Fort Vancouver in November 1836 with pine rafters: Pelly to Smith, 1 January 1837, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 20. For details see HBCA C.7/177, fo. 54d; Pelly to Smith, 1 January 1837, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 20; Fort Vancouver, [Country Produce], HBCA B.223/d/94; "Columbia District Country Produce Inventories Outfit 1837," HBCA B.223/d/106, fo. 8. In May 1837, the Llama carried boards, deals, and rafters to Oahu. "Lumber. Just Received. Per HBCC Brig Lama, from Columbia River, a cargo of assorted lumber, consisting of 30,000 ft. 1 Inch boards-assd lengths. 70 Beams 18 ft. 1 12 in W. 4 in thickness] 500 Rafters 12 a 18 ft l 3 dy 4 in. The above for sale, at wholesale and retail, in quantities to suit purchasers. Please apply to George Pelly Agt HBCC." Sandwich Islands Gazette, 5 August 1837, quoted in St. Clair, "Beaver in Hawaii," p. 40. For details see "Columbia District Country Produce Inventories Outfit 1837," HBCA B.223/d/106, fo. 8, 5 August 1837.
several timber merchants," Douglas wrote; "chiefly of Columbia growth. Mr Pelly thinks that the competitors, in our line, are gradually withdrawing from the business. . . ."\(^{149}\)

The *Nereide* had recently arrived with a large cargo of pine plank, deals, boards, and rafters.\(^{150}\) In July, Pelly reported that Columbia lumber was getting better prices owing to:

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\text{. . . less competition; formerly large quantities of Lumber were imported from the United States, New Zealand and Norfolk Sound and this small market was for a long time glutted now the Stock of Lumber is pretty well worked off and Norfolk Sound is now the only place were [sic] Lumber is brought to this market besides that from your Establishment at Fort Vancouver. The price now obtainable is from five to six Cents the running foot, one inch thick and Twelve inches wide; 60,000 feet has just arrived from Norfolk Sound in the Suffolk. . . .}\(^{151}\)

Two late lumber shipments occurred in 1838,\(^{152}\) both of which had sold for good prices by the end of April 1839, when Pelly told the company’s secretary that:

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\text{The Wood Market here is rather dull and at all times you are probably aware very limited so that a very small increase of import materially depresses prices, the low price of preceding years occasioned by a Glut of the market, has had one good effect that of checking inordinate imports from the US New Zealand and left you pretty well the exclusive market, and still the demand is scarcely equal to the supply. . . .}\(^{153}\)

\(^{149}\)Pelly to Douglas, 30 April 1830, cited in Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBRS 4, p. 267.

\(^{150}\)Pelly to G&C, 24 April 1838, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 38.

\(^{151}\)Pelly to Smith, 26 July 1838, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 43.

\(^{152}\)"The former low prices," Pelly said, had "discouraged shipments of Lumber from all other quarters except Norfolk Sound the Market will probably continue at present quotations." Pelly to Smith, 22 December 1838, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 48.

\(^{153}\)Only rafters had not sold owing, Pelly said, "[T]o the Natives supplying themselves and others from their own Forests at lower rates than I have hitherto submitted for those of the Company." Pelly to Smith, 30 April 1839, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 51-52.
McLoughlin thought that the improvement in lumber prices held "out a prospect of future reimbursement for the unprofitable sales of the last few years," and he sent three large cargoes on the *Vancouver* in 1839 and 1840.\(^{155}\)

The company's lumber operations impressed the Wilkes Party on its visit to Oahu. Thomas Farnham, one of the party, wrote from Oahu in January 1840 that: "The Company ship Vancouver is lying in this port. She brought more than 100 M feet of Columbia River lumber."\(^{156}\) Wilkes himself wrote that the company's boards sold at Oahu for eighty dollars per thousand, and he witnessed the Brig *Ware* taking in a cargo of the company's lumber.\(^{157}\) In March 1840, Pelly wrote that he had sold most of his stock of Columbia lumber. The market, he said, had been swollen due to recent imports by American adventurers from the United States "tempted by the high prices I have obtained." He believed, however, that the Americans could not afford to sell their lumber for less than 5 1/2 cents a foot, so he lowered his price to five cents a foot "and as the other holders cannot gain any profit at such a low figure I hope they will not make further shipments to these Islands."\(^{158}\) Before the end of 1840 the market could cope with two more shipments of

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\(^{154}\) McLoughlin to Pelly, 11 November 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo. 53d.

\(^{155}\) The June shipment carried rafters, inch boards, spars, and a thirty-foot deal. Douglas stated that he could furnish rafters "with greater ease than other lumber." Douglas to Pelly, 24 June 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo. 21d; 22d-23. The large November shipment consisted of boards and planks (for ships' use), and assorted inch deals and beams. Pelly to Smith, 21 March 1840, HBCA A.11/61, fos. 53-56.

\(^{156}\) Thomas Jefferson Farnham [Oahu] to J.R. Poinsett [US Secretary of War], 4 January 1840, BCARS A/B/20/F 23.

\(^{157}\) Wilkes, *Narrative* (1840), cited in HBCA search file "Timber."

\(^{158}\) Pelly pointed out that "Our market at all times very limited is at present time dull owing to large importations from the United States." He stated that the Americans could not afford to sell their lumber at less than 5 1/2 or 6 cents a superficial foot owing to costs of freight,
Columbia lumber, and McLoughlin remarked that prices were improving despite American importations.

Ominous signs appeared in the spring of 1843 when a shipment of boards, plank, and rafters arrived at Oahu from California. This "will interfere with our sales," Pelly and Allan wrote, "as it is much superior to our Lumber. . . . Should Lumber continue to pour in from California, where we understand they have now got saw mills, we shall soon be obliged to reduce the price of ours. . . ."

Meanwhile, an 1842 shipment to London, promoted by Simpson, was not a success.

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159 In May, the Columbia took a cargo of pine spars, beams, planks, and boards, and in November, the Vancouver carried boards, planks, and rafters. For details see HBCA C.7/177, fo. 77d and 82d.

160 "It is satisfactory to find that our lumber in spite of large importations from the United States is improving in price." McLoughlin to Pelly and Alexander Simpson, 21 November 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 105.

161 Pelly and Allan to McLoughlin, 22 March 1843, HBCA B.223/b/30, fo. 21d.

162 Spars and planks from the Columbia were, Simpson said, "procurable with little delay and at no cost," and he sent a return freight to London in 1842. Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBRS 29, p. 87; Simpson to McLoughlin, 18 May 1842, HBRS 6: 290. The planks got a "good price," but the spars were not suited to the market. "The spars, though pronounced of good quality fetched at public sale only 92/6 per load, their value being diminished by their length not being in due proportion to their thickness, which rendered them unfit for masts, and make it necessary to waste much of the best part of the timber in fitting it for other purposes." G&C to McLoughlin, 27 September 1843, HBRS 6, p. 305.
There was also the threat from the Columbia River itself. In 1843 American settlers built two sawmills of similar design on the Columbia. In October 1843, Pelly and Allan reported that a Dr Babcock had arrived in Honolulu ostensibly for health. In fact he was one of a party that had erected a sawmill at Willamette Falls:

[H]is real object in coming here is to form connexions and Procure an outlet for the sale of lumber. We have also learned from good authority that he in conjunction with his associates in business has ordered a Planing Machine for boards from the States with the view of underselling the Company's lumber at these Islands,—we would therefore strongly recommend that a Complete Planing Machine be sent us by first conveyance and so arranged as to work either by manual or Horse Power as independent of our wish to meet the Americans upon their own ground, we anticipate great advantages from it, because the labour of planing boards is the main objection to the Columbia River Lumber here.  

The Governor and Committee acceded to Pelly and Allan's request in September 1844 and ordered a planing mill, which went into operation on the Columbia in May 1845. The Fort Vancouver mill continued in operation until after the Oregon Treaty, when it was rented, in 1849 to an American. In the meantime the company had opened a sawmill at the new depot on Vancouver Island, but American lumber exports from Puget Sound and the Columbia River dominated the Pacific market between the mid 1840s and the the 1860s.

The company's lumber export trade to Oahu before 1843 was, however, a success. Its proximity to market, abundant supply, and cheap labour enabled Pelly to undercut distant lumber producers in the United States, Sitka, and New Zealand. Altogether perhaps 2,000,000 feet of lumber was sent to the Oahu agency. Simpson, during his 1841 visit to Fort Vancouver, wrote that:

163 Clark, "Sawmill on the Columbia," p. 44.

There is likewise attached to this establishment a saw mill, which manufactures all the wood required for the use of the establishment and shipping, besides two or three cargoes a year for exportation to the Sandwich Islands, where the sales amount to about 10,000 dollars per annum. This branch of business affords a remunerating employment for the shipping, when not required for purposes more immediately connected with the fur trade. . . .

Lumber was perhaps the principal source of profit for the Oahu agency. 1839 sales amounted to $16,943. According to Dugald Mactavish, Sandwich Islands agency profits for 1841 had been made "principally upon the Timber & other Country produce sent their [sic] from the Columbia." Simpson and McLoughlin's 1829 plan had also resulted in the shipment of four cargoes of lumber to South American markets between 1830 and 1836. The first Spanish shipment occurred in November 1830, when the Dryad under Aemilius Simpson left for Monterey with an adventure of about 36,000 feet of lumber, including deals.

McLoughlin had wanted Simpson to send the vessel to South America, but the Dryad was needed to establish the fur trade post at the Nass River and could not go so far south.

The adventure was not a success. Captain Simpson succeeded only in trading some lumber

166Clark, "Sawmill on the Columbia," p. 43.
167Dugald Mactavish to Hargrave, 2 April 1842, Hargrave Papers, NAC.
168"Our Vessels sailed In Novr The Dryad Capt Simpson for Monterrey laden with salted salmon and Deals. . . ." J. E. Harriott to McLeod, 25 February 1831, McLeod Papers, NAC.
169McLoughlin to G&C, 11 October 1830, HBRS 4, p. 88; McLoughlin to G&C, 24 November 1830, HBRS 4, p. 95.
for hides at Monterey at a poor rate of exchange, and McLoughlin’s ambition to send another cargo to the south in 1831 was postponed with Captain Simpson’s death.

In 1834 McLoughlin sent two cargoes of lumber to the south, perhaps because the Oahu market was glutted. The Nereide, sent in May to California or South America, and the Lama, sent in July, were to make "a regular business" of the southern lumber trade. The Lama was to aim for the "Ports of San Francisco and Monterrey, on the coast of Upper California." Their cargoes consisted of boards, rafters, squared and rough pine logs, and thirty spars. These early shipments did not sell well owing to low prices, and in November McLoughlin decided "to drop the business" if timber did not sell better than it had for the last three years.

The third southern shipment was most incongruous. In 1836, again because business in Oahu was slow, McLoughlin decided to send the Ganymede to England via South America with a large cargo of lumber. He consigned the cargo to R. F. Budge, an English merchant at Valparaiso, who had agreed to act as the company’s agent. McLoughlin wrote to

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170 McLoughlin to McDonald, 4 June 1831, HBCA B.223/b/7, fos. 1-2


172 "My intention before receiving your instructions was to send one of our Gentlemen with the first Cargo we sent there for sale and to sell it by auction or private sale, and if the timber did not sell better than it has done for the last three years to drop the business." McLoughlin to G&C, 18 November 1834, HBRS 4, p. 124.

173 McLoughlin to Pelly, 17 June 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fos. 42-42d; McLoughlin to G&C, 9 April 1836, HBRS 4, p. 148. "We have no account of Mr Pellys having sold any Timber since last fall whence I infer that it is not much in demand at Woahoo, the Ganymede therefore will proceed with her Cargo to Valparaiso which I will consign to Mr Budge & direct him to sell it & remit the proceeds to England & if he finds freight for the Ganymede to load to send her to England. . . ." McLoughlin to Simpson, 4 April 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fo. 28; 30.
Budge, asking him to dispose of the lumber immediately and to keep the customary commission for himself. He asked Budge to buy a cargo of his choice at Valparaiso and send it—or the money earned from the sale—to London, and he gave Budge permission, if required, to buy a cargo at "Mount Video, Bueno Ayres, or Rio de Janeiro." McLoughlin gave to Captain Eales of the Ganymede letters of introduction to English houses at all three places, and told him that if Budge had gone out of business to ask the British consul to recommend a reliable merchant in Valparaiso.

The Ganymede left Fort Vancouver in mid April 1836 with 114,400 feet of pine boards and rafters. In August, Eales and Budge wrote from Valparaiso to say that they had sold the lumber for $45 per thousand feet, had had to pay a heavy duty, but had secured a "Freight home" of copper ore valued at £1,350. On his way Eales decided to sail to Iquarque (Iquique, a port in what is now northern Chile) to take in a cargo of saltpetre for London. This circuitous Pacific "adventure" did not please the Governor and Committee because profits had only slightly exceeded port and other expenses, and also because they were confounded by the sporadic, irregular, risky nature of the adventure. They did not want their vessels tramping from port to port buying and selling cargoes at random like any private adventurer. The Sandwich Islands presented greater advantages in terms of proximity

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174 McLoughlin to R. F. Budge, 8 April 1836, HBCA B.223/b/15, fos. 8-9.

175 McLoughlin to Eales, 8 April 1836, HBCA B.223/b/15, fos. 9-11.

176 "I received letters from Captain Eales of the Ganymede, and from Mr Budge of Valparaiso . . . dated 16th and 26th August '36, stating that the cargo was sold say 114,422 feet at $45, Duty paid pr M feet, at 9 months credit, equal to $37, p M in bond, and had a Freight home of £1350 Stlg." McLoughlin to Simpson, Chief Factors, Chief Traders, HHBC, 30 August 1837, HBCA B.223/b/17, fo. 32; Pelly to Smith, 2 October 1836, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 14-15.
and regularity, and in February 1837 they prohibited such adventures to South America. 177

These shipments show, if nothing else, the spectacle of "fur traders" loading vessels with lumber for Valparaiso and Rio de Janeiro. Lumber was not sold thereafter on the Spanish-speaking coasts of North and South America.

The company's coastal business also yielded agricultural exports which piggy-backed on the salmon and lumber trades. From its farms on the lower Columbia the company exported flour, butter, and potatoes to Oahu. References to Columbia wheat appear first in the early 1820s. 178 McLoughlin's Fort Vancouver wheat crops were so abundant that by the 1830s the fort provided for its own needs and had enough left over to supply the posts to the north, the country shipping, and the annual English ship. The agricultural opening of the Willamette Valley provided the company, after about 1836, with an unexpected windfall in the form of wheat purchased from the French Canadian and, after about 1840, American settlers there. An export trade in flour was not, however, established until the completion in 1839 of a water-powered grist mill near Fort Vancouver.

The demand for flour at Oahu resulted from European and American commercial activity there. Finlayson reported in 1832 that 200 barrels of flour, each of about 196 pounds, were "likely to command a market" during the March and October whaling seasons;

177 "We have therefore to desire that none of our ships be allowed to touch there on their homeward passage in future but that they be dispatched from the Sandwich Islands, with no other cargo than the Furs or other returns that may be shipped from the Columbia for England, unless a good filling up freight can be procured at the Islands direct for London." G&C to Simpson, 15 February 1837, HBCA D.5/4, fos. 237-245d; 238d.

178 "The Governor and Committee sent wheatmeal to Haldane and Cameron in 1822 because their requisition for Indian corn could not be met in London. Wheatmeal, they wrote, "you will no doubt find to be an excellent substitute." G&C to Haldane and Cameron, 4 September 1822, HBRS 3, p. 335. Mention of these agricultural exports from the lower Columbia River is absent in Gibson's Farming the Frontier."
they would sell "at not less than 9 dollars pr Bbl." McLoughlin promised to send flour when he could spare it, which was not until 1834, when he sent fifty barrels to Pelly.179 It sold quickly, and in March 1835 Pelly asked for more; McLoughlin obliged in June by sending him fifty barrels valued at ten dollars a barrel.180

McLoughlin explained to Pelly in 1836 that these small shipments resulted from the "present inefficient state of our Grist mill," which, he said, was operated by an ox. In its present state "it will furnish flour barely sufficient for our land and naval Establishments." But he planned to get a better mill which would allow larger exports of flour to Oahu.181 Two small shipments of flour were made in 1838 before the new mill was built. "Flour is and has been for some months in good demand at favourable prices," Pelly told Smith in April 1839; "I have sold all I had at from 14 to 15 Dils. the Barrel of 200 lbs. weight the usual prices obtainable here are from 7 to 8 dollars..."182

During Douglas's term in charge of the department, 1838-39, he displayed his usual energy. In October 1838 he told the Governor and Committee that he was putting up "a water power Grist Mill, adapted for two runs of 54 inch stone. A Barge of 40 tons burden,

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179Finlayson to McLoughlin, 2 August 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 41d: McLoughlin to Ogden, 5 October 1832, HBRS 4, p. 314; HBCA C.7/177, fo. 36d.


181McLoughlin to Pelly, 17 June 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fo. 44. Mr. French had wanted the company to provide him with 200 barrels of flour at $10.00 a barrel, but McLoughlin was unable to comply. Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBRS 4, p.

182The second shipment, consisting of seventeen barrels, arrived in Oahu in December 1838. Pelly to Governor and Committee, 24 April 1838, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 38; Pelly to Smith, 22 December 1838, HBCA D.11/61, fo. 48; Pelly to Smith, 30 April 1839, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 51.
for River transport, is also in a state of considerable forwardness." In 1839 Douglas finished the new flour mill near Fort Vancouver which was capable of grinding between eighty and 100 bushels of wheat a day. He also completed a granary at Fort Vancouver, known as the wheat store, with a capacity of 18,000 bushels.

These changes enabled the company to store wheat from its own farms and, increasingly, from the French Canadian farming community in the Willamette. Douglas bought the surplus produce of 1836 of the Willamette settlement, consisting of about 1000 bushels; in October 1838 he wrote that "I am now buying up the crop of this season, to clear the market and leave nothing in store for casual visitors, a policy that ought not to be neglected." The company's flour exports became, like everything else, a bone of contention between Simpson and McLoughlin. In 1844 Simpson referred scathingly to a statement by McLoughlin that "[A] sufficient quantity of Grain should be sent to the Sandwich Islands to meet the demands of that market & of Sydney, & suggests that it might be found worth while to send flour to them (Sydney), some 7000 or 8000 miles distant! . . . McLoughlin's views appear to us wild & speculative in the extreme. . . ." Despite this, the company by the mid 1840s produced or traded from the French Canadian and American

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183"Oak will be cut this winter for the Thrashing Machine, which will be made as soon as possible." Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBRS 4, pp. 260; 265.


185Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBRS 4, p. 241. Retail shops where English goods were sold to settlers or visiting naval forces were known as "Sale Shops" to distinguish them from the Indian trade; wheat from the Willamette was traded here and credited to Fort Vancouver's "Depot" account. Accounts were kept separately for all three commercial functions in order to gauge profit and loss accurately.

settlers on the Willamette large amounts of wheat, ground it at the new grist mill, and exported over 1,000 barrels a year to Oahu.¹⁸⁷ No such agricultural export opportunity would appear to the north.

Fort Vancouver's dairy farm produced surplus butter for two shipments to Oahu. Finlayson had reported in 1832 that the whaling vessels would buy "20 to 30 firkins Butter at about 30 @ 35 cents pr lb."¹⁸⁸ "Good butter is always an article in demand," Pelly repeated in March 1835, and in September McLoughlin sent him twelve kegs, each containing eighty pounds of Columbia butter valued at twenty-five cents a pound.¹⁸⁹ The next summer, the merchant Mr French asked the company, without success, for 5,000 pounds of butter, and in 1838, McLoughlin sent another twenty kegs of butter to Oahu.¹⁹⁰ Such exports were redirected to the Russian American Company after 1839.

Potatoes had been grown on the lower Columbia since the days of the Pacific Fur Company; Franchère had planted a dozen potatoes in May 1811 at Fort Astoria.¹⁹¹ The 1820 potato crop from Fort George amounted to 1,000 bushels, and the next year James Keith of Fort George called potatoes "our most valuable produce" along with salmon.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷Gibson has calculated that in 1842 the company produced 10,000 bushels west of the Rockies, and had 40,000 bushels in store in 1845. Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 189.

¹⁸⁸Finlayson to McLoughlin, 2 August 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 41d. A firkin was a small barrel containing nine gallons.

¹⁸⁹Pelly to McLoughlin, 21 March 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 119; HBCA C.7/177, fo. 44; Pelly to Smith, 5 December 1835, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 1. "Account Sales at Woahoo . . . HBR 4, p. 152 n.1. This butter was sold for $18 a keg. Spoehr, "Fur Traders in Hawai'i," p. 52.

¹⁹⁰Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBR 4, p. ; Pelly to Smith, 9 December 1838, HBCA D.11/61, fo. 48; Pelly to Smith, 30 April 1839, HBCA A.11/61, fo. 51.

¹⁹¹Lamb, Franchere's Journal, pp. 89, 96.

¹⁹²James Keith to Colonel Perkins, 13 April 1821, Keith papers, University of Aberdeen.
The Hudson's Bay Company subsequently introduced these tubers at all its posts in the Columbia Department, and by the late 1820s Fort Vancouver alone produced about 4,000 bushels a year. Like all successful provisions, potatoes were soon considered for export. Finlayson reported in 1832 that every March and October the company could dispose of 400 bushels to whaling vessels at the Sandwich Islands, and thirty barrels of potatoes were sent to Oahu in 1838. Edward Belcher, in his 1843 Narrative, wrote that potatoes were a Columbia River export to the Sandwich Islands, but such exports do not show up in the record.

What of the lower Columbia fur trade during all this? On the lower Columbia the emphasis of the 1830s was on the development and export of other resources. Charles Wilkes and Silas Holmes, who visited Fort Vancouver in 1840, saw the rise of export trades as a result of the decline in the fur trade. In 1841 Simpson noted some of this. "The Indian trade," he wrote, "however, is but a very small branch of the business of Fort Vancouver, the operations of which are varied and extensive." Simpson was right: Fort Vancouver's returns show a steady decline in the Indian trade between 1833 and 1843, and a steady increase in profits of the sale shop, where English goods were sold or traded to Willamette settlers and others for wheat.

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193 Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 38.

194 Finlayson to McLoughlin, 2 August 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 41d; HBCA C.7/177, fo. 67.

195 Belcher, Narrative, p. 302.

196 Gibson, Farming the Frontier, pp. 199; 200.

197 Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBRS 29, p. 78. Profits on Fort Vancouver's Indian Trade declined from £3,295 in 1836, to £1,985 in 1837, to £1,187 in 1842, and to £2,274 in 1843. Profits on Fort Vancouver's sale shop increased from £1,665 in 1836, to £1,1613 in
Quietly and efficiently, and quite outside public scrutiny, the company instituted export trades on the Columbia River after 1821. There is a great deal of apparent contradiction in the Hudson’s Bay Company’s exports of salmon, lumber, and other commodities from the Columbia River. Lumber exports show the apparently incongruous spectacle of "fur traders" loading vessels with Columbia River lumber bound for Valparaiso and Rio de Janeiro, and exchanging that lumber in those ports for cargoes of copper ore and salt petre destined for London. The company responded to a new commercial opportunity on the west coast, to abundant resources, and positive trade and labour conditions. Sales of salmon and lumber together amounted to about $20,000 a year at Oahu before deduction of expenses.

Of equal importance was the precedent lent by such success. With these new exports under way, and transport systems in place, it was a straightforward matter to add new exports from more northerly parts of the coast to the company’s export repertoire. The other principal arena for such adventures was the lower Fraser River-Puget Sound area. The company’s successful Columbia River export trades gave the company the confidence to undertake export trades on these parts of the coast.

1837, to £3,838 in 1842, and to £3,140 in 1843. Fort Vancouver depot went from a £1,291 profit in 1836, to a loss in 1837 of £1,217, to a loss of £1,213 in 1842, to a loss in 1843 of £1,006. Fort Vancouver, Accounts Current, Outfit 1833, HBCA B.223/d/56; HBRS 4, p. 286; HBCA B.223/b/31, fos. 149a-149b; McLoughlin to Simpson, 20 March 1845, HBCA B.223/b/32, fo. 93.
CHAPTER 9
FRASER RIVER AND PUGET SOUND EXPORT TRADES, 1830-1843

The salmon is to the north-west Indians what the cerealia are to us, the fishing season being their harvest.

John Scouler

While the Columbia River was the principal source of non-fur exports, McLoughlin also orchestrated the export of salmon from the Fraser River and livestock from Puget Sound. By 1843, salmon challenged fur as the principal export of Fort Langley and, with its farm, the fort was positioned to replace Fort Vancouver as the major provision centre on the coastal section of the Columbia Department. Fort Nisqually’s stock farms, ably managed by William Fraser Tolmie of the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company, promised great profit. Company officials also examined the coast to the north of the Fraser for its commercial potential. This potential, and the commercial success of forts Langley and Nisqually, contributed to Simpson’s 1841-42 plan to move the company’s operations from the Columbia to the Gulf of Georgia and southern Vancouver Island. Exports of salmon and

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2Fort Langley produced agricultural foodstuffs for the provision and coasting trades. McLoughlin praised Yale in 1834 for starting a farm at Fort Langley, which would serve to guard the multifarious Fort Vancouver trade in the event that "we will be obliged to neglect perhaps our farm—and by having farm produce from you we will be able to do so without injury to our business." McLoughlin to Yale, 2 October 1834, HBCA B.223/b/10, fo. 51.

3Both Langley and Nisqually were provision centres for the North West Coast fur trade. Not depots, they were subsidiary establishments to the company’s larger departmental business. Before 1843 both answered to orders issued from Fort Vancouver, and after that date they answered increasingly to orders from Fort Victoria, even when their provision trades had developed into major export trades.
agricultural produce originated as provisions, and in both cases their abundance contributed to their transformation into export trades.

Salmon was the motor of Fort Langley’s economy. On the coast, all rivers had their own salmon runs, even on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Naturalist John Scouler likened salmon to a staple cereal, and the colonial naturalist John Keast Lord called salmon "one of the most prominent wonders of this region." Of all coastal salmon runs by far the most important was the Fraser; Sockeye was the favoured species. Native population densities on the Fraser and its drainage system reflected, generally, the densities of the salmon run; the fish lose half their weight as they ascend the river. "They literally consume their own bodies" on the struggle upstream.

Unable to grow much food in New Caledonia, the fur traders inherited from the Carrier people a dependency on salmon. For fifteen years before the 1821 merger, the North West Company had exploited the salmon run of the upper Fraser and its tributaries. Daniel Harmon, for example, had 25,000 salmon in his store at Fort St. James in September 1811. "Beyond the height of Land," Simpson wrote in May 1821 "Salmon is the principle


6Michael Kew ms. in Add. Mss. 1308, file 8, BCARS.

article of sustenance and taken in great quantities in the Summer and Fall. . . .”

John Tod of Kamloops recalled that practical considerations made salmon, not farm produce or animal flesh, the fur traders’ preferred provision in the interior. "I am speaking of staples which the Company from a business point of view had to regard and provide," he said. Farm produce was hard to grow in most parts of the interior, and company labourers were needed primarily for transport. This accounted for what, in his recollections, Tod called the "dependence" on salmon at Kamloops and elsewhere on the Fraser drainage:

The staple for food was something obtainable regularly in large quantities, something fairly nutritious, prepared as to keep without decay, easily packed and carried, and with the advantage, also, of cheapness. Dried animal flesh, as in other parts of the continent, might have served most of these conditions, but would have been very much expensive. . . . I had a good little farm at Kamloops, made productive by irrigation, and the officers in charge of many posts, as I have said, had small gardens, but these counted for nothing in the general requirements. "No salmon, no furs" was a pithy, true saying to the west of the Rocky Mountains.

The Hudson’s Bay Company exploited the Fraser River salmon from New Caledonia to Fort Victoria (where the Songhees had reef nets), and on the Fraser’s tributaries. Fisheries existed at Fort Langley, Fort Hope, Fort Yale, Kamloops, Fort Alexandria, Chilcotin, Fort Fraser, and Fort St. James. Ogden called salmon the "staff of life" in New Caledonia where, soon after 1821, 30,000 fish were required to meet all annual

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9Wolfenden, ed., "John Tod;" see Locke, "No Salmon, No Furs."

demands. In 1827, the seventeen people at Fort Alexandria consumed 10,000 salmon. Kamloops required at least 10,000 salmon for its own use, and in one year the New Caledonia fur brigade that passed the post on its way to Fort Vancouver and back required 4,000 salmon. Tod recalled that every year he sent a salmon party out from Kamloops to a trading place on the Fraser 76 miles away "near the Fountain" called Papayou or Popayou. In 1846 there were about 1500 men at this place and Merineau, Tod’s trader, secured 10,000 fish. At Kamloops and other interior locations this salmon was often, as Tod put it, the "sole subsistence;" it was a provision not an export.

The company’s lower Fraser fishery, like its lower Columbia fishery, relied directly on the Native trade and indirectly on the three basic Native fishing methods: the hook, the spear, and the net. It is likely that fish barrelled by the company came from the whole stretch of the river, from the Gulf to the canyon, though the company had a fishing station or saltery at the mouth of the Chilliwack River, and may also have encouraged Native traders to

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11Peter Skene Ogden, "Notes on Western Caledonia," ms., n.d., in Donald Ross Papers, BCARS.


14John Tod, "The History of New Caledonia and the Northwest Coast," 1874, ts., BCARS; Locke, "No Salmon, No Furs."

15"The savages at one time used a wooden hook with a bone barb," Lord wrote in the 1860s, "but now they get supplied with steel fish-hooks by the Hudson’s Bay Company." Lord noted that they also used scoop nets. Lord, The Naturalist, pp. 259; 261. Fort Langley records show the introduction of metal hooks: for instance "125 Large Cod Hooks" were traded in the 1829 fishing season. McDonald to Governor and Council, Northern Department, 25 February 1830, HBCA D.4/123, fos. 66d-72.
buy fish at Point Roberts. Native salmon traders came from a number of places in the Gulf of Georgia and lower Fraser region. Aurelia Manson, James Murray Yale's daughter, who was born at Langley in 1837, recalled that the "old natives" of Point Roberts, New Westminster, Vancouver, Katzie, and Saint Mary’s Mission, could tell of the "work and doings" of Fort Langley. These people must all have traded at the fort. The native fishery, however, was extensive and many groups were involved.

Island people like the Nanaimo and Cowichan fished at the river and had their own summer villages there. The Cowichan were so closely associated with the river that its Native name was Cowichan. "With the coming of the Sockeye in July," Barnett wrote, "all the able-bodied Cowichans left for the Fraser River for two months, where they camped on Lulu Island on the south arm of the river." They dried their salmon there before returning to their winter villages on the island. In 1829 McDonald characterised the Nanaimo as the "most forward" Indians trading at Fort Langley: "They also are a numerous

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16 The company had a saltery at the mouth of the Chilliwack: Cullen, p. 50. Mayne, in the spring of 1859, called it a fishing station: "On the southern bank [of the Chilwayhook River] . . . are the remains of an old fishing-station of the Hudson's bay Company, now unused." Mayne, Four Years, p. 93. It was probably both. "During the period when the Hudson [sic] Bay Company was active on the West Coast, agents of the company made annual visits to the Point for the purpose of adding to their stock of salmon." Rathbun, A Review of the Fisheries. This statement presents problems because the company, at least before the gold rush, did not have agents on the Fraser.

17 "Most of the old natives at Point Roberts, New Westminster, Vancouver, Katzie (Langley) and Saint Mary’s Mission can tell of the work and doings of the Fort. . . . " Aurelia Manson, "Recollections of School Days," ms., BCARS.

18 Simpson to G&C, 10 March 1825, HBCA A.12/1.

tribe and live mostly on the Island—during the salmon season they occupy a large village they have about 3 miles below this on same side the river."

The Fraser River salmon export trade was the company’s first non-fur export from what is now British Columbia. Fort Langley was not, however, founded for the salmon trade but to replace Fort Vancouver as depot if the Fraser was found to be navigable. After proving the river unnavigable in 1828, Simpson had maintained Fort Langley as a branch of the coasting trade, and specifically for its fishery, fur trade, and farming potential. Thenceforth salmon followed fur as the post’s major export, finally overtaking it in the 1840s.

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20Fort Langley Journal, 1829-30, HBCA B.113/a/3, 30 July 1829.

21Writing on the Fort Langley salmon trade, like everything else to do with the history of the Hudson’s Bay Company in the Columbia Department, is scattered and written in isolation. Howay, Ormsby, Cullen, Mackie and Morton have noted the decline of the fur trade and the increasing importance of salmon at Fort Langley. "Thus by the early forties the nature of Langley’s return had changed greatly; furs were still included, but they had become quite secondary, fish and agricultural products assuming the more prominent positions." F. L. Howay, "Fort Langley, Historic HBC Post in British Columbia," The Beaver 2:2 (November 1921), pp. 2-6; 4; Ormsby, British Columbia, p. 73; [Robie Reid, ed.,] "Fort Langley Correspondence: 1831-1858," BCHQ 3 (July 1937), pp. 187-95; Robie Reid, "Economic Beginnings in British Columbia," Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada 30 (May 1936); Mary Cullen, A History of Fort Langley, 1827-96 (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites, 1979); Richard Mackie, "Colonial Land, Indian Labour, and Company Capital: The Economy of Vancouver Island, 1849-1858," Master’s thesis, University of Victoria, 1984; Jamie Morton, Fort Langley: An Overview of the Operations of a Diversified Fur Trade Post 1848 to 1858 and the Physical Context in 1858 (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service Microfiche Report Series No. 340, 1987).
The first thirty years’ of Fort Langley’s records are replete with references to the salmon fishery. Fur traders knew all about the richness of the Fraser’s salmon owing to their long experience in New Caledonia. "I understand Salmon is more abundant in Frasers River than here," McLoughlin said in September 1826.23 Within forty-eight hours of being founded, in August 1827, James McMillan recorded in the post journal that six fresh salmon

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22 Figures are derived from the text (below) and from Cullen, Fort Langley, p. 96. These are minimum figures only, and they do not include dried salmon, which was not exported.

23 McLoughlin to G&C, 1 September 1826, HBRS 4, p. 37.
were traded for the use of the fort. Soon the fish was in demand on the coast as in the interior as the principal provision, supplying the North West Coast, Puget Sound, and on occasion even Fort Vancouver.

At first the fur traders moulded their trade around the Native fishery, which was geared toward the production of dried salmon for winter use. For the first two winters McMillan traded dried salmon from the Cowichan as a winter provision. He wrote in September 1827 that the Cowichan on their return from the fishery at the canyon "dispose of a part of their Store of [dried salmon] Provisions" at the fort. As on the lower Columbia, blankets were considered superior to the salmon trade. "This Trade costs us very little," McMillan wrote, "as vermillion, Rings, and other trifles are the only Articles we allow for dried Salmon." In the first year McMillan built a dried salmon shed. Salmon was so abundant, he wrote, that he could trade enough to feed all the people of Rupert's Land. On the west coast the abundance of the salmon staple meant the company could tap a huge resource instead of engrossing, like its experience with buffalo pemmican in Rupert's land, a limited resource for its own use at the expense of the Native and Métis people. It is hard not to detect an exploitative element in the economics of the salmon trade. Salmon for which the company paid perhaps $100 in trade goods, such as flimsy little chisels, at Fort Langley was sold for $1,000 at Oahu.

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24 31 July 1827: "The Fort Langley men were put on Shore to go on with their operations." 2 August: "Six fresh salmon were also purchased." Fort Langley Journal 1827-28, HBCA B.112/a/1.

25 26 September and 3 October 1827, Fort Langley Journal 1827-28, HBCA B.113/a/1.

26 McMillan to McLeod, 21 January 1828, McLeod Papers, NAC.
McLoughlin, who had started curing salmon a year or two before on the Columbia, asked McMillan in the spring of 1828 to do the same at Fort Langley. "Will you please to Salt all the Salmon your means will permit, although if not required by you it will serve for us & to inform me what quantity you think you can Salt & the price a Barrel would cost," he wrote. At the end of September 1828 McMillan wrote that "our whole Trade this season is only 5000 pieces dry," and he added that the salmon shed contained 3,000 dried salmon and sixteen tierces—each equivalent to forty-two wine gallons—of salted salmon. A piece of "dried salmon" was equal to a third of a fish.

Simpson, who descended the river a few weeks later, wrote enthusiastically that more than 5,000 Indians assembled during the summer in the neighbourhood of the fort for the purpose of fishing. "In regard to the means of living," he said, "this Establishment may be said to be already independent: Salmon are so abundant, that besides the consumption of the Post a considerable quantity might be cured for Exportation if a market could be found."

By the spring of 1829 McMillan's successor Archibald McDonald and his men were consuming their own salted salmon at the fort (McDonald wrote on 25 May 1829 that "Owing to the high state of the water now, the natives take but few sturgeon; and our daily

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29 Dried salmon was measured by the piece, each of which was a third of a fish: "our whole Trade this season is only 5000 pieces dry, each the third of a salmon." Fort Langley Journal 1827-28, 27 September 1828, HBCA B.112/a/1.

30 Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, HBRs 10, p. 42.
bread at present is potatoes & the salted salmon."

A month later, McLoughlin told McDonald about his projected salmon export trade to Oahu and California, and asked him "how many Barrels of Salmon you think you could Salt and the means you would require for that purpose."

On 20 August 1829, the meticulous McDonald recorded the results of the salmon trade. "In case the salmon fishery at Fraser's River may hereafter become an object of attention I here give a view of the season's trade." In the ten previous days he had traded a total of 7,544 fish for just under £14 ($70). The average size of salmon was six pounds; altogether they made eighty-five tierces of salt salmon. This, he wrote, "is in all conscience as cheap as provisions could anywhere be had." Axes, daggers, chisels, and knives changed hands, as did combs, rings, mirrors, buttons, files, cod and "Kirby" hooks, beads, vermillion, baize, wrist bands, and of course tobacco. Nearly half the value of the trade goods was made up of 640 country-made "small chisels" or axes which, McDonald wrote, were "shabby little things got made here by ourselves." Blankets did not figure in the trade.

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32McLoughlin to McDonald, 17 June 1829, HBCA B.223/b/5, fos. 4-5.

33"As may be seen by the annexed statement is in all conscience as cheap as provisions could anywhere be had. Let me here remark that the axes which come to nearly half the amount are overvalued, being shabby little things got made here by ourselves" (20 August 1829). Fort Langley Journal 1829-30, 17-21 August 1829, HBCA B.112/a/3. See also his "Statement of Salmon Trade Fort Langley from 10th to 20th Augt 1829," in McDonald to Governor and Council, Northern Department, 25 February 1830, HBCA D.4/123, fos. 66d-72. These may have been analogous to nephrite celts used in wood-working (Quentin Mackie, personal communication).
salmon trade, at least at this early stage. Sturgeon, an important provision, was not exported until the 1850s.

The supply of salmon far exceeded the demand. On his last day of trading in 1829 McDonald was "under the painful necessity of intimating to our friends the Nanimoos that we could trade no more," and on 21 August he "turned off upwards of 40 canoes with their fish." Salmon took about a month to dry: on 20 September, McDonald wrote that he had completed the preparation of his stock of dried salmon, consisting of about 7000 pieces.

Dried salmon such as this remained in use as a provision long after the company embarked on the export of cured salmon. The company did not develop an export trade in dried salmon probably because such fish would still have required packaging and preparation and may not have had a long shelf-life. Salted or kippered fish, besides, was the norm in Britain and in the company's eastern regions where traders originated. The Scottish method of kippering fish involves salt, an expensive preservative, whereas drying does not. An element of personal preference may also have figured: if McMillan was content to trade dried salmon by the million, McDonald preferred salted and kippered fish. Malcolm McLeod recalled that: "My old friend Mr. McDonald was always enthusiastic (like a true Highlander) on the subject, but he went strongly for 'pot,' and most ardently for 'salting,' secundum ortem, and not killing 'the thing' by smoking. . . ."

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34In 1829, for example, 10,150 lbs of sturgeon was consumed as a provision at Fort Langley. McDonald to Governor and Council, Northern Department, 25 February 1830, HBCA D.4/123, fo. 69.

35Fort Langley Journal 1829-30, 22 September 1829, HBCA B.112/a/3.

36McLeod, *Hudson Bay to Pacific*, pp. 107-8. See this source also for habits of salmon.
In February 1830, McDonald prepared a report for Simpson and the Northern Council on the "the prospect of curing salmon at this place, as an additional source of Returns." He emphasized the company's dependence on the Native salmon fishery:

I must inform that we made several attempts ourselves last Summer with the Seine & hand scoop net but our success by no means proved that we could do without Indian Trade, nor does even this appear to me a source of great disappointment as in years of scarcity the best regulated fishery of our own would miscarry, while in years of plenty such as the last the expense in trade would hardly exceed the very cost of Lines and Twine.

In 1829, he continued, the post consumed 8,118 salted, 4,640 dried, 1,360 fresh, and 462 smoked salmon. With such abundance he planned to enter on the salmon business at Fort Langley in an organized manner and to build a detached salting camp near the fort. He thought salmon might be got near "the Falls" fifteen days earlier than Fort Langley, by which he meant the foot of the Fraser Canyon. With these means, he said, fish could be obtained for fifty-five or sixty days instead of twenty—"Ample time judging from last years experience to procure 500 Barrels of Salmon." He asked McLoughlin to send a helper from Fort Vancouver because his men were inexperienced with fishing and curing.

McLoughlin replied as follows:

I approve of your plan of salting as much Salmon as possible and send you an extra quantity of Salt and two men to assist but I am sorry I have no Cooper, however your man Faniant could I think sufficiently Cooper the Salt Barrels to come here and our

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37 This quotation is from a later letter: McDonald to Governor & Council, Northern Department, 10 February 1831, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 61d-66; 62-63. (Used in preface, above).

38 McDonald to Governor & Council, Northern Department, 25 February 1830, HBCA D.4/123, fos. 66-72. See also Cullen, Fort Langley, p. 86 and Cole, Exile in the Wilderness, pp. 148; 250n.
Cooper would finish them . . . you will ship all the Salt Salmon you can afford. . . .\textsuperscript{39}

The 1829 stock of salted salmon was not exported, however.\textsuperscript{40}

1830 was the critical year in the history of Fort Langley salmon. McDonald traded more than 15,000 fresh salmon between 25 August and 15 September, enough, he wrote, to make up more than 200 barrels. They cost £30 ($150) in trade goods. He preserved the salmon in casks made at Fort Langley. These, he predicted, were so poorly-made "that I fear . . . the first cargo will not stand the test of a foreign market," and he asked to be sent a good cooper who "will know something of Fish curing."\textsuperscript{41} On 21 September 1830, McDonald sent 120 barrels and forty-five tierces of this salmon to Fort Vancouver, along with twenty tierces of and six bales of "kippered" salmon dating from 1829. The \textit{Vancouver} was so laden with goods that space could not be found on the vessel for a further forty barrels of 1830 salmon.\textsuperscript{42} McDonald's concern about the casks was well-founded; they lost

\textsuperscript{39}McLoughlin to McDonald, 7 July 1830, HBCA B.223/b/6, fos. 5-6.

\textsuperscript{40}"To send the Cadboro this fall for the few Boa[r]ds, shingles and salmon laid up at Fort langley appearing an object of no great import. . . ." McDonald to McLoughlin, 14 November 1829, HBCA B.113/a/3.

\textsuperscript{41}McDonald to Governor & Council, Northern Department, 10 February 1831, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 61d-66; 62-63. See also McDonald to Ermatinger: "from the 25th Augt. to 10th Sept: we traded & cured 15,000 Salmon: & on the 21st of that month Shipped 200 Barrels of our own making." McDonald to Edward Ermatinger, 20 February 1831, quoted in Ormsby, \textit{British Columbia}: 504 n. 36. Memo to Finlayson: "Mr Finlayson will bear in mind that it cost £ 30 to trade about 200 Bbds Fort Langley Salmon, & that if it is found advisable to salt Salmon at that place for exportation, it will be necessary to provide Salt at Woahoo & send it by the Vessel." [John McLoughlin], "Mema. for Mr Finlayson," [n.d., June 1832], HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 5.

\textsuperscript{42}McDonald to Governor & Council, Northern Department, 10 February 1831, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 61d-66; 63.
their pickle almost immediately, and in November 1830 McLoughlin could send only a sample of Fort Langley salmon to Oahu.\textsuperscript{43}

McDonald redoubled his efforts in 1831. In February, he wrote that "Our time is at present principally occupied about cooperage, and the construction of Wharves and other conveniences for the Salmon business."\textsuperscript{44} He told his friend McLeod that although the 1830 fur trade was not as good as in 1829,

this deficiency is more than made up by 220 Barrels of Salmon. . . . Am now preparing from 2 to 300 Barrels to be at the Salmon immediately on the Commencement of the Season—they say a Cooper is come across for me, but we saw nothing of him as yet. In consequence of my casks of last season losing the pickle, the Dr sent none of them to market but sent his own, & kept ours for home consumption. So the end is always assured, & perhaps this might at all times be the arrangement as the Columbia fish is acknowledged better than ours. Curious they are caught a week or two sooner at the Bridge than here—last season it was approaching the end of August before they appeared here.\textsuperscript{45}

In June 1831, McLoughlin had good news for McDonald. "Mr Charlton writes that at Woahoo your Salmon would sell at 10 dollars pr. Barre11 you will therefore salt all the Salmon you can and on the return of the Dryad from the North she will call at your place for it."\textsuperscript{46} McDonald threw himself into the work, and the 1831 fishery was the best yet, producing about 300 barrels. In January 1832, he wrote to McLeod that:

\begin{footnotes}
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\item 43J. E. Harriott to McLeod, 25 February 1831, McLeod Papers, NAC. See also McDonald to McLeod, 20 February 1831, McLeod Papers, NAC and McLoughlin to Simpson, 16 March 1831, HBRS 4, p. 226.
\item 44McDonald to Governor & Council, Northern Department, 10 February 1831, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 61d-66; 62-63.
\item 45McDonald to McLeod, 20 February 1831, McLeod Papers, NAC.
\item 46McLoughlin to McDonald, 4 June 1831, HBCA B.223/b/7, fos. 1-2.
\end{footnotes}
Our Salmon, for all the Contempt entertained for any thing out of the routaine of Beaver at York Factory, is close upon 300 Barrels, & I have descended to Oil & Blubber too, tho not on your large Scale—So that altogether, whatever others may think of Fraser’s River, I am much satisfied with its proceeds myself.47

This successful shipment resulted in the export, in June 1832, of at least 100 barrels of Fort Langley salmon to Oahu—the first commercial export of salmon from what is now British Columbia.48 The company’s Sandwich Islands records allow us to examine the fate of this consignment. Duncan Finlayson accompanied the Eagle to Oahu in June 1832. The salmon trade, he wrote, was "an object likely to become lucrative:"

A Gentleman by the name of Reid, lately of a respectable house in Lima, but now set up in business at this place, has purchased 100 Barrels of the Langley Salmon . . . at 10$ each, for the Lima market, where, in his opinion it is highly esteemed, & will there command a remunerating price. He will hereafter enter into a contract to be furnished annually with a larger quantity at this place. . . .

Under these circumstances, I may venture to assure you that the Salmon will at all times meet with a ready market, & command a good price, I have therefore sent pr the Eagle to Fort Langley about 380 Bushels of Salt, so that Mr McDonald may increase his quantity to 300 Barrels. It may however be proper to remark that the Columbia Salmon is much more esteemed, & meets with a much better market & price than that of Frazer’s River; indeed, so confident am I that the Salmon, if attended to, will become a profitable Branch of our business, that I would not hesitate, if at liberty to do so, to embark all my earnings in speculating thereon.49

47 McDonald to McLeod, 15 January 1832, McLeod Papers, NAC.

48 In June 1832 the Eagle took 180 barrels of salmon, valued at Fort Vancouver at $15.00 each, for a total value of $2700: HBCA C.7/177, fo. 20. Aemilius Simpson was to have picked up McDonald’s salmon in the fall of 1831 and sell it in California, but he died in September. McLoughlin to A. Simpson, 13 August 1831, HBCA B.223/b/7, fo.4d.

49 Finlayson to McLoughlin, 2 August 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fos. 40-43; fo. 41-41d. On the capacity of the Lima market see Finlayson to W.G. Reid, 25 July 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fos.36d-37; on Reid’s voyage to Valparaiso & Callao with 100 barrels @ $10 each see Reid to Finlayson, 26 July 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 37 and Finlayson to Reid, 27 July 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 37d.
At the same time Finlayson wrote to McDonald as follows:

As 'tis probable the Fraser's River Salmon will command a remunerating Price, I have shipped on board the Eagle, 100 Barrels containing 380 Bushels Salt, which will enable you to cure about 300 Barrels of Salmon, & which I think can be disposed of to advantage. The smaller sized Casks brought hither this Season, are considered rather large for hand transportation, it would therefore be desirable to have from 150 to 200 Barrels of the next quantity you cure, made up in Casks not exceeding 20 gallons, which, I am informed, would ensure them a better market, & of which I think there can be little doubt, as the purchasers of those now sold, are repacking them in casks of from 10, 15, & 20 Gallons. The Kippered Salmon is highly esteemed at this place; samples of which are now making up for Valparaiso & Callao, & we will be informed, ensuing spring, the price it may fetch at those places.  

But the Fort Langley coopers (as McDonald was aware) had not yet perfected their art. Finlayson had neglected to tell Reid that most of the salmon was not, in fact, from the established Columbia River fishery. When Reid discovered that the salmon was "brought from Frazer's River" he complained to Charlton, who told McLoughlin that all but two of the barrels sold to Reid were "what the traders to the North West Coast call 'Squagging,'" that is, a less desirable sort of salmon.  

50Finlayson to McDonald, 2 August 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo.39. In August, Captain Grave of the Eagle took 620 bushels of salt and a hogshead of molasses to Fort Langley—"part of the Langley outfit." Finlayson to Captain Grave, 2 August 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 38.  

51Charlton to McLoughlin, 21 March 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo.111. On McLoughlin’s quarrel with Charlton see McLoughlin to Capt Kipling, [Sept] 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 45 and McLoughlin to Charlton, 30 September 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 56. A later observer wrote that on the north coast, "The minor streams swarm during the season with a small variety, known locally to the northward as the Squag-gan, inferior in richness to the larger fish, & therefore not so well adapted for salting, but nevertheless of excellent quality." Guide to the Province of British Columbia for 1877-8 (Victoria: T. N. Hibben, 1877), p. 18. This is based on Anderson and Sproat. Gibson identifies "Squagan" or "Squaggen" or "Squagon" as sockeye—a very superior fish—but then quotes Furgison, a Boston trader (1810) as saying they were "a bastard kind of salmon." Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 210.
Figures are lacking for 1832. The 1833 fishery, however, was the best yet. In September Tolmie, who was at Fort Nisqually, wrote that "Yesterday a letter arrived from Mr Yale by indians stating that trade is good & that he has salted 350 barrels of salmon." On 12 September Tolmie wrote "In the evg. the Cadboro hove in sight. . . . 280 barrels of salt salmon on board." Most of this was kept for the use of forts Nisqually or Vancouver. The 1833 catch was so abundant that the following spring Yale could spare salmon as a provision for Fort Vancouver; indeed, Fort Vancouver remained the principal market for Fort Langley salmon for the next decade.

The Fort Langley salmon fishery of 1834 was greater than usual. Though total figures are lacking, it was widely used at forts Nisqually and Vancouver. In September 1834, McLoughlin ordered Yale to give him "all the salt salmon you can Spare," and to deliver thirty barrels to Fort Nisqually, or however much Kittson wanted; the rest was to go

52My only information for 1832 is that McDonald salted as much salmon as he could. "I approve of your salting as much Salmon as you can, as although it did not sell well, it will serve as provisions for the new establishment." [Fort Simpson]. McLoughlin to McDonald, 5 July 1832, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo.? [McLoughlin wrote this letter before he knew of Finlayson's big sale to Reid].

53Tolmie, 10 September 1833, Journals, p. 234.

54Ibid., p. 235.


56"You will please to send us pr the Lama all the Salt Salmon and Salt Pork that you can spare." McLoughlin to Yale, 16 May 1834, HBCA B.223/b/10, fo.14.

57Cullen, Fort Langley, p. 96.

58McLoughlin to G&C, 18 November 1834, HBRS 4, p. 130.
to Fort Vancouver.\footnote{McLoughlin to Yale, 14 September 1834, HBCA B.223/b/10, fo. 45. The next day McLoughlin wrote to Kittson as follows: "As to dry salmon if you get enough at your place you may write Mr Yale not to send you any but you ought to have a sufficient quantity to give two days in the week to your men." McLoughlin to Kittson, 15 September 1834, HBCA B.223/b/10, fo. 45-46.} The following June, McLoughlin imported part of the 1834 Fraser River fish which he told Yale was "as well cured as any I ever saw." This provisioning pattern persisted until the gold rush, but Yale grew to resent these provisioning demands because salmon if exported would have produced greater revenue for Fort Langley.

There was difficulty in getting enough wood, and wood of the right kind, for the many barrels needed. In September 1829, McDonald had sent four men into the woods for barrel staves; he visited them twelve days later and recorded that "we now have about 1000 excellent staves." At some time in the history of the company’s fishery, probably after local supplies were exhausted, barrel staves came from, and gave their name to, Stave Lake and Stave River.\footnote{Fort Langley Journal, 1829-30, HBCA B.113/a/3.}

As early as 1835, Yale had trouble finding enough barrel hoops at Fort Langley, and they had to be provided from Puget Sound. In November of that year McLoughlin told Kittson to cut 8,000 hoops, and prepare to ship them to Fort Langley by the next vessel.\footnote{McLoughlin to Kittson, 6 November 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 77. See also McLoughlin to Yale, 6 November 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 77.}

In December 1839, McLoughlin visited Fort Langley (for the first time) and told Yale that "wood for Salmon barrels" was a pressing need. "If possible we ought to get the wood for
Yale dutifully went out in search of staves, and complained to McLoughlin of the difficulty of finding white pine for staves. "I observe what you state about the difficulty of getting white Pine Staves," McLoughlin replied in February 1840, "but I think red Pine would answer the purpose, and even if we get a sufficiency of white pine we must try a few red Pine Barrels to see how it answers." Red pine was probably cedar.

The 1835 shipment of 150 barrels and 112 half barrels of Fort Langley salmon was the largest that had yet left the Pacific coast. Demand was high in August 1836 when the Cadboro delivered 800 bushels of salt to Fort Langley and the North West Coast; the 1837 fishery was very productive, yielding, Douglas said, "350 Barrels of Salmon for exportation besides the quantity required for Fort use." At least seventy-eight barrels of this salmon was exported to Oahu.

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64 McLoughlin, "Memorandum for Mr Yale," HBCA B.223/b/24, fos. 59-60.


66 HBCA C.7/177, fo. 44. See also "Account Sales at Woahoo pr. George Pelly of the Cargoes of the Ganymede & Dryad Consigned to him October 1835," HBR 4, p. 152 n 1; "The Hon' HBC' in Account Current with George Pelly," 21 July 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fo. 48d and 49; "In Acct with George Pelly" "By Salmon pr. Dryad," June 30 [1836], HBCA A.11/61, fo. 18.

67 "800 Bushels salt to be embarked at Fort George." HBCA C.7/177, fo. 51. In November 1836 the Columbia left Fort Vancouver for Oahu with 200 barrels salmon which may have come from the Fraser. HBCA C.7/177, fo. 54d.

68 Douglas to Simpson, 18 March 1838, HBR 4, p. 281.

69 In February 1838, the Nereide left for Oahu with a cargo that included seventy-eight barrels of Fort Langley salmon. HBCA C.7/177, fo. 60d. In the spring of 1838 salmon was selling for "8 & 9 Dollars a Barrel," Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBR 4, p. 267. By the end of May 1838, seventy-eight barrels of "F. L. Salmon," officially valued at $6 a barrel, remained unsold. "Columbia District Country Produce Inventories Outfit 1837," "Remaining at Oahu," HBCA B.223/d/106, fo. 8.
Meanwhile these fur traders conducted an experiment which indicates a sensitivity to market demand. "You will salt thirty Barrels or Casks salmon with the heads and back bones in the fish by way of experiment," he told Yale in March 1836, "and Besides cure as much as possible in the usual way." In February 1838, Douglas told Pelly that "Forty Barrels of the Salmon now forwarded, are cured with their heads and bones; if in that state they are found to keep well, and to suit the market better, we will introduce that mode of curing at all our fisheries." The following spring Douglas reported to Yale that "Fish cured with the head and backbone are not found to answer the Sandwich Islands Market, you will therefore continue to cure in our old way."

In November 1838 Douglas told Yale that "The Salmon fishery is an object of much importance and merits the utmost attention; if you think its produce could be greatly increased, the means will be furnished of doing it ample justice." And when discussing the possibility of moving Fort Langley to Whidbey Island, he told Yale to put the salmon fishery ahead of the farm: "Remember that the Salmon trade must not be sacrificed, as it will always yield, a more valuable return at less trouble risk & expense than the farm."

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70McLoughlin to Yale, 6 March 1836, HBCA B.223/b/18, fo. 22.

71Douglas to Pelly, 4 December 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 41d.

72Douglas to Yale, 10 May 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo. 14.

73Douglas to Yale, 21 November 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo.38. "It is not at present desirable to increase the Fort Langley establishment of men, solely with the view of extending the fisheries; we will, however, cure as many salmon as possible with the means at your disposal, and we can always furnish any quantity of Salt you may think necessary." Douglas to Yale, 10 May 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo. 14. In December 1838, Douglas sent another 200 barrels of salmon to Oahu on the Nereide. I do not know what river these came from. HBCA C.7/177, fo. 67.
A joint summer shipment of Columbia and Fraser River salmon took place in June 1839, when the Vancouver left Fort Vancouver for Oahu with "59 Barrels Columbia Salmon" and "51 Barrels Frazers River Salmon." The thrifty Douglas must have rounded up salmon intended but not consumed as a winter provision.

Fort Langley burned to the ground on 11 April 1840 with the loss of 300 barrels of salted salmon worth £300. Everything was lost in the fire except seven barrels of salmon which were probably part of the 1839 batch awaiting export. "Staves and hoops ready prepared for seven hundred Barrels, Tubs for pickling salmon in and all went with the rest," Yale wrote. The burning of the fort meant that Pelly had difficulty meeting his obligations in Oahu, and that thirty barrels of Columbia salmon had to provision the new post at Taku. Empty barrels were supplied from Fort Vancouver in 1840, and McLoughlin urged Yale to make a "large box or two" like the salmon storage bins recently made on the Columbia. They should be "say 18 feet long 8 broad and 6 high the planks ought to be three inches thick the seams well caulked from the inside and well pitched but not tarred as ours are here which Capt. Scarborough can describe, I am sure they would hold a great deal of salmon." The fire allowed Yale to rebuild on a new and larger scale. In

74 HBCA C.7/177, fo. 70d.

75 "Acct of Property Burnt with Fort Langley" enclosed in Yale to Simpson, 15 April 1840, HBCA B.223/b/28, fos. 53-55.

76 Yale to Simpson, 10 February 1841, James Murray Yale, Correspondence Outward, BCARS.

77 He foresaw difficulties meeting the contract for 400 barrels with Captain Spalding. McLoughlin to Pelly, 22 September 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 76.


79 McLoughlin to Yale, 30 May 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 32.
October 1840, McLoughlin promised to send two extra men to help him extend his farming and fishing operations. "[M]ake as many barrels for salmon as we can I wish you would make a thousand and fill them . . . "  

After a time Fort Langley salmon took on an importance approaching that of fur. During his 1841 visit, Simpson analysed the company’s business at Fort Langley as follows:

The returns in furs amounting to about £2,500 and in salted salmon for market say about 400 barrels to about £800, the profit on the post being about £1600 per annum . . . as the country has been closely wrought for many years, the returns in furs are gradually falling off; but the increasing marketable produce of the fisheries makes up for that deficiency.  

Isinglass was Fort Langley’s other important export derived from the Fraser River fishery. Obtained in the Indian Trade from the float-bladder of Fraser River sturgeon, isinglass was exported to London from Fort Langley annually after 1831. Forty-two pounds were obtained in 1831; 383 in 1843. Fort Langley was the principal producer of this valuable substance on the Pacific coast; Fort Vancouver produced about half as much.

Fort Langley did not develop a successful lumber trade in the 1830s. This was despite the early enthusiasm of Archibald McDonald, who proposed to build a sawmill on the Fraser and later embarked on the manufacture of shingles. McDonald produced boards and shingles after Aemilius Simpson discovered in June 1829 that they were in demand at the

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80 McLoughlin to Yale, 17 October 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27. fo.92.
81 Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, in HBRS 29, pp. 73-74.
82 Fort Vancouver, Fur Trade Returns, Columbia District and New Caledonia, 1825-1857, BCARS.
In September 1829, McDonald sent 300, hand-sawn, two inch planks to Fort Vancouver. The export of lumber could not, he wrote, "by mere manual strength . . . be made a lucrative business." He failed to find a stream capable of driving a sawmill on any of the nearby tributaries of the Fraser.

Shingles, on the other hand, presented little problem because they could be made by Native labour and did not require a sawmill. "I dare say few places are better adapted for shingles," McDonald said in September 1829, and by mid October he had procured 10,000 of "excellent quality" together with a few thousand feet of plank. 84 In February 1830, he reported that:

Among other returns that could be made from this place, last fall we had 3000 feet of Plank, and 10 M Cedar Shingles ready for Shipment: the latter I should suppose would answer well, but the Boards with mere manual force can hardly be made worth the trouble when Machinery is in competition,—should the demand for Timber continue we thought a Saw Mill here also an object of attention, but without exposing ourselves at too great a distance, the improbability of finding a good Seat where Wood is in abundance is a great objection. 85

In September 1830, McDonald sent 10,000 dressed cedar shingles to Fort Vancouver, from where they were sent to Oahu, where Charlton sold them for eighteen to twenty dollars per

83"Lieut. Simpson ascertained in his voyage to the Sandwich Islands that Boards of one inch thick and one foot broad sold in Retail for one hundred dollars per thousand feet if you have no other employment for your men they would pay their wages by sawing boards. . . . Mr Simpson is able to give you every information relative to the Sale of Salmon Deals Shingles and Timber." McLoughlin to McDonald, 17 June 1829, HBCA B.223/b/5, fo. 4.

84McDonald to McLoughlin, 14 September 1829, in Cole, Exile, pp. 155; 251. "To send the Cadboro this fall for the few Boa[r]ds, shingles and salmon laid up at Fort langley appearing an object of no great import. . . . " McDonald to McLoughlin, 14 November 1829, HBCA B.113/a/3.

85McDonald to Governor & Council, Northern Department, 25 February 1830, HBCA D.4/123, fo.71.
thousand. Fort Langley may also have produced the 3,000 shingles sent on the Nereide to southern markets in 1834. The Russian American Company seems, however, to have engrossed the shingle market at Oahu, and shingles disappear inexplicably from the record after the 1830 shipment. After 1829-30 the fort's lumber export trade was moribund, though shingles and other items continued to be produced for fort use.

Meanwhile another provision centre was in the process of formation some 150 miles south of Fort Langley. The Puget's Sound Agricultural Company originated in the company's operations on the Columbia River itself, and its inspiration was a similar project in Rupert's Land. In the early 1830s McLoughlin developed a passion for stockraising, an interest that was noted by Tolmie only eight days after arriving from England. On 12 May 1833, Tolmie wrote this in his diary:

Rode out after dinner along Vancouver Plains. . . . During our ride the Dr unfolded to G. [Meredith Gairdner] & me his views regarding the breeding of cattle here. He thinks that when the trade in furs is knocked up which at no very distant day must happen, the servants of the Coy. may turn their attention to the rearing of cattle for

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86 McLoughlin to McDonald, 7 July 1830, HBCA B.223/b/6, fo.6; McDonald to Governor and Council, Northern Department, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 61d-66; 62d. "In respect to the Lumber business from your River to these Islands I think it may be entered into to a considerable extent by having an assorted Cargo. . . . the Shingles such as you sent down are worth from 18 to 20 pr 1000. . . the Americans always sell theirs by measurement. . . ." Charlton to McLoughlin, 27 January 1831, HBCA D.4/125, fos. 17d-19.

87 HBCA C.7/177, fo. 33.

88 In March 1835 Pelly informed McLoughlin that "if you could send 100,000 Shingles about 18 Inches long and well made they would meet a Sale at $8 a thousand," and he offered to send him "a specimen of those in demand here the Russians seem very desirous of engrossing the whole Lumber supplies to this place. . . ." Pelly to McLoughlin, 21 March 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 118; 119.

89 On the founding of the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company and the Russian provision demand see also Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company, pp. 192-217 and Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 79-80, 260-4.
the sake of the hides and tallow, in which he says business could be carried on to a
greater amount, than that of the furs collected west of the Rocky Mountains.⁹⁰

A year before, McLoughlin had drafted the plans of a venture called the "The Oregon
Beef & Tallow Company." The Hudson's Bay Company was just beginning to dabble in the
California hide and tallow trade, and doubtless McLoughlin had in mind the precedent of the
Red River Tallow Company, formed by Simpson in 1831 "for the purpose of breeding Cattle
for their tallow and hides, as an article of export."⁹¹ Calling it a "scheme brought forward
by John McLoughlin Esq.," McLoughlin's beef and tallow company had a projected capital
of £3,000, payable in 300 £10 shares. The object was to market the "Inside Fat or Candle
Tallow," as well as marrow, salted beef, hides, and horns of cattle. A starting herd of 7 to
800 cattle was to be obtained in California. The company was to be managed by a large
stockholder and run at first by five or six "hands." In his ambitious prospectus, McLoughlin
estimated that 500,000 cattle could ultimately be kept at farms both north and south of the
Columbia, and he proposed that the company (like the Red River Tallow Company) would
have some sort of connection with the Hudson's Bay Company.⁹²

If any one factor, perhaps, lay at the root of McLoughlin's enmity for Simpson, it
was Simpson's preemption of McLoughlin's plan for a hide and tallow company. In 1834,
Simpson reported to the Governor and Committee that:

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⁹⁰Tolmie's diary, 12 May 1833, in Tolmie, Journals, pp. 178-79.

⁹¹Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1832, HBCA A.12/1, fo. 422.

⁹²"The Oregon Beef & Tallow Company," in Simpson to G&C, 27 August 1834, HBCA
D.4/100, fos. 30-31. See also Rich, HBC, Vol 3, pp. 661-62 and Gibson, Farming the
Frontier, p. 79.
Several Gentlemen in the service appear disposed to form a Joint Stock Association, for purpose or rearing cattle on the banks of the Wilhamet, with a view to establish a branch of export trade to England and other countries, and in provisioning for the South American and Sandwich Island markets. . . .

Simpson thought the Hudson’s Bay Company should itself form such a business. "The soil and climate moreover are exceedingly well adapted for such an export," he told the Governor and Committee, perhaps reflecting on the disastrous failure of the Red River Tallow Company. If operated as "a Branch of the Fur Trade," such a venture would cost little and promised to become "an extended and important branch of export trade. . . ."93 The Governor and Committee agreed with Simpson. They thought that such an undertaking "might be profitable if carried on by the Fur Trade, with all the Protection and facilities, which might be supplied by the Company’s establishments." They went a step further than Simpson, however, by forbidding any company employees from engaging in a project unconnected with the Hudson’s Bay Company. Their reasoning was that:

We can not however sanction such an arrangement as we think it would be detrimental, if not dangerous to the Fur Trade, were such an establishment, formed by Individuals and conducted as a separate concern: Besides we consider that the Fur Trade, has a right to the best exertions, and to the undivided time and attention [of its employees] . . . and that they must not engage in any Concern, which may injure or interfere with its Interests during the period they may enjoy the benefits of a retired share. We cannot therefore permit any Person, to engage in this project while connected with the Company. . . .94

McLoughlin was outraged at their response. He said:

93Simpson to G&C, 27 August 1834, HBCA D.4/100, fo.2.

94G&C to McLoughlin, 10 December 1834, HBRS 4, p. 137 n.3.
I see nothing in the Deed Poll that deprives me of the Right of investing my means in any business I think proper, except in trading directly or indirectly with the Indians; and forming a hide & tallow Company is certainly distinct from the Fur Trade. . . .

He also employed a powerful argument that reappeared whenever the company undertook a new business, such as the Nanaimo coal mine, in the Columbia Department. If started under the company's aegis, McLoughlin said, the initial expenses of the hide and tallow business could only come from the profits of the fur trade itself, thus in effect depriving chief factors and chief traders of a portion of their annual dividends. A separate company would divorce all costs and profits from those of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The Governor and Committee decided to form a separate agricultural company because, they said, "[W]e are quite sure that the Fur Trade and farming pursuits, branches of the business so foreign to each other, will be done more justice to and be more likely to prosper under distinct managements and separately attended to, than if combined. . . ." It was this consideration (distinctive managements for fur trading and farming) that prompted the Governor and Committee to conceive the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company. Galbraith, however, argued that the agricultural company was formed because legal advisors feared the company "might invalidate its charter if it was directly involved in a business unrelated to the fur trade," but if this statement is accurate it effectively negates the

95Mcloughlin continued: "... and I think, if the Hudson's Bay Company enter on that business, that no commissioned Gentleman be obliged to join it, unless they please. . . . The present Factors & Traders will incur the expense of making a business, while the profits will go to others." McLoughlin to G&C, 30 September 1835, HBRs 4, p. 137. McLoughlin feared that hide and tallow company profits would go to Hudson's Bay Company shareholders, not to company employees in the Columbia Department who actually initiated and operated the hide and tallow trade on the company's behalf. See also Rich, HBC, Vol 3, pp. 661-62.

96G&C to ?, n.d., quoted in Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 86.

97Galbraith in HBRS 29, p. xxxvii, n. 2.
whole history and momentum of the company’s commercial experience, not only on the Pacific after 1821 but also at Red River and Hudson Bay. In fact, it was not illegal to diversify within the Hudson’s Bay Company but to invest the company’s capital in an agricultural company: the company’s own capital could not be used to create another company. 98

McLoughlin, at any rate, had no control over the formation in 1839 of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s hide, tallow, and wool affiliate, the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company. 99 The purpose, Dunn wrote, was "[R]earing sheep; and laying the commencement of an extensive foreign wool trade."100 The decision to locate the new company on Puget Sound instead of on the Columbia or Willamette resulted from the rapid settlement of the Willamette Valley since 1832, from uncertainty over the impending boundary settlement and, Galbraith writes, from the hope that the company, owing to its location, would serve as "a possible British counter in the Oregon dispute."101 Also in 1839, Simpson entered into his provision contract with the Russian American Company, under the terms of which the

98 This is a case of Galbraith in 1973 misconstruing what he had written in 1957. What Galbraith reported originally was: "The company’s legal advisors expressed the opinion that the governor and committee could not, in conformity with the terms of the charter, invest any of the Company’s capital in an association formed for agricultural purposes. Such action, they warned, might invalidate the charter. The dilemma was solved by the expedient of creating a satellite enterprise. . . . " Galbraith, pp. 198-9. Galbraith cites "Opinion of Edward Jacob and William G. Polson, undated," A.10/16, HBCA. Thus it is was a problem of financial not commercial practice.

99 Rich, HBC, Vol. 3, pp. 661-662; 685-87. Not surprisingly, McLoughlin—whose sentiments and interests were rooted on the Columbia River—never had his heart in the agricultural company.

100 Dunn, History of the Oregon Country, p. 234.

101 Introduction to HBRS 29, p. xxxvii.
Hudson’s Bay Company would provide foodstuffs to the Russians, a task that passed very quickly to the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company.

Perhaps as a way to placate McLoughlin, in February 1839 Simpson and the Northern Council awarded McLoughlin a salary of £400 over and above the dividends arising from his chief factorship. They phrased their resolution as follows:

The great extent of the Columbia District together with its growing importance arising from the recent arrangements entered into with the Russ. American Fur Company[,] the projected operation of the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company[,] and other commercial objects in contemplation involving a greater degree of responsibility. . . . It is resolved that the Chief Factor. . . of that District shall in addition to the emoluments arising from his Chief Factorship be allowed a Salary of Five Hundred Pounds p Annum to commence on the 1st June next.102

Thus, fewer than fifteen years after the establishment of Fort Vancouver in 1825 the company undertook the export of European foodstuffs from the west coast, and in 1839 Puget Sound entered the company’s wider commercial realm. The Hudson’s Bay Company had already begun to prepare, unintentionally, for the arrival of the agricultural company. It had been discovered that Fort Nisqually, founded to capture the fur trade of the Sound and the Straits from American coasters, was ideally suited to stock raising.103 A stock farm there could provide substantial beef, mutton, and pork provisions and perhaps produce enough for export. The Nisqually fur trade was poor, as was the soil, and by 1835 it was

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103"I paid a visit to Nisqually, the soil is poor, but the fur trade does not require it for the naval Dept, and it can raise all the provisions it requires." McLoughlin to Governor, Chief Factors and Chief Traders, Northern Department, 29 August 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 41.
clear that crops could not be grown there. Prospects were better for cattle and sheep, and in the summer of 1838 Captain Brotchie bought 800 sheep in San Francisco and in July delivered 634 survivors to the proposed pasture farm at Fort Nisqually. Sheep and cattle throve, and in 1840, Fort Nisqually was transferred from the Hudson’s Bay Company to the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company. By this time, Simpson recalled, “the fur trade was almost extinct in that quarter.”

Cowlitz Farm, the Hudson’s Bay Company’s other post in Puget Sound, was also transferred to the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company. Located on the portage of the Cowlitz River about thirty miles north of the Columbia, this farm was founded as a cattle farm in 1838 for reasons explained by McLoughlin to Douglas: "This place [Fort Vancouver] cannot support our cattle and we are directed to make a Cattle farm on the North side of the Columbia . . . I am afraid Nisqually will not afford sufficient pasturage and you

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104 "The soil of your part of the country seems to be very poor, but I am of your opinion that you are in the best situation for trade." McLoughlin to Kittson, 5 February 1835, HBCA B.223/b/10, fo. 93. "It is principally intended for a grazing and dairy farm." Dunn, History of the Oregon Country, p. 214. "The land is inferior to that in some other parts of the same district, the soil being gravelly; the grass, however, grows luxuriantly, and the mildness of the climate adapts it well for grazing purposes." Kane, Wanderings, pp. 142-43. See also Tolmie, Journals, pp. 195-96.

105 "They were landed at the proposed pasture Farm at Fort Nisqually, . . . " Douglas to Chief Factors and Chief Traders, New Caledonia and Thompson’s River Districts, 9 November 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo.36d; see also Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBRS 4, pp. 249-51.

will consequently have to make it at the Cowlitz. . .

The company continued to supplement its livestock, this time with far better results than its experiments at Red River. In the spring of 1841, Douglas bought 3,670 sheep and 661 cattle in California, of which 3,200 and 551 respectively made it safely to Nisqually.

By March 1843 these numbers had increased to 5,888 sheep and 1,501 horned cattle, as well as 179 horses and mules, and 80 swine. Thereafter, both Nisqually and Cowlitz exported agricultural produce to London and Sitka. "The wool, which is good," Kane wrote, "finds its way to the English market by the Company's ships, and the cattle are slaughtered and salted for the Sandwich Islands and the Russian dominions." By the end of the decade the company exported 20,000 lbs of wool annually to London.

Many fur traders were opposed to the agricultural company. Chief Factor George Gladman of York Factory wrote in 1842 that "I cannot persuade myself it will ever prove a profitable speculation, until nearer markets are discovered for Wool and other exportable

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107 McLoughlin to Douglas, March 1838, HBCA B.223/b/18, fo. 25d. Cowlitz was founded by Charles Ross and eight men from Fort Vancouver. "Before proceeding to the Farm, he [Ross] will make a short stay at the Salmon fishery in its vicinity, to salt fish for winter provisions. . ."

108 "They [the HBC] have also bought another farm under cultivation at the Cowlitz River, about thirty miles from the Columbia. This farm, in 1841, produced 7000 bushels of wheat." Dunn, History of the Oregon Country, p. 214.


110 Puget's Sound Agricultural Company, Minute Book, 1839-1858, HBCA F.8/1.

111 Kane, Wanderings, pp. 142-43.

112 "Importation from the Columbia River, 1848," HBCA A.63/5, fo. 159.
stuffs." But Puget Sound was not Red River; Gladman was forgetting about the Russian contract and the Sitka market; exports to London paid; and the company paid its first dividend of 5% in 1844 followed by dividends of either five or ten per cent for ten straight years. In the 1840s the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company was by no means the dismal financial failure depicted by Galbraith and Coyle, but in the early 1850s a combination of American squatters on the Puget Sound farms and mismanagement of its new Vancouver Island farms made it unprofitable.

Further north, the American maritime fur traders had, before about 1830, taken to shipping timber (spars, masts, firewood, shingles) and salmon (squaggan) from the North West Coast to Hawaii as a way of bolstering profits in the declining sea otter trade. But these shipments, partly from the Russian sawmill at Sitka, were not of the same scale or permanence as the Hudson's Bay Company's shipments of Columbia and Fraser river produce. As one American shipowner said in 1822, "NW Coast vessels [upon leaving the coast] generally have a great deal . . . of all such lumber & trash as is of no great value."

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113 Gladman to Edward Ermatinger, 5 August 1842, Ermatinger Papers, NAC.

114 See Puget's Sound Agricultural Company Minute Book, 1839-1858, HBCA F.8/1.


116 "For several years after its origin the PSC made dividends of from 5 to 10 per cent per annum, that is to say, up to the time settlers began to squat on the Company's lands. Finally the encroachment of Squatters so spoiled the business there that the PSC could pay no more dividends." Tolmie, "History of Puget Sound and the North West Coast," p. 23. On the fate of the island farms see Mackie, "Colonial Land, Indian Labour, and Company Capital," 133-41.


118 Bryant and Sturgis to Harris, 30 May 1822, quoted in Gibson, *Otter Skins*, p. 243; on the sawmill at Sitka, operational in the 1830s, see ibid, p. 242.
Glimmerings of the diverse economic potential of the North West Coast and northern Vancouver Island first appear in the Hudson’s Bay Company’s commercial records for the 1830s. The resources of these regions had first been noted by company traders on their fur-trading journeys in the 1830s; passengers on the Beaver were especially prone to spotting items of interest. Reserves of coal, salmon, and lumber were examined for the first time in the 1830s, but none of these northern resources were yet developed owing to the priority given to extending the fur trade itself to the North West Coast and to developing provision and export trades on the Columbia and Fraser.

The 1830s, nonetheless, witnessed foreshadowings of later coastal developments. Unknown minerals were found on the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1833 and were sent to London for analysis; in the same year coal was found in Puget Sound; and in the summer of 1835 coal deposits were found on the north east end of Vancouver Island.

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119 McLoughlin forwarded to London for analysis a box containing "pieces of Mineral" found on the islands that Dr Meredith Gairdner believed contained lead, sulphur, arsenic, mercury, and silver. "If found valuable," McLoughlin said, "great quantities might be procured as it is so abundant that the Natives melt it into Balls and buy none from us." McLoughlin to Smith, 7 September 1833, HBRS 4, p. 115.

120 In 1833 Tolmie found a coal outcropping on the Jolifie River in Puget Sound, which pleased the Governor and Committee because they planned to send a coal-fired steamship to the coast. They told McLoughlin that "[I]t will be well to work the Mine, if it can be done with little labor or expense; as Coal is preferable to wood, for the purposes of steam, and will render it unnecessary to get any from England, thereby saving the cost and Freight, which are matters of consideration." The sample tested at Fort Vancouver was found, however, to be of very poor quality, as was a sample found at Cowlitz, and none of these southern coal discoveries came to anything. See Tolmie, 22-23 May and 8 May 1833, Journals, pp. 186-90; p. 175; G&C to McLoughlin, 1 February 1834, HBRS 4, p. 132 n2; in November 1840 McLoughlin sent "1 Barrel Cowlitz Coal" to London. HBCA C.7/177, fo. 81d.

121 Tolmie recalled that in the summer of 1835 Native people furnished coal from the north east end of Vancouver Island to the manager of Fort McLoughlin. William Fraser Tolmie, "Memo re Coal on Vancouver Island," Tolmie Papers, BCARS.
The company, always anxious to find coal for its forges, investigated these coal resources immediately. Walbran reported the discovery as follows:

There is a tradition . . . that coal was discovered at the north end of Vancouver Island through some Indians from that place recognizing . . . the large black stones burning in the forge at Fort McLoughlin (Bella Bella) as the same sort of 'klale stone' to be found in large quantities where they resided. The information was investigated by the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company and found to be correct, but for several years what little coal was obtained was only worked by the Indians and purchased from them. "Klale" is Chinook for "black," and "klale stone" was the Indians' first Chinook name for coal.122

Tolmie, who then was at Fort McLoughlin, sent a specimen to Fort Vancouver,123 where it was examined by John McLoughlin, who hoped it might power the steam vessel on its way from England.124 In the fall of 1836 Duncan Finlayson, John Dunn and others visited the coal site on the Beaver's inaugural tour,125 and the next year Finlayson and McLoughlin agreed "To remove Fort McLoughlin to the Coal mine when it can conveniently be done."126 It was not done, though Fort Rupert was built at the coal deposits in the summer of 1849. However, Vancouver Island coal was used in the company's own forges: for example, in the spring of 1839 there were "15 Tons Vancs Island Coals" in Fort Simpson's

122Walbran, British Columbia Coast names, p. 477. On this discovery see also Dunn, History of the Oregon Country, p. 240 (not noted by v. good).

123Tolmie, "Memo re Coal on Vancouver Island," Tolmie Papers, BCARS.

124"There is in your vicinity a bed of Coal, from the specimen sent here by Dr Tolmie I suppose it would answer for the Steam Boat—Please get all the information you can about it." McLoughlin to Manson [Fort McLoughlin], 15 November 1835, HBCA B.223/b/1, fo. 79.

125"We set out for Newitie visited by the Quaquills—where the coals are situated . . .," he recalled. Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBRS 4, pp. 334-35. [more here].

Country Produce inventory. 127 This coal was, characteristically, traded from Native people.

Douglas had this coal discovery in mind in 1840 on his long voyage to Russian America on the Beaver, though he seems to have been more impressed with the salmon than the coal:

And should our views hereafter extend beyond the mere traffic of peltries we will have it in our power to cultivate the fisheries of these shores, which, judging from the abundance of excellent Salmon I saw there, will yield a large produce, and may become a valuable auxiliary business. 128

He wanted to establish a post in the area of "Queen Charlotte’s Sound with Johnstones Straits and Vancouver’s Island." 129

From the far north coast also came the occasional suggestion that timber might be exported. Fine masts and spars could be felled right into the water, and company vessels often had spare deck space. In 1833 McLoughlin asked the officers at forts Simpson and McLoughlin to have their men cut a few spars and masts for the Ganymede. 130 About 13,000 shingles were produced at Fort Simpson in 1837 for post use 131 (every post on the


128 Douglas to McLoughlin, 1 October 1840, HBCA B.223/b/28, fos. 77-79. Copy also at BCARS A/B/20/V2 D K. Not in any HBRS.

129 Ibid.

130 "As the Ganymede may have to wait a few days at your place it would be as well as many Spars and Masts were put on board of her as can be conveniently done which you would have to get cut by your people." John McLoughlin "To the Officer in charge of the HBCoy Establishment Mill Bank Sound or Fort Simpson," forgot ref.

131 Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 243.
coast made its own shingles), but these were not exported. On his 1842 trip to the coast Simpson proposed to send timber from the Fort Simpson area to England. Always anxious to find work for idle hands, he wrote that: "[T]he people at the different establishments on the Coast, who have a great deal of leisure time on hand, might be usefully employed in preparing timber for shipment when they have no more pressing duties to perform."

Simpson obtained from the Russian governor Etholine a memo on spar dimensions suitable for men of war.132

Further north, on the panhandle, there was also the possibility of extending the trade beyond furs. The Russians had developed extensive provision trades in salmon and herring.133 James Douglas, always alert for new branches of trade, had happy visions of barreled salmon on his August 1840 visit to Fort Stikine. The "waters abound with salmon," he wrote, which the Natives of the region sold "cheerfully" at a moderate price. "If Barrels could be provided 100 tierces of Salmon might be cured annually, at this place, for exportation . . . ."134

Thus, while the Columbia River was before 1843 the principal location of new export trades in salmon and timber, the company also formed provision and export trades on the Fraser River and Puget Sound in the 1830s, and located several promising resources even further north. The existence of these resources and the success of forts Langley and

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133Respecting the Russian American Company's territories, Baron Wrangell wrote in 1839 that: "After grain, fresh or salt fish is the staple food. Great numbers of herring appear in February or March, and these are followed by [three kinds of salmon]. . . and other fish, until October. Between fifty and sixty thousand of these species are salted down for the winter; this requires more than 1,000 pounds of salt." Pierce, ed., Russian America, pp. 6, 13.

134Douglas to McLoughlin, 1 October 1840, HBCA B.223/b/28, fos. 77-99; 94; quoted also in HBRS 29, p. 63 n.4.
Nisqually were very much on Simpson's mind in 1841-42 when he decided to shift the company's centre of operations north to the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Gulf of Georgia. They proved the viability of a new and diverse commercial emphasis north of the Columbia.
CHAPTER 10
PROFIT, EXCHANGE, AND LABOUR

There are few more impressive sights in the world than a Scotsman on the make.

J. M. Barrie.

Dependence of the Company on the Indian was closely related to the problem of reducing overhead.

Harold Innis.¹

Aggregate figures of value and profit for the Columbia Department as a whole have been located for the period 1813-1843 (Table 6).² The North West Company made a profit only in the years 1815, 1818, and 1821; much of its loss was incurred on its China venture. The Hudson’s Bay Company’s Columbia business fared much better; it made a continuous profit despite large expenses incurred in the extension of the fur trade and institution of export trades in this vast and initially competitive region. The costs of implementing Simpson’s policies following his first two visits were considerable; between 1825 and 1835 the company invested in trade goods, ships, and experienced personnel; constructed posts for the North West Coast fur trade (forts Simpson and McLoughlin); instituted export trades to Oahu and elsewhere; established posts on the south coast (forts Langley and Nisqually); built

¹Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 133.

²Innis, who wrote that "The value of the Columbia department as a whole is difficult to determine," did not have access to these figures. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 334. Innis referred in part to the immense distances and circuitous transport routes between London and the Columbia, which meant that the company’s London accountants might take several years to determine final profit figures. Requisitions had to be ordered years in advance and then subtracted from final gains; pelts were auctioned in London a year or two after they were shipped there; salmon and lumber were not always shipped in the same outfit year and did not always sell immediately in Oahu; costs of transportation and other miscellaneous departmental charges had to be subtracted from final auction and profit figures.
an extensive new depot at Fort Vancouver; and extended the inland fur trade down the southern tributaries of the Columbia and into the Sacramento watershed. By the 1830s these initial investments were paying off and returns began to increase. In 1832 an accountant observed that the Columbia had improved its trade by about £6,000 and "is now beginning to make up for the expences well laid out," and the next year Robert Miles wrote that the department was "doing increasingly well & making amends for the outlay of former days." After the mid-1830s Columbia Department annual returns ran at about twice the value of annual profits; returns were about £40,000, a figure which gave fur traders a quick rule of thumb for calculating profits. About £20,000 was swallowed by substantial overhead expenses, especially shipping costs, trade goods, and wages. The department's annual

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3 Gain and profit applied to total profit after all fur had been auctioned and overhead costs deducted. A post's "apparent gain" was an estimate of total profit, based on past expenses, and calculated before the fur had been sent to London and auctioned. Traditionally the term "returns" applied to the total "return" of a season's trade; it applied only to the value of furs obtained by a post, district, or department. Fur returns were valued at a set standard exclusive of costs of trade goods, transport, wages, and other overheads. For example the returns of a post might be £2,000 a year, but actual profit might be less than half that amount. Returns later applied to the total body of marketable commodities produced or traded by a post, district, or department; it also applied somewhat loosely to the total value of those marketable commodities. When a fur trader at Kamloops talked about returns he meant fur; on the coast he could mean just about anything; the total returns of a post like Fort Vancouver bore little relation to its fur returns. Eventually, at such posts as Nanaimo, separate accounts were kept for furs, coal, and other commodities.

4 Robert Miles to John McLeod, 5 August 1832, McLeod Papers, NAC; Miles to Ermatinger, 25 July 1833, Edward Ermatinger Papers, NAC.

5 In 1833 the returns of forts McLoughlin and Simpson amounted to £4,738 of which £2,815 was profit. McLoughlin to G&C, 28 May 1834, HBRS 4, p. 119. In 1840, John Rowand (at York Factory) reported that "Our Columbia business goes on well the returns from that quarter amounts to £44,000 leaving a profit of 24,000£." Rowand to Hargrave, 8 July 1840, Hargrave Papers, NAC.

6 London expenses amounted to £40,000 in 1832, £42,000 in 1833, £36,000 in 1838, and £45,000 in 1841. "Shipping Expenses" were the largest of these, amounting to about £18,000 a year. George Gladman, "Expenditure at Fenchurch Street on Account of the Fur Trade,"
requisitions for trade goods increased steadily, for instance from £10,399 in 1834, to £13,300 in 1838, to an estimated £18,000-£20,000 in 1841. The Hudson’s Bay Company never lost money on its Columbia business between 1821 and 1843, and made a net profit of about £270,000 between 1830 and 1843 alone. This profit contributed in no small way to the company’s overall financial success: between 1825 and 1863 this company paid dividends to its shareholders at a minimum rate of 10%, and for eight years dividends were either 15% or 20%. This was a successful company.

Donald Ross Papers, BCARS.

7Simpson to G&C, 18 July 1831, HBCA A.12/1, fos.370-418; fos.383; Simpson to G&C, 10 June 1835, HBCA D.4/102, fo. 3; Simpson to Ross, 6 November 1841, Ross Papers, BCARS (Simpson referred to this last as a "general cargo").

### Table 6
Columbia Department, Returns and Profit (£s), 1813-1843

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value of Country Produce</th>
<th>Total Returns [value]</th>
<th>Total Gain [profit]</th>
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</tr>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>34,793</td>
<td></td>
<td>13,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>40,732</td>
<td></td>
<td>17,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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91813-20 figures, and 1821 profit, are from Keith, "Adventure on the Columbia." 1821-1825 figures are from York Factory, Accounts Current 1821-26, HBCA B.239/d/286. In the original these are divided between Western Caledonia and Columbia. Figures are not available for 1826-29. 1830-1839 figures, including country produce figures, are from York Factory, Abstract of Accounts Current, 1830-1839, HBCA B.239/d/547, fo. 18. A similar list of country produce figures is in York Factory, Country Produce Account Book, 1828-1836, HBCA B.239/d/491. 1840-44 figures are from "General Result of Trade Northern Department and Columbia pr Country Accounts . . . . Ross Papers, BCARS. This document also includes annual expenses and parallel figures for the Northern Department.
Departmental patterns emerged. Table 7 shows returns of outfit year 1844; the figures refer to values, not final profits; map 8 shows these districts' approximate spatial configuration. By 1844 Snake Country returns, previously substantial, were in serious decline, a reflection of the company's scorched earth frontier policy there. North West Coast returns (seen in the Fort Simpson and steamer Beaver figures) were greater than those of the south coast (seen in the figures for forts Langley, Victoria, and Nisqually), a reflection of the milder climate and mountainous terrain to the south. North West Coast returns were also collected from a much larger coastal and interior region than the south. Interior districts (especially New Caledonia and Fort Colvile) offered, generally, a richer and more secure fur yield than coastal districts. Indeed, once export trades had emerged on the south coast the interior districts became known as "the fur districts" or "the fur countries" to distinguish them from the Pacific coast.10

10e.g. Clouston to W. G. Smith, 5 December 1856, HBCA A.11/63, fos. 235-236; Tolmie to Swan, 30 December 1878, Swan Papers, UBC.
Table 7
Columbia Department Returns (£s), 1844

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Returns (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
<td>8,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steamer Beaver</td>
<td>6,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Simpson</td>
<td>4,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Colvile</td>
<td>3,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Stikine</td>
<td>3,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Establishment</td>
<td>2,747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Vancouver Indian Trade</td>
<td>2,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snake Country</td>
<td>2,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson’s River</td>
<td>1,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Langley</td>
<td>1,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Nez Percés</td>
<td>1,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Victoria</td>
<td>1,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Nisqually</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£40,437</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These years witnessed changes in the relationship and relative importance of the provision, fur, and non-fur export trades of the Columbia Department. Fur, as Innis pointed out, was by far the most accessible and profitable commodity available in the Indian trade of the northern part of North America. For the company, control of the still-valuable fur trade of the Columbia Department remained of primary importance because it served to make the entire region and all its resources uninviting to distant American competitors. At the same time, the fur trade acted as the motor of the company’s non-Native economic development in that profits earned on the London market from fur sales covered the initial expenses of the new export trades, and forms of labour and transport devised in the fur trade

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worked equally for new exports. Fur trade profits, labour, and vessels supported new export trades in their infancy and permitted their subsequent development.¹³

None of these things could function in this large and remote region without secure, local, and adequate provisions. Provision trades, formed primarily on the lower Columbia and Fraser rivers and in Puget Sound to support this frontier district of the fur trade, grew steadily over these years, buttressed the company’s extended operations, and helped maintain overall profit figures at about the same level; Columbia produce increased in value from a mere £50 to about £8,000 between 1830 and 1838 (table 6). The cost of provisioning the department with imported foodstuffs would otherwise have been enormous. Inexpensive local provision trades underpinned and made possible both an extended coastal fur trade and new export trades. New export trades were based on the twin pillars of a visible fur trade economy (hard cash earned from fur sales in London) and an invisible provision economy (an extensive local exchange of commodities in which specie was absent).

Provision trades on the west coast tended, more than elsewhere in the company’s territories, to become exports. From the beginning the company had an eye on these same commodities (especially salmon, flour, and timber) as potential exports. Provisions, then, had a dialectical relationship with furs: having provided the local economic base which permitted the company to buy vessels to extend the fur trade, provisions were then

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¹³It would be unfortunate if the continuing financial importance of fur sales at London end of the commercial equation diminished the historical importance of the provision trades or the new export trades and regional markets located by the company. That profits might have been maintained by broadening the range of exports was a possibility not considered by Rich, whose interest in the London fur market led him to ignore, in their entirety, new world exports to new world markets. Even in 1863, he wrote, "The old Company had remained predominantly a fur-trading company. It was, indeed, as a fur-trading company that it earned its dividends and as a fur-trading company that it valued its assets." Rich, HBC, Vol. 3, p. 816. Similarly, Ray places the beginning of the company's diversification at 1870. Arthur J. Ray, The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).
transformed into exports and shipped to new Pacific markets on those very vessels in the dead season. The economic system thus formed also allowed the company to import English manufactures for retail sale at its shops at Oahu and Fort Vancouver.

By 1843, exports of salmon and lumber and sales of English goods at Oahu, Yerba Buena, and to the settlers near Fort Vancouver contributed materially to departmental profit; returns derived from the company’s diversified, extended, non-fur undertakings on the coast and in Oahu contributed about £4,000 annually to total departmental profits. About £2,000 came from sales at Oahu and another £2,000 arose from sales at Fort Vancouver and Yerba Buena. These amounts grew steadily over the next decade or two; new exports possessed an unstoppable momentum. For example, in 1849 Douglas estimated the value of the company’s "Exports from the Company’s settlements on the West side of the Mountains" as follows: Great Britain, £60,000; Sitka, £10,000; and the Sandwich Islands, £8,000.14 (Douglas’s Great Britain figure was swelled beyond its normal £40,000 by the inclusion of gold and specie earned during the California gold rush).

The application of British commercial capital to all regions of the west coast of North America required the productive power of Native people. Without them it is doubtful that the company’s permanent workforce of six hundred could have operated the transport, shipping, fur, lumber, salmon, and agricultural branches of the business.15 Commodities like lumber and salmon exchanged cheaply from the Native people of the lower Columbia, lower Fraser, and Puget Sound allowed the company to ship cheaply to markets in Honolulu.

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15The history of the company’s non-Native labour force in the Columbia Department is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
California, and Sitka, and to sell in those markets for less than producers in Britain, the United States, and New Zealand. While such trades relied of course on a small, select, and competent workforce of coopers, carpenters, millers, blacksmiths, and mariners, they relied also on the resources and labour of the Chinook and Coast Salish people of the Columbia and Fraser rivers.

The continuous profit of the Hudson's Bay Company's provision, fur, and new export trades in the Columbia Department depended directly and indirectly on Native labour. Direct labour took the form of work; indirect labour took the form of trade. Hunting itself was a form of off-site (indirect) labour, as was the whole complex and extensive Native trading system through which the Hudson's Bay Company acquired fur, and as was the work of the Native people who guided the continental explorers of the fur trade companies and supplied them with transport and provisions.\(^{16}\) The company relied in some degree on Native work in most parts of its business. Native labour underlay and, structurally, unified the provision, fur, and export trades: Native people hunted, traded, travelled, fished, farmed, mined, and logged for the company. The company's transport systems, provision trades, and new export trades, more than the fur trade as such, drew Native people into the company's labour force on the west coast. A trading imperative unified the Europeans and the indigenous peoples: the west coast people were often characterised as traders, and the Hudson's Bay Company was in law and practice a trading company. The company's later "resource development" ventures, like its coalmining operations at Fort Rupert and Nanaimo, required the large-scale hiring of a skilled European workforce and management.\(^{17}\) Such ventures came in later


\(^{17}\)See Ralston, "Miners and Managers."
decades; the company’s 600 men were probably doing as much as they could in the way of trade. Between 1821 and 1843 a diverse Native trade was combined with a new commercial opportunity on the Pacific. In the remainder of this chapter I outline the origin, extent, and location of Native involvement in the company’s provision and export trades on the west coast and speculate on the effect of this involvement on the Native world after 1821.

Two separate traditions of Native involvement in the fur trade economy met and merged on the west Pacific coast after 1821: a British, land-based, continental tradition brought to the coast by the North West and Hudson’s Bay companies,18 and an indigenous tradition developed by Russian, American, and British fur traders on the west coast.19

Both traditions operated against a backdrop of a Native Pacific economy (or economies) long noted for trading acumen. In the pre-contact period some of the major commodities in the extensive Native coastal commerce were slaves, sea otter pelts, salmon,

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18Fur traders in New France, as well as the Spanish and Russians in the New World, made use of Native labour. The North West Company’s tradition was of course originally a French one. Trigger points out that in New France the fur traders paved the way for French colonization through good trading and cultural relations with Native people. "[T]he ties these traders made with their native trading partners provided the basis for later cooperation between other groups of Frenchmen and the indigenous inhabitants of the St. Lawrence Valley." Fur traders in New France played "a crucial role in establishing the primary relations with native peoples, relations that gave the natives a necessary role in founding a viable European colony." Bruce Trigger, Natives and Newcomers: Canada’s ‘Heroic Age’ Reconsidered, pp. 48-9, 298, 341, and cover blurb.

haiqua shells, coppers, Native tobacco, oolichan, and elk hides; after contact other items such as potatoes and blankets were added to the list of trading staples.20

The trading bonanza of the sea otter era was only a prelude to later developments. The commercial policies of the maritime fur traders did not, at first, intersect extensively with the Native economies of the North West Coast: these traders brought provisions with them or bought them in Hawaii, and at first they wanted only sea otter skins. They traded only at the westernmost Native ports accessible to deep-sea vessels; they visited only a fraction of the coastline mapped by Vancouver; and in the end they simply left the coast without having engaged the land itself: their engagement was with the produce of the land.21

On the other hand, the commercial policies of the land-based fur traders, while sharing an origin in western capitalism in common with the maritime traders, and directed at obtaining more or less the same commodities with the same people in the same Native world, bore a greater potential for massive and permanent economic change.

The Hudson’s Bay Company’s employment of Native people, as with many other elements of its commercial practice, originated east of the Rockies and was brought to the Columbia Department as a measure of necessity, economy, and expediency. The payment of Native people labour was an integral part of the commercial and Indian policies of the Montreal- and London-based fur trades. From the Hudson’s Bay Company’s first days on Hudson Bay, each post attracted a special group of local Native people known as the "Home

20See Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 4 (tobacco), 5, (potatoes), 7-11 (sea otter, coppers, oolichan oil, haiqua, elk hides, slaves, salmon), 231-3 (oolichan), slaves (233-7; 277-8).

21The maritime fur traders "utterly failed to take advantage of their opportunities, or to leave one mark of civilization, save perhaps its vices on the coast—in a word leaving it the worse and the poorer for their presence there." F. W. Howay, "An Outline Sketch of the Maritime Fur Trade," Canadian Historical Association, Report, (1932), pp. 5-14; p. 14.
Guard," who filled a middleman role in the fur trade and provided provisions and security to company personnel.22

In the nineteenth century, Native labour became increasingly important to the company's extended and extensive transport and provision systems. Innis, the first historian to assess the extent of Native involvement in the fur trade, provided numerous examples from Rupert's Land in the 1830s, most of it in transport: Native people were hired as steersmen, bowsmen, and middlemen (or "midmen") on freight boats; at Norway House in the summer of 1832 more than fifty Indians were employed.23 Recent research supports Innis's early observations on the importance of Native labour.24 Continentally, women's work was from the beginning at least as important as men's in the provision trades that supported the fur trade.25 Numerous cases of Native women's labour have been noted from

22Rich, HBC, Vol 1, pp. 494-495. Native people were first hired specifically as labourers in the provision trades. On the Bay and inland these people supplied the company with fish and game. Innis believed the company was dependent on such supplies, stating that "Constant reference to the Homeguard Indians in various journals was an indication of the dependence of the Company on the native population." Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 134. Innis saw this dependence as a response to the expense and impracticality of importing food from England (or elsewhere), and as a survival strategy resulting from the difficulty of growing food in a cold climate.

23Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, pp. 308-312.


25Women provided basic subsistence commodities and allowed fur traders to concentrate on their commercial pursuits. Native women were, Van Kirk writes, "an unofficial part of the labour force." "They were servants who never received wages in any real sense and undoubtedly both companies profited by this source of cheap labour." Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties," pp. 53, 73.
Simpson’s regime, most of them in the provision trades. The diverse maritime abundance of the west coast was exploited, ethnographically and archaeologically, equally by women and men.

On the west coast, during these decades (the 1820s and 1830s) of intensified trapping, provision production, and resource development, Native people supplied—directly and indirectly—the bulk of the labour in the fur, provision, and export trades alike. Non-Native labour was concentrated at the post and transport levels and at the level of manufacture (e.g. the work of engineers, coopers, blacksmiths, millwrights in the lumber and salmon industries). In terms of the company’s exchange system there was no practical difference between providing a beaver or marten pelt, a barrel of coal, a basket of potatoes, a pound of isinglass or whale oil, a brace of wild fowl, a canoe load of salmon, or a day’s agricultural labour to the company. Standards of trade for country produce emerged in the

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28Perhaps the main point of intersection between the Native communities and the "fur" trade economy in North America occurred in the provision trades. Daily subsistence was of more urgent importance to a post’s economy than fur acquisition. Similarly, provision demand probably had a greater immediacy to Native life than fur demand, and required the involvement of men and women.
nineteenth century alongside the better-known fur trade standards. This meant that the provision trades were as closely regulated as the fur trade; theoretically, a uniform value of country produce, like that of pelts, could be established and maintained across physical and cultural boundaries or between posts and districts.

The offsite Native labour implicit in the provision and fur trades, and based on the simple exchange of commodities, metamorphosed, on some parts of the coast, into formal, explicit, working relationships as a result of the demands and requirements of the new and emerging export trades. In other words, the fur trade and the supporting provision trades, based on straightforward commodity exchange, usually required what to fur traders was an "invisible labour" within the Native economy. The export trades, on the other hand, increasingly required the actual, visible, formal, employment of Native people at the company’s forts, farms, and work camps. Native people found they could exchange their labour as easily as the fruits of their labour and for the same trade goods.

The sources allow a fairly clear picture to be drawn of the degree and range of Native involvement in the company’s west coast regional economy. The company began to employ Native people in numbers on the west coast in the late 1820s to supply the commodities and labour necessary for the successful operation of its Columbia and Fraser export trades. Previously, apparently, some Native groups had been reluctant to work for the company. William Fraser Tolmie recalled in 1884 that the Chinook and others had considered labour the work of slaves:

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In the earlier years of the whiteman’s presence. . . , [the] Tshinooks of the Lower Columbia and the Indians thence to Puget Sound would not work for the new-comers, any individual so-doing being reproached as placing himself on the level of a slave.

The late, Canadian born, Mr. J. M. Yale, so long of the Hudson’s Bay Co. at Langley, Fraser River, was perhaps the first to induce the natives to work. At Fort McLoughlin, Milbank Sound, they did day’s work at extracting large stumps in 1834-35. Not long after 1836, when the ‘Beaver’ began to run, the Indians at various points prepared fuel for her in advance. At [Fort] Vancouver, Columbia River, the young Kliketats, in 1836, and the following years, became ploughmen, carters, boatmen, and one year, six of them, acting with perfect honesty, seined salmon on shares with the company. In 1843-44 and the following years, the natives of the south-east of Vancouver [Island] and Puget Sound, became canoe-expressmen with mails or passengers, often both, between Victoria and Nisqually, ploughmen, carters, shepherds and sheep-shearers, the women doing as well as the men at the latter work.30

A second retired fur trader, Joe McKay, also attributed the origins of Native labour on the west coast to the Hudson’s Bay Company. Writing in 1897, McKay recalled that "Having been trained to work by the Company’s people, they represent now a very important factor in the labour market."31 The soundness of these recollections is borne out by the contemporary evidence from coastal posts.

In 1828, soon after the founding of Fort Langley, Native women were hired to store potatoes and salt salmon; in 1829 ten or twelve Native people carried fence wood, and in the following years they loaded and unloaded the company’s vessels and worked as farm

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labourers. James Murray Yale of Fort Langley first hired Native people in agricultural labour in 1833, if not earlier. As McLoughlin told him in May 1834,

[I] am happy to find that you have anticipated my Views and so zealously begun your farming operations and I approve very much of your Employing Indians and paying them with the produce of your farm as this Labour costs you nothing and by accustoming and teaching them to work you are doing them the Greatest good you can and in course of time they may became as useful as most men we now a days get.33

Later, Native people were hired as milkers to Fort Langley's seventy or eighty cows, and Native women prepared salmon for barrelling.34 At Fort Simpson, Native men and women entered the company's workforce in many capacities in the 1830s and 1840s.35

Native work began early on Puget Sound too. "Indians have been hired," Tolmie wrote in July 1833 at Fort Nisqually, "to clear away the brushwood along the bank . . . & for about 100 yards up from base."36 The Puget's Sound Agricultural Company's operations, managed by Tolmie himself, saw an unprecedented emphasis on the hiring of Native labour for a variety of work after about 1839. In that year the Governor and Committee urged Douglas to hire "a few docile native Indians, say emancipated Slaves," as herdsman, carters, and weeders.37 Tolmie hired Native people at Cowlitz as cheap


33McLoughlin to Yale, 17 May 1834, HBCA B.223/b/10, fo. 17.

34Denys Nelson, Fort Langley 1827-1927 A Century of Settlement in the Valley of the Lower Fraser (Vancouver: Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver, 1927), p. 28; for women's role in the salmon trade see Manson, "Recollections."


36Tolmie, Journals, p. 213.

37Quoted in Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 117. "It was desirable to employ natives not only because they offset the labour shortage, but also because they were economical."
agricultural labour, and after 1839 between one half and two thirds of the company's work at Nisqually was done by Native people. They were paid between £4 and £8 a year, compared to £35 a year paid to experienced British shepherds on contract to the company.\textsuperscript{38} In 1843, eleven of the thirty-two men at Cowlitz were Native: Welnam, Klaput, and Tenasman worked the horse ploughs; Tim worked the ox plough; Toyam, Pat, Basselle, Jack, and an "Indian Lad" worked the harrows; and two unnamed Indians were shepherds and horsekeepers.\textsuperscript{39} As well, the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company's account books document numerous "Payments for Indian labour" at Cowlitz and Nisqually.\textsuperscript{40}

Years later, when Tolmie sought work as an Indian Agent, he recalled his first years at Nisqually as manager of the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company's farms:

The difficulties of Indian management at Nisqually had been greatly enhanced by the introduction of sheep and cattle in large numbers on the [Nisqually] Plains, the Indians, themselves owners of horses, and considerably dependent on roots of native growth for subsistence, found the innovation so much for the worse that discontent was often exhibited. General kind treatment, trifling payments for mischievous dogs shot, and the employment of Indians as shepherds, cattleherds, ploughmen &c &c gradually reconciled them to the new order of things.\textsuperscript{41}

Similar work patterns arose on the Columbia River where, in all probability soon after the fort's establishment, Native people worked on the company's farms. Tolmie recalled that while based at Fort Vancouver from 1840 until the spring of 1841, he:

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., pp. 88, 117; and on Native labour on mission farms see pp. 179-186. For a census see Robert C. Taylor, "The Fort Nisqually Census of 1838-39," Ethnohistory (Fall 1960), pp. 399-409.

\textsuperscript{39}"Distribution List of Men at Cowlitz Farm 6 November 1843," HBCA F.26/1, fo. 68.

\textsuperscript{40}Puget's Sound Agricultural Company, "Minute Book," [1839-1858], HBCA F.8/1.

\textsuperscript{41}Tolmie to Joseph Howe, 6 October 1871, Tolmie Papers, BCARS.
... became travelling agent for the Company with Indians as boatmen and canoemen. Indeed the various tribes known on the Columbia River as Klikatats had by this time so much changed their notions that the Company's large fields were mostly ploughed by Indians, who around Vancouver were friendly and useful in every way.42

The hiring of Native people as agricultural labourers on the Columbia River resulted in part from the difficulty and expense of hiring Columbia freemen, most of whom came from the quickly-developing French Canadian and Métis community in the Willamette Valley where labour was also at a premium.43 As Douglas wrote in 1838, "A grievous burden is, however, imposed on the agriculture of this portion of America, by the impossibility of finding labourers, exactly, at the season, they are wanted, with the option of dismissing them at pleasure."44 In 1841 Simpson reported that there were 1000 "Indian hands" at the Willamette, though this seems very high.45 This estimate may refer to seasonal work.

Native labour was important in the non-agricultural coastal districts too, particularly in canoe transport and communication. The company's sailings were sporadic and irregular before the Beaver's arrival, making the use of existing Native transport systems essential; the sources contain numerous and vivid references to Native letter-carrying in the Gulf of Georgia region. Charles Ermatinger recalled how a letter was "forwarded from tribe to

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42Ibid.

43Columbia Freemen were company employees (usually of mixed blood) whose contracts had expired and who chose to remain in the country, often farming in the Willamette (from about 1818 onwards) and working for the company part-time or seasonally and trading fur to the company. "Our store at Fort George is only for Indians or at least all who deal there are supplied at Indian price... the place where we have dealings with freemen is Vancouver where we pay them 11/- for a made beaver." McLoughlin to Birnie, 29 December 1840, HBCA B.223/b/27, fo. 118.

44Douglas to G&C, 18 October 1838, HBRS 4, p. 265.

45Quoted in Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 136.
tribe" between Fort Langley and Fort Vancouver in 1828 even after the bearer of the letter was killed.\textsuperscript{46} In 1831 Archibald McDonald of Fort Langley noted that a packet of thirty-two private letters had reached him via Puget Sound "after a March of 11 weeks thru the different tribes between Vancouver & this. . . , "\textsuperscript{47} and in September 1833 Tolmie, who was at Fort Nisqually, received a letter "from Mr Yale by indians" on the results of the 1833 salmon trade at Fort Langley.\textsuperscript{48}

Native labour was important from the first at Fort Victoria. James Douglas recorded that in 1843 the Songhees "immediately" offered their services in cutting pickets in return for payment in blankets, an offer that suggests that Native people at this new post had no qualms about such work. They cut at least some of the fort pickets at Mount Douglas, hence its other name "Cedar Hill". Native labour was important also in farming and transport. Ormsby notes that Native people milked cows at the fort and guided the "bullock-drawn implements,"\textsuperscript{49} and the 1846-50 post journal records numerous other instances.\textsuperscript{50} The company's diverse economy in the Victoria area involved a similar diversity of Native work.

\textsuperscript{46}Charles Ermatinger, "The Columbia," p. 20.

\textsuperscript{47}McDonald to John McLeod, 20 February 1831, McLeod Papers, NAC.

\textsuperscript{48}Tolmie, 10 September 1833, Journals, p. 234.

\textsuperscript{49}Ormsby, British Columbia, p. 92.

\textsuperscript{50}Personal communication, Cairn Crockford, 1989.
After the building of Fort Victoria an express canoe system was put in place between it and Fort Nisqually on the direct route to Fort Vancouver. Paul Kane, who left Victoria in the canoe of a Nisqually chief on 10 June 1847, described the voyage as follows:

He was very glad of my company, as my being the bearer of despatches would be a certain protection for the whole party from whatever Indians we might meet. I asked him how he had managed to escape coming down, and he showed me an old piece of newspaper, which he held up whenever he met with strange Indians, and that they, supposing it to be a letter from Fort Victoria, had allowed him to pass without molestation.

The gentlemen in charge of the various posts have frequent occasion to send letters, sometimes for a considerable distance, when it is either inconvenient or impossible for them to fit out a canoe with their own men to carry it. In such cases the letter is given to an Indian, who carries it as far as suits his convenience and safety. He then sells the letter to another, who carries it until he finds an opportunity of selling it to advantage; it is thus passed on and sold until it arrives at its destination, gradually increasing in value according to the distance, and the last possessor receiving the reward for its safe delivery. In this manner letters are frequently sent with perfect security, and with much greater rapidity than could be done otherwise.

Letters were sent from the Beaver on the coast to Fort Alexandria in the Chilcotin.

"[L]etters were conveyed more than once," Richard Mayne reported, "by some such route, by Indian messengers, from the Hudson’s Bay Company’s steamer ‘Beaver’ lying in the Bentinck Arm, to the officer in charge of Fort Alexandria, high up the Fraser River."53

Most Native employment occurred on the south coast and Columbia River because that was where most of the company’s new resource trades developed. However, the 1830s

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51 Between 1843 and 1845 the Nisqually-Victoria express system was in charge of Joe McKay, then a postmaster. See Alfred Stanley Deaville, The Colonial Postage Systems and Postage Stamps of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1849-1871 (Victoria: Charles F. Banfield, 1928), pp. 17, 21. Warre’s painting, "Mt. Baker from Near Protection Island, October 45" shows a Nisqually-bound express canoe in the middle of Juan de Fuca Strait.

52 Kane, Wanderings, pp. 171-72.

53 Mayne, Four Years, p. 146.
witnessed greater Native involvement in the company's extended commerce on the North
West Coast. John Dunn recalled his visit to Beaver Harbour (probably in the fall of 1836) as
follows:

The natives were anxious that we should employ them to work the coal; to this we
consented, and agreed to give them a certain sum for every large box. The natives
being so numerous, and labour so cheap, for us to attempt to work the coal would
have been madness.\(^{54}\)

Simpson, as ever concerned with "system & economy," wanted to hire Native sailors
for the company's marine department. Writing from Sitka in May 1842, he complained
about the useless English servants and asked McLoughlin to emulate the marine service of
the Russian American Company:

Many of their Mates and fully half their seamen are natives of the country . . .
tractable, efficient and cheap servants. It has for a length of time & very frequently
been strongly recommended, that you should get some of the natives apprenticed to
the marine branch of the Service.\(^{55}\)

In the 1820s and 1830s, then, Native people began to work as labourers at Hudson's
Bay Company posts between Fort Simpson and the Columbia River. They worked for the
company on the farm at Fort Vancouver, on its Columbia River fishery, at the Puget Sound
farms, in transport, at the Fraser River fishery and on the Fort Langley farm, at the coal
mine on Beaver Harbour, in the construction of Fort Victoria, at Fort Simpson. Generally
they worked on a part-time, seasonal, or occasional basis rather than full-time; naval officer
Edward Belcher stated in 1839 that out of 560-600 men employed by the company in the


\(^{55}\) Simpson to McLoughlin, 18 May 1842, HBRS 6, pp. 291-292.
Columbia Department, "not more than ten native Indians are permanently employed." They also worked as shepherds, agricultural labourers, ploughmen, and a number of other occupations in the new provision and export industries on the coast. Their work was always inexpensive relative to non-Native labour.

The degree and extent of Native involvement should not, however, be exaggerated: increasing numbers of non-Native labourers (including Kanakas) were also required in the company's extended coastal shipping and commerce. Native trade and trade routes remained intact. Native trade was generally more important to the company in 1843 than Native labour. In many respects this was still a Native world, in which Native access to and control of resources and trade had not been formally challenged. The lives of the vast majority of Native people in the Columbia Department in the mid-nineteenth century intersected with the company's economy not, primarily, as labourers but as recipients of English material goods acquired through trade and, to a lesser extent, as suppliers of provisions. And even where Native people worked for the company they showed a remarkable ability to retain their seasonal rounds; indeed some groups maintained their seasonal cycles of resource exploitation after decades of contact in regions of extensive non-Native settlement and

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56 Belcher, Narrative, p. 301

57 "Company servants regarded the Native populations, within an economic framework, as unskilled labourers who would provide raw supplies, local produce and personal services which could be converted into a profit for the Hudson's Bay Company." Lester Ross, Fort Vancouver 1829-1860, p. 148.
commercial activity. all must have adapted to some degree to new forms of wealth, currency, and exchange.

The company's exchange system underlay its Native employment policies. Part of the strength of the company's commercial prowess was its ability to adapt its exchange system, first from the trade in fur to the trade in provisions, second to the exchange of commodities destined for export, third to onsite labour, and ultimately to land itself. The trading mechanism remained the same. Mutual interest and improved trading opportunities, presumably, drove this exchange, as well as the utility and high quality of English manufactures. It may be inaccurate to speak of a Native dependence on European trade goods, but the evidence suggests that a growing Native demand for European commodities underlay the fur, provision, and export trades.

Moreover, it is impossible to deny that the documents are full of gleeful references to the absurd cheapness with which provisions, export commodities, Native labour, and other services could be obtained. An immense creation and transfer of wealth occurred in which commodities obtained cheaply over large spaces by tens of thousands of Native people were

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58 Cole Harris, "The Lower Mainland, 1820-81," in Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke, eds., Vancouver and its Region (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992), pp. 38-69. As late as the 1880s the Native people of the west coast of Vancouver Island spent only two weeks a year engaged in non-Native commercial activity. The rest of their time still revolved around herring, dogfish, salmon, and fur sealing. Cairn Crockford, personal communication, 1992.

59 Trigger argues that a Native "dependence" on European goods emerged in New France in the mid seventeenth century as a result of plagues. Trigger, Natives and Newcomers, ch. 5. Native people were willing to broaden their trade to retain access to English goods. For example, Alexander Christie, in 1821, recommended closure of the company's whale-hunting post on the Eastmain Coast in part because it had "been prejudicial to the Fur Trade of that neighbourhood, in that the Indians of the district no longer find it necessary to obtain furs for the purpose of barter, as they can obtain all their necessaries in exchange for oil at Whale River." Alexander Christie, "Report on Eastmain District, 1821," in HBCA Search file "Oil.
converted in European and Pacific marketplaces into hard cash and handsome dividends which went directly to a few dozen company shareholders, governors, and officers.

The basis of the company’s technique, at least in the diverse economy of the west coast, was its transfer of the exchange system of the fur trade to every aspect of its economic relations with Native people. This exchange system lasted long into the nineteenth century. Native people exchanged provisions, exports, and labour for the same English trade goods for which they continued to exchange their pelts. After the 1780s blankets became increasingly important: the famous point blankets, made at Whitney in Oxfordshire, were introduced into the company’s trading in 1779 and reached the Columbia Department forty years later. The company’s barter system worked just as well for animal pelts as blankets or actual labour; it was a system in which money, coin, or specie were absent until 1858; there was little difference in the trading mechanism. New commodities entered the company’s exchange system in the presence of an abundant resource base and diverse Native trades. Table 5 shows some west coast exchange rates.

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60 Blankets were standardized with the application of the "point" system. "The ‘points’ were marks on the side of the blanket," Rich wrote, "denoting its size and its value in beaver, a three point blanket being traded for three beaver, and so according to the number of points . . . . It was the quality of the blankets and the unfailing fairness with which the points were kept to standard measurements which made them so valuable an asset to the Hudson’s Bay Company." Rich, HBC, Vol 2, p. 109. On the introduction of the blankets see Alice M. Johnson, "Mons. Maugenest Suggests," The Beaver 291 (Summer 1960), pp. 36-39 and Morton, A History, p. 425.


62 Sources: Simpson to G&C, 10 March 1825, quoted in Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, p. 121; Maclachlan, "The Founding of Fort Langley," p. 21; Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 220; haiqua 21 September 1835; (1843): above, ch. 9; Kane, Wanderings, pp. 165-66.
Table 5

Selected Rates of Exchange

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>&quot;Currency&quot;</th>
<th>Commodity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1824-25</td>
<td>Fort George</td>
<td>Goods worth 7/-</td>
<td>35 salmon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Fraser River</td>
<td>1 blanket</td>
<td>10 beaver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Fort George</td>
<td>1 blanket</td>
<td>5 haiqua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>North Coast</td>
<td>8 blankets</td>
<td>1 sea otter skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>Fort Victoria</td>
<td>1 blanket</td>
<td>40 cedar pickets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>Fort Victoria</td>
<td>12 blankets</td>
<td>1 sea otter skin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The company had to adapt to the requirements of the local economy on its arrival; the people of the coast had developed their own modes of exchange like haiqua and slaves. At first, in the 1820s and early 1830s, dentalia shells or haiqua remained the "currency of the country," the "circulating medium" for many Native groups and for the company in much of the Columbia Department. The company secured most of its haiqua requirements at Cape Flattery, Fort Nisqually, and Fort Langley; from these places the company sent the light and valuable shells all over the department at minimal cost on its regular transport.63

The company's massive trade extension onto the North West Coast and elsewhere west of the Rockies threatened the circulation of Native currencies, and by the 1840s haiqua shells and slaves had been replaced on much of the coast with the company's blankets.64

"The blanket," Kane said after his 1847 visit, "is the standard by which the value of all

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64Blankets, Gibson notes, had been a staple article of the North West Coast trade since the 1790s, and in 1826 American traders observed that "blankets are the staple article;" that blankets and duffles were "the most essential articles of trade." Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 219-20. It may be that the exchange of haiqua and slaves remained popular in the Native context, and that Native people adapted to the use of blankets only in their trade with the company, but reports of the prevalence of blankets as potlatch items and articles of clothing suggests otherwise.
articles on the north west coast is calculated." At Fort Victoria he heard of a potlatch where one man distributed twelve bales of blankets. The company's blankets usurped haiqua and slaves as currency on the coast—though a demand for haiqua persisted into the late nineteenth century. By the 1840s everything (commodities, slaves, labour, land) had its price. The appearance of a new currency does not entail the disappearance of old commodities. All these things were up for sale; all could be bought by company officials for blankets, haiqua, or other trade goods. Anything could be traded for blankets, including, later, treaty land on Vancouver Island.

Cape Flattery was also the centre of the Native slave trade conducted by American coasters who, Simpson wrote in 1829, bought slaves at Cape Flattery and the Straits of Juan de Fuca and took them north to Haida territory where they disposed of them for between thirty and fifty beaver skins each. Slaves, Simpson wrote, "are the principal circulating medium on this Coast." There is no evidence, however, that the Hudson's Bay Company engaged in the Cape Flattery slave trade. In a coastal region rife with circulating commodities there were other ways of discouraging American traders. American involvement in the slave trade as late as the 1830s resulted from the lateness of the company's invasion of the coastal region: the North West Company's inability to extend its

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65 Kane, Wanderings, pp. 165-166; 153. As late as 1878 blankets were the "recognised currency" on the coast. See Douglas Cole and Bradley Lockner, eds., To the Charlottes: George Dawson's 1878 Survey of the Queen Charlotte Islands (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993).


67 Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, HBRS 10, p. 80.

68 I can find nothing "sanctimonious" about the company's objection to American involvement in the coastal slave trade. Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 235.
trade to the coast north of the Columbia River had left Native trade routes and exchange systems intact and at the mercy of visits from American coasters who lacked the Hudson’s Bay Company’s accountability to political or social opinion. The company had to answer, at least in theory, to public opinion in Wilberforce’s anti-slavery Britain. Nonetheless company officials were in a position to record the details of the slave trade. In June 1834 Tolmie, then at Fort McLoughlin, wrote that "The Chimesyans give 15 elk skins for a boy slave about 12 or 14 years of age beside a small quanity of powder, ball, paint, tobacco, etc." On the lower Columbia in 1837 a slave was worth from eight to fifteen blankets. In about 1840 John Dunn noted that "A full-grown, athletic slave, who is a good hunter, will fetch nine blankets, a gun, a quantity of powder and ball, a couple of dressed elk skins, tobacco, vermilion paint, a flat file, and other little articles." Among the Chilcat a copper was worth nine slaves. The prevalence of the slave traffic in the Native economy in later years is reflected in the tendency for Native people to treat as slaves Europeans who were shipwrecked or otherwise found themselves in Native custody.

Company officials may have refused to enter the Native slave trade on the North West Coast but as individuals some of them bought and kept slaves, even with the impending ban

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69 Imperial emancipation of slaves occurred in 1834, and in 1835 the company drew up its own "Regulations for Promoting Moral and Religious Improvement" in its Indian dealings. See MacKay, The Honourable Company, pp. 408-9.

70 Tolmie, Journals, p. 313 (29 June 1834, Fort McLoughlin).

71 From Slacum’s 1837 report, quoted in Merk, Fur Trade and Empire, p. 355.


73 Ibid., p. 288. For a description of slavery at Fort Taku see Douglas to McLoughlin, 1 October 1840, HBCA B.223/b/28, fo. 91.

74 e.g. Susan Sturgis incident, and John Jewitt earlier.
on slavery in the British Empire. Slaves owned by company officials appear to have
performed explicit services such as hunting and agricultural labour. "Mr Manson purchased
a man slave from the Weetletook about a fortnight ago," Tolmie noted in his private Fort
McLoughlin journal in 1834; "The price paid was 10 R. B. Blankets 3 1/2 pt, 1/4 Gal:
Gunpowder, 50 balls, 20 leaves tobacco, 1 Pint Pot 2nd hand, 3 Gals Mixed Rum, 1 Trading
Gun-much worn. The slave named Tom was employed with the people and occasionally in
hunting." Nonetheless company officials tried unsuccessfully to ban slavery in a Native
world where slavery and slave labour were prevalent. Imperial emancipation of slaves took
place in 1834; in 1836, McLoughlin fired Mr Pisk Kipling for keeping eleven slaves at Fort
George: he had paid five blankets for Chief Mossona's wife, and McLoughlin concluded that
Kipling must have been drinking. In 1838 James Douglas attempted to ban slavery at Fort
Vancouver, and as late as the 1850s he vowed to abolish slavery within colonial limits.

Fur traders' high-caste wives probably came with a retinue of slaves, and it seems
clear that slavery was tolerated, at least initially, by company officials because (as Tolmie
noted) some Native people considered certain kinds of work as slaves' work. If so, this may

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75 Tolmie, Journals, p. 310 (28 May 1834, Fort McLoughlin).

76 McLoughlin to Dunn, 11 September 1835, HBCA B.223/b/11, fo. 45. Chief Mossona's wife was not the only woman bought by a fur trader: Paul Kane related that Mr McDougall of the Pacific Fur Company at Astoria had paid ten guns, ten blankets, ten knives, ten hatchets, and other trade goods for the unnamed daughter of a chief. Later she married Chief Casanov. Kane, Wanderings, p. 121.

77 HBRS 4, pp. 237-238. For slavery at forts George and Langley see Douglas to Birnie, 6 August 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 23d; Douglas to Yale, 21 November 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 38; Douglas to Yale, 10 May 1839, HBCA B.223/b/24, fo. 14d.

78 "Remember. The moral renovation of the place. Abolition of slavery within our limits. Lay down a principle and act upon it with confidence. To build a Church of Christ in this place." James Douglas, [c. 1852], in Douglas Scrapbook, n.d., BCARS.
be another example of adaptation to regional economic conditions. Gibson equates slaves with "food producers."\textsuperscript{79} Hunting may not always have been a high-status occupation, and tilling the soil certainly was not. For example Scouler, in 1825, noted that the Chinook people of the lower Columbia refused to grow potatoes because "it was the work of slaves to cultivate the ground."\textsuperscript{80} This suggests that the gathering and preparation of camas—the equivalent of potatoes in pre-contact times—was also the work of slaves; it was in any event the work of women. If so, at first the company may have relied on slave labour on its farms. This possibility is borne out by McLoughlin's response to an American senator, Caleb Cushing, who in 1845 accused him of keeping slaves at Fort Vancouver. McLoughlin stated that John Dougald Cameron had liberated Fort George's slaves in the early 1820s, but he admitted that subsequently:

\begin{quote}
I did not make the Servants Wives send their slaves away but availed myself of every opportunity to make them work, & pay them as other Indians. The consequence is, that our ploughing & harrowing is principally done by Indians and several of these Indians have claimed their liberty. . . .\textsuperscript{81}
\end{quote}

Fur, provisions, labour, slaves, and women may have been bartered to the company for various reasons, but little of the Native peoples' material culture (even non-perishable items of stone) apparently found its way permanently into company posts. Regarding the excavation of Fort Vancouver, Caywood wrote that "Not a thing of Indian manufacture was

\textsuperscript{79}Gibson, \textit{Otter Skins}, p. 173.


\textsuperscript{81}John McLoughlin, "Remarks upon Mr Cushings Report. . . . " n.b., (c.1845) in HBRS 7, p. 275.
found in connection with the excavation." Over 10,000 objects of European manufacture, by contrast, were excavated.  

Increased trade, exchange, labour, and other economic contact between the company and Native people leads directly to the question of their impact on Native cultures. Historians of other fur trade regions have documented the considerable demographic, territorial, and social changes caused by the traders' activities, and there is no reason to think the west coast was immune to the forces of change. The broader subject of cultural change due to contact will not be broached here beyond a few empirical observations; the sources allow a few cautious comments to be made. First, the fur traders introduced diseases that had a devastating effect on Native mortality. Second, the company's demand (especially its initial demand, before the emergence of diverse export trades) for rather limited coastal supplies of beaver may have intensified the hunting activities of these apparently "indolent," sea-dependent people. Third, as discussed above, the extension of the company's business to the entire region west of the Rockies resulted in the demise of

82Caywood, "Excavating Fort Vancouver," pp. 4-7.
83e.g. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, pp. 94-231.
84Fisher accurately shows what was, by and large, a mutually beneficial trading relationship in the fur trade era, but does not begin to access the deeper economic and cultural changes produced by contact. Fisher, Contact and Conflict.
85Some of the conclusions reached here with repect to changes caused by the land-based fur trade resemble those reached by Gibson in his analysis of the maritime fur trade (Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 233-9, 267-78). Conclusions presented below, unless referenced otherwise, were reached independently.
86See Gibson, "Smallpox on the Northwest Coast;" Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 238, 272-7.
87Chief Kakalatza of Somenos told naturalist Robert Brown in 1864 that his father used to hunt beaver at Lake Cowichan, but only "when the King Georges wore beaver hat[,] and skin was worth trading at Fort Langley to Mr Yale." Hayman, Robert Brown and the Vancouver Island Exploring Expedition, pp. 47; 64.
Native forms of currency and exchange like haiqua and slaves and the introduction of blankets and other trade goods, and eventually money. Fourth, the company had the ability to cause fundamental change in Native economies through specific commercial activities: by post construction, by labour demands in the provision, fur, and export trades, by the introduction of trade goods including firearms, by the spread of disease, and by the infiltration of the region by transport systems.88

The company had the great advantage over the diverse cultures of the Columbia Department in that its centralised administration and effective transport allowed it to gauge the economic demands of linguistically and culturally distinct Native cultures occupying a vast area. The company’s brigade, express canoe, and steamship communication systems allowed the rapid transmission of information regarding Native trade demands and the actual movement of commodities themselves. For example, the company obtained tens of thousands of haiqua shells in the Gulf of Georgia region and transported them cheaply on the Beaver to the entire coast, or on its brigades to places as distant as the Yukon River, where the shells were very valuable.

The company’s activities, wittingly or unwittingly, provoked changes in Native economies and societies. The sources reveal Native cultures in a constant state of flux and apparent turmoil, some of which must have resulted from the company’s wholesale invasion of the culture areas of the Northwest Coast and Plateau peoples.

Company officials were quite confident in their ability to interfere with, disrupt, or monopolize existing Native trade routes. After all, by the early nineteenth century company

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88On the effect of some of these factors on the south coast see Maclachlan, "The Founding of Fort Langley," pp. 20-28; for examples of internecine warfare on the North West Coast see Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 173-4.
officials had been dealing, with varying degrees of success, with Native trading competition east of the Rockies for 150 years. An example is the company’s policy on the entire Pacific coast after 1821 of stemming, or attempting to stem, the natural riverine east-west "drift" of interior fur to the coast by the construction of coastal posts and the establishment of a shipping department aligned on a north-south axis and directed ultimately to the London fur market. After 1831, at Fort Simpson, the company first eliminated American trading competition and then reduced the price of coastal pelts to match those in the interior, thus making it less profitable for Native traders to send fur to the coast. In 1836 Duncan Finlayson believed that the Beaver, by its regular coastal traffic, would prevent a good deal of Native trade. "On the whole," he wrote, "she will give the most effectual blow to the [American] opposition which they have ever met with on the Coast, and will also lessen in a great measure the traffic carried on amongst the natives themselves." By 1843 the whole region had been divided into districts connected by company and Native forms of transport (steam, sail, canoe) all imposed and accepted quite amicably.

The arrival of the Beaver and the construction of posts led to the favouring of homeguard Indians over their neighbours with resulting jealousy, competition, and warfare. The company’s coastal fur trade favoured certain outer coast groups, like the Sebassa, whose trading stations happened to be in the path of the Beaver. Disease, trading preference,


90 Finlayson to McLoughlin, 29 September 1836, HBCA B.223/b/12, fos 17d-23d; also HBRS 4.

91 Mitchell, "Sebassa’s Men." Gibson writes that new wealth "could be acquired not only by hereditary clan chiefs but also by skilful individual hunters" who became a nouveau riche.
and warfare may have produced greater mobility within the ranking system, and may at the same time have left dangerous gaps in it.

Of course, the very existence of a fur trade influenced Native economy and society. Often Native people wanted the company to establish posts among them, perhaps in order to reap the trading advantage of having a post in their territory. Anderson wrote that trading posts were "the source of comparative affluence"92 for the people among whom they were set, perhaps because it gave them an initial (at least) trading advantage over their neighbours. Great disruption could result. For example, in the late 1830s hostilities broke out between the people of Puget Sound and those of the Gulf of Georgia. This inner coastal world had been largely ignored by the maritime fur traders, and the cause of these hostilities is not given in the correspondence, but it is likely that the construction of forts Langley and Nisqually, the introduction of diseases, and the advent of the Beaver, all in the decade after 1827, upset traditional alliances on the coast, exacerbated old rivalries, and created new ones. In 1837, McLoughlin noted that "... it is always to be regretted that any difference should have arisen between the Caw-itch-ins [Cowichan] and Sinnihonish [Snihomish] as besides the injury this does the trade it is sure to lead them to perpetrate hostilities among themselves."93 Such hostilities harmed the fort's trade. "I am sorry to see that your Indian Trade is falling off," McLoughlin wrote a year later to Kittson at Fort Nisqually, "I think this proceeds in a great degree from the dissentions and wars between the different tribes and

Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 270-1. Tsimshian men, Fiske argues, advanced themselves increasingly through their dominance of the fur trade to such an extent that they squeezed women out of their traditional economic activities. Jo-Anne Fiske, "Colonization and the Decline of Women's Status: The Tsimshian Case," Feminist Studies 17:3 (1991), pp. 509-35.


93McLoughlin to Kittson, 20 February 1837, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 135.
we must do our utmost to make peace among themselves. . . ."\textsuperscript{94} New hostilities broke out
the following spring (1838) with the people to the north, and Douglas also saw this as a
threat to Fort Nisqually's trade: "Their time is occupied with plans of defence or revenge,
and amidst the alarms of war the useful pursuits of peace are forgotten, and freedom of
intercourse, so essential to Trade, no longer exists." He sent men to help Kittson form a
trading party to "renew intercourse" and "open a more intimate communication with the
several Tribes attached to your District." It would cost money but it would be worthwhile.
"Select the most powerful leader of each Tribe," he told Kittson, "and as an encouragement
to good conduct, make them understand, that upon certain conditions, they will annually
receive a Clothing, from us."\textsuperscript{95} That fall the warfare worsened when the Ucleta (Yucalta)
swept into Puget Sound from the Gulf. Douglas feared "that the menaces of the turbulent
and merciless Ucletas should have urged the inhabitants of the Sound to abandon their
villages and fly in consternation to the Fort," he urged Kittson to win their confidence and
make peace so that the people of Puget Sound would resume trading at Fort Nisqually. "A
regular intercourse and a more accessible market for their furs will I am confident, increase
the amount of exertion, and . . . rouse the Indians to more active habits, and, train their
energies to useful pursuits."\textsuperscript{96} Douglas's exhortations were in vain, and by 1843 Fort
Nisqually's fur trade was minimal.

\textsuperscript{94} McLoughlin to Kittson, 15 March 1838, HBCA B.223/b/8, fo. 23d.

\textsuperscript{95} Douglas to Kittson, 14 May 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fos. 12-12. See also Douglas to
Kittson, 4 June 1838, Ibid., fos. 13d-14. (no notes on it).

\textsuperscript{96} Douglas to Kittson, 18 September 1838, HBCA B.223/b/22, fo. 28; Douglas to G&C, 18
October 1838, HBRS 4, pp. 261-62. Similar examples of Native warfare exist for most posts
in the Columbia Department after 1821, but the company's effects on the Native world and
Native responses to the company are beyond the scope of this study.
The introduction of the potato produced further changes, less insidious perhaps than others. The cultivation of the potato spread rapidly through the Gulf of Georgia region from Fort Langley after the establishment of the fort in 1827. Potato cultivation may have been introduced directly by the Native people who worked as agricultural labourers at Fort Langley after the early 1830s; it may have been promoted in the Coast Salish area by the example of the aboriginal cultivation of camass. In 1839, for example, Douglas informed the Governor and Committee of the general spread of the potato:

I may be permitted to mention . . . as a matter to interest the friends of our native population, and all who desire to trace the first dawn and early progress of civilization, that the Cowegians around Fort Langley, influenced by the counsel and example of the fort, are beginning to cultivate the soil, many of them having with great perseverance and industry cleared patches of forest land of sufficient extent to plant, each ten bushels of potatoes; the same spirit of enterprize extends, though less generally, to the Gulf of Georgia and de Fuca's straits, where the very novel sight of flourishing fields of potatoes satisfies the missionary visitors that the Honourable Company neither oppose, nor feel indifferent to, the march of improvement.97

Douglas, while reconnoitering the site of Fort Victoria in 1842, observed that "[T]he Indians have many small fields [of potatoes] in cultivation, which appear to repay the labour bestowed upon them. . . ."98

The potato also made its appearance to the north, though in this case its introduction predated the company's arrival.99 On his visit to the Queen Charlotte Islands in July 1825 Scouler noted that "Around Kittegass, the potato is now pretty extensively cultivated, and


98Douglas is quoted in [HBC], "Colonization of Vancouver's Island," 1849, p. 10.

99See Gibson, Otter Skins, pp. 243-6.
they brought us plenty to sell." The Haida, who previously had traded sea otter pelts for European goods, compensated for the disappearance of sea otter by growing and selling potatoes. John Dunn, who was on the coast in the mid 1830s, wrote of the Haida that,

Attached to their houses, most of them have large potatoe gardens: this vegetable was first given to them by an American captain; and is now grown in abundance, and traded by them to the vessels visiting their harbour, and to the traders at Fort Simpson. I have known from five to eight hundred bushels being traded in one season, from these Indians, at Fort Simpson. In May 1835, John Work traded potatoes needed for seed at the fort from the people of or near Laredo Sound. "[T]hese people appear very poor," he wrote, "... for this formerly used to be one of the best places for sea otter on the Coast, but now scarcely any is found among them. They grow considerable of potatoes, they had several patches under cultivation about their village." And McLoughlin wrote to Work that:

I hope every means will be used to increase our intercourse with the Indians of the Queen Charlotte Island, and it will be proper to purchase potatoes and whatever property they may bring to induce them to visit the Establishments more frequently, as we will be eventually the gainer by such a course. The potatoes cost a trifle, and

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100 Scouler, "Account of a Voyage to Madeira, Brazil, Juan Fernandez, and the Gallipagos Islands. . . . (January 1827), pp. 69-70.


provided they are not required at Fort Simpson . . . they may be sent to Stikeen . . .

On the North West Coast, then, the Haida traded potatoes to the company in order to retain access to the company's goods; they and other groups adapted the cultivation and exchange of this new commodity to their economy. Trade in provisions such as potatoes must have provided major points of intersection between the company's and the Native economies, which on large stretches of the coast otherwise operated independently.

The company's records contain a great many examples of changes of all kinds from every corner of the Columbia Department. For example, diversification within the fur trade itself (caused by market factors) may also have affected Native people, for example when the falling demand for beaver pelts in the 1840s led the company to place a greater value on marten skins, which led to massive marten exploitation in New Caledonia. Hammond writes that this "must have had structural and cultural implications for Native Peoples living in New Caledonia. Were depleted family-tenure beaver ponds abandoned in the search for a more valuable and, in the marten's case, more mobile commodity?"

Cultural and regional differences must be taken into account when speculating on the Hudson's Bay Company's impact on the people of the Columbia Department. Furs were, as Innis pointed out, "the chief product suitable to European demands by which the North

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104Ibid. Potatoes traded in this fashion found their way to Fort Stikine. "There is no garden at Stikine," McLoughlin said in 1844, "and the potatoes issued to the men are traded from Indians at Fort Simpson, who bring them from Queen Charlotte's Island." McLoughlin to G&C, 20 November 1844, HBRS 7, p. 48.

105Anderson stated that the Haida potato surplus was used for "bartering abroad for luxuries not otherwise available." Anderson, "Notes on the Indian Tribes," p. 75.

American peoples could procure European goods. But this equation does not apply if those European demands could be met just as effectively by supplying salmon, camas, shellfish, haiqua, timber, shingles, coal, cranberries, or any of the dozens of provisions and commodities traded by Native people to the company on the coast before 1843; it does not apply if a European demand existed for onsite, direct, Native labour, such as in land-clearing, ploughing, harvesting, shingle-making, wood-cutting, coal-mining, and transport. These activities required the direct labour of Native people, as opposed to the invisible labour involved in the hunting of animals and the preparation of pelts. The provision trades, even in the absence of a fur trade, required Native labour. Generalizations about the effect of a "fur trade era" on the coast are of questionable value if they assume the primacy of a trade in fur that was in reality non-existent or unimportant. Direct labour must have had different economic and social results for the groups concerned. Inglis and Haggarty suggest that investigations of the effect of contact should be made at commodity-specific, site-specific, or regional levels owing to the very different economic relations existing at different places on the coast. 

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109 Contact resulted in "immediate and profound changes to economic patterns and to socio-political and settlement patterns for groups at the trading centres. In areas peripheral to this intensive contact changes were likely less radical and the traditional patterns persisted longer. Changes still occurred, however, but as a result of changing relationships with their neighbours." "The historic period was a time of constant disruption to the traditional way of life. Survival was dependent upon redefining group composition and settlement patterns. . . . [research must reflect] the ongoing changes brought about by such factors as population decline, warfare and changing economic pursuits." "[T]he impact of early contact was not uniform along the coast. . . . it is clear from first contact that groups with access to the foreigners made significant changes to traditional patterns to capitalize fully on the wealth of trade. What was happening in these locations [Friendly Cove and Clayoquot Sound] was in many ways unique and cannot
not Fort George in 1813; Cape Flattery in 1835 was not Fort Langley in 1835. There is a real need for spatial, cultural, and temporal sensitivity.110

After 1821, the provision, fur, and export trades of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s regional economy on the Pacific were grafted onto the established and thriving resources, trade, and labour supplies of the Native economies of this large region. Access to these economies contributed significantly to the company’s considerable financial success. The company’s presence produced substantial social and economic change which will be illuminated as post journals and other records are analysed. Everything in the record of the year 1843 suggests that this Native foundation of exchange and labour was only going to get broader, at the same time, of course, as the arrival of skilled European tradesmen and complex industrial machinery signalled the beginnings of a colonial economy.

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110 Appreciation of the regional and internal complexity of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s nineteenth century commercial operations is just as important as an ethnographic sensitivity. There were differences between the company’s operations in Hamilton Inlet, James Bay, Rupert’s land, and the Lower Fraser. "The term ‘fur trade’ is a bit of a misnomer. It suggests a monolithic enterprise, uniform at all times in all parts of the country. Regional studies, such as this one, indicate that this view is too inflexible. In practice there were a number of different fur trades, differing over time depending on economic situations and differing from place to place depending on geography, ecology, and relationships with the Indian people." Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz, Partners in Fur: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay, 1600-1870 (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1983), p. 167.
CHAPTER 11

SIMPSON'S REORGANIZATION:

"BEYOND THE MERE TRAFFIC IN PELTRIES"

If they get the line of 49 our Columbia is dished, what then will become of all the great doings of late years on that side the Mountains.

John Lee Lewes, 1843.¹

As a centre of operations for a general Commerce, such as we now carry on in the Pacific (and I presume there is no intention of abandoning all branches of business except the actual trade in Furs) Fort Victoria is better situated than any point with which I am acquainted.

Peter Skene Ogden, 1852.²

That Lewes's seemingly imponderable question could be answered effectively within a decade by Ogden was testament to the company's commercial achievement on the Pacific in general and to the success of Governor Simpson's policy decisions of 1841-2 in particular. Out of the reorganization imposed by Simpson came a considerable northern realignment of the company's business on the Pacific.

Simpson's third visit concerns this chapter and closes the narrative portion of this thesis. Simpson ordered the total closure and withdrawal of the company's business on land north of Fort Simpson, south of the Columbia River, and in California. For a number of reasons he also made plans to move the Columbia Department Depot from the Columbia River to Vancouver Island, of which commercial considerations, increasing American interest

¹John Lee Lewes to James Hargrave, 1 April 1843, in Glazebrook, Hargrave Correspondence, p. 429.

²Peter Skene Ogden, Memorandum, 2 July 1852, HBCA A.12/6, fos. 120-121d.
in the Columbia, and the possibility of an unfavourable boundary treaty were the most important. To this end, he ordered the development of new resources on southern Vancouver Island and Puget Sound. He wanted to centralize the company's far-flung commercial activities on what was likely to become a British part of the coast, and at the same relocate to a region rich in natural resources and possessing impressive export opportunities. He was pleased with the returns of the Oahu Agency, with its sales of country produce, and he intended to maintain a high level of exports there from the country within the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Thus, while Simpson prepared for the worst political result, he did not for a minute contemplate a commercial alternative to resource development in his restructuring of 1841-42. There is barely a mention of the fur trade of the south coast itself in Simpson's voluminous correspondence of 1841-42, an indication of the extent to which the company on the coast had become a general trading company.

The proposed new depot on Vancouver Island, named Fort Victoria in 1843, was Simpson's inspiration as much as was Fort Vancouver. While Fort Vancouver reflected Simpson's 1824-25 plans for the department, Fort Victoria mirrored his 1841 plans. The fur trades of the Columbia and Fraser drainages figured prominently in 1824-25, which is why Fort Vancouver was built eighty miles from the ocean and beyond the dangerous bar at the river mouth. The fort, terminus of the York Factory Express and of the interior fur brigades, was built near the end of the overland, transcontinental trade route located by the Northwesterns. Fort Vancouver was built on fertile land with the intention that it should provide provisions for much of the coastal operations of the department, which in 1825 were concentrated on the lower Columbia itself.

Fort Victoria, on the other hand, was a Pacific depot, placed conveniently for access to the company's new deep-sea commerce to Oahu, Sitka, and San Francisco, as well as
London. The new post was to be at the heart of a centralized ocean-going commerce, of import and export to Pacific markets. Furs, which as before reached the coast from the interior districts, would be gathered at the new depot for export to London. Like Fort Vancouver, Fort Victoria’s farms promised to provision the coastal posts, though by 1843 Fort Langley’s farm and the stock farms on Puget Sound lessened the urgency that the new depot be self-sufficient or even create an agricultural surplus. When Simpson ordered this move to the north he was confident that his local management was quite capable of running businesses unrelated to the fur trade. On the Columbia and Fraser, McLoughlin, Yale, and their colleagues had devised export trades based on logging, farming, and fishing, and Simpson planned to transfer these skills to a region where the resources, apart from arable land, were more abundant and, owing to the extensive coastline and clear navigation, more accessible than on the Columbia.

Thus, there was no sudden break in 1843 with the founding of Fort Victoria, just as there had been no break in 1825 with the founding of Fort Vancouver. In each instance the company brought to bear on the new region the transferable package of commercial strategies and policies developed by the fur trade to the east of the Rockies; the company also, of course, inherited directly some commercial practices from North West Company operations in the region and, rather vicariously, some from the maritime fur traders. By 1843, of course, the company’s accumulated commercial skill and experience had increased considerably since its arrival on the Columbia in 1821, though the fur trade’s eastern origins were still apparent in a number of ways, such as the fundamentals of its corporate culture
and the demography of its workforce. Lessons learned at Fort Langley before 1843 were just as important as those learned at Fort Vancouver and Puget Sound. The company had adapted to a new environment bearing new resources, to a place inhabited by a different Native population, and to new markets. The company took to the north its "Indian Policy" and what was, after the Americans' disappearance, its language of the "Indian Trade," Chinook.

In 1843, however, the vast coastal region dominated by the company north of the Fraser, including the whole of Vancouver Island, produced only fur for export. The company had accomplished its object of capturing the coastal fur trade from the Americans and Russians, a virtuoso performance of commercial prowess and territorial extension with political implications that transpired to be merely a prelude to heightened commercial activity on the coast. Exports other than furs could not be considered until the coastal fur trade itself was completely in the company’s control. When new exports were contemplated, the company adapted its trade system, experienced personnel, transport routes, and markets to develop these trades and profit its shareholders; the fur trade thus acted as catalyst or motor of later commercial activity. On many parts of the coast north of the Columbia the company had, in its routine business, located important new sources of salmon, timber, agricultural land, and coal. Douglas in 1840 and Simpson in 1841-42 toured the coast with an eye to its commercial potential; these two men managed the changes of the 1840s. Douglas inspected the coast with ideas of extending the company's trade "beyond the mere traffic in peltries,"

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3In 1837 for instance, 218 "Canadian" employees were stationed in the Columbia Department. By contrast, the Northern employed 157, the Montreal employed 132, and the Southern Department only 51 Canadians. ("Memorandum by Edward Roberts, 19 March 1837"). "By ‘Canadians Roberts meant French Canadian employees who might or might not be of mixed blood." Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company, pp. 21, 434 n.25.
and Simpson, fearing an unfavourable boundary settlement, made plans to move the company’s operations to the island lock, stock, and barrel, and to construct a new depot on southern Vancouver Island where the company would duplicate most of the export trades it had established on the Columbia.

The scheme for a new northern depot actually dated to 1821, when the company realised that the territory to the south of the Columbia River was almost certain, Galbraith writes, "to be awarded to the United States in any boundary agreement." With the Columbia as the boundary the company would face immediate American competition from directly across the river, whereas a northern depot on the lower Fraser or within the Strait of Juan de Fuca would be remote from such competition. British hopes of such a Columbia River boundary faded in 1827 with the failure of negotiations between Great Britain and the United States and the decision to prolong indefinitely the joint occupancy provisions of the 1818 convention. In 1828, the Governor and Committee instructed Simpson "to acquire as ample an occupation of the Country and Trade as possible, on the North as well as the South side of the Columbia." The Governor and Committee believed, wrongly as it turned out, that Britain’s chances of the Columbia River becoming the border would be increased if they could demonstrate occupancy of the region to the north of the river. Simpson’s hopes of building a depot on the lower Fraser were dashed with his descent of the river’s treacherous canyon in 1828, but even after proving its impassibility, Simpson retained a belief that Fort

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4 Galbraith, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, p. 82.

5 Ibid., p. 187. The talks had ended by agreeing to continue the joint occupation subject to termination by one year’s notice.

Langley would, he wrote in 1829, "answer the purpose of a Depot, in the event of our being under the necessity of withdrawing from Fort Vancouver:" serious American competition on the Columbia River "would be attended with a ruinous sacrifice of money." This competition did not appear until the early 1840s, and McLoughlin developed flourishing export trades on the Columbia, but the political reasons favouring a northern move grew only more urgent in the 1830s.8

The high-level and drawn-out negotiations leading up to the 1846 treaty tend to obscure commercial developments on the coast. By the 1830s the company had a good idea of the commercial potential of the south coast, and compelling practical and political considerations existed for establishing a depot within the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The country inside the Straits had been regarded as a fine country for settlement since the publication of Vancouver’s voyages. Its resources were known. A depot there would service the operations of the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company as well as the fur trade of the North West Coast and Fort Langley extensive operations. Moreover, the treacherous bar at the mouth of the Columbia River claimed altogether three company vessels,9 and intermittent fever at Fort Vancouver (malaria possibly aggravated by typhus) posed a serious inconvenience to the company’s Columbia River business.10

7Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1829, HBRS 10, p. 41.

8See Galbraith, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, pp. 177-191 for the political background to the Oregon treaty.


In the 1830s the company decided to locate a new depot within the Straits of Juan de Fuca to serve as a replacement to Fort Vancouver. Several sites were considered, including Cowlitz, Whidbey Island, Birch Bay, and Fort Langley. In 1832, Simpson proposed to establish a post at the Cowlitz portage to serve as the "Grand Depot of the Department" because Fort Vancouver was too sickly with the intermittent fever. In August 1833, Francis Heron of Fort Nisqually actively explored Whidbey Island for a depot location. He recounted his journey:

On a voyage of discovery in the Cadboro' last summer, I however found out a most eligible spot, on Whidbey's Island, which is most advantageously situated, between the Gulf of Georgia, Admiralty Inlet, and the Straits of Juan de Fuca—This place, if not chosen for the Grand Depot, is, at all events to answer for this post and Fort Langley.

This plan was abandoned partly because Yale objected to the notion of abandoning Fort Langley and its increasingly important salmon business. In March 1836 he refused to relocate Fort Langley to Whidbey Island because it would have "so injurious an influence on the salmon and fur trade."

Early in 1837 there was heightened interest in London in the Columbia Department because the company's 1821 license for exclusive trade west of Rupert's Land was up for

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11Simpson to G&C, 10 August 1832, HBCA A.12/1, fo. 436.

12Heron to Hargrave, 1 March 1834, Glazebrook, Hargrave Correspondence, p. 137. In August 1833, Tolmie had noted in his diary that "In the after noon Mr. Heron arrived—he had visited Whidbey's Island & Dungeness—at the former he found a plain 5 miles by 2 of excellent soil abounding in Deer but there is no good millstream. At the latter, a plain of 400 acres, tolerable soil with an excellent mill stream, large extent of saltmarsh." 26 August 1833, Tolmie, Journals, p. 229.

13McLoughlin to Yale, 6 March 1836, HBCA B.223/b/18, fo. 22. "More suitable sites for a coastal depot. . . were considered, but to preserve the salmon trade, Dr McLoughlin urged the retention of Langley." Ormsby, British Columbia, p. 73.
renewal. The company sought renewal of its license from the British government, Rich wrote, "not only with the old arguments put forward in 1821, that competition in the fur trade meant ruin and debauchery for the Indians, but also on the ground that the Company intended to develop an agricultural colony around Fort Vancouver. . . . an agricultural settlement could always find support in the Colonial Office." The company wanted to prove to the British government that it had an interest in the disputed region immediately north of the Columbia. The company's negotiations with the Colonial Office were successful; in May 1838 the British government awarded the company a further twenty-one years' exclusive access to the Indian trade west of Rupert's Land.

The arguments put forward by the company show a knowledge of the commercial potential of the Gulf of Georgia-Puget Sound region. Simpson provided the Governor and Committee with much of the information they subsequently presented to the Colonial Office. In February 1837 Simpson, who already feared an unfavourable boundary settlement and wanted to establish a northern depot, summarized the company's commercial achievement on the Pacific as follows:

The fur trade is the principal branch of business at present in the country situated between the Rocky Mtns and the Pacific Ocean. On the banks of the Columbia River, however, where the soil and climate are favourable to cultivation, we are directing our attention to agriculture on a large scale, and there is every prospect that we shall soon be able to establish important branches of export trade from thence in the articles of wool, tallow, hides, tobacco, and grain of various kinds.

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15Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company, p. 196.

16"George Simpson to John Pelly 1837," quoted in Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 75. Similar arguments lay behind the government's decision to permit the HBC to colonise Vancouver Island in 1849. This and the following quotation appear to be from the same letter.
The Country situated between the Northern Bank of the Columbia River, which empties itself into the Pacific in Latitude 46° 20, and the Southern bank of Frazer’s River, which empties itself into the Gulph of Georgia in Latitude 49° is remarkable for the salubrity of its climate, and the excellence of its soil, and possesses within the Straits of De Fuca some of the finest harbours in the world, being protected from the weight of the Pacific by Vancouver’s Island and other Islands. . . . The possession of that Country by Great Britain may become an object of very great importance, and we are strengthening our claims to it (independent of the claims of prior discovery and occupation for the purpose of Indian trade) by forming the nucleus of a Colony thru’ the establishment of farms and settlement of some of our retiring officers and servants as agriculturalists.\footnote{Simpson to J. H. Pelly, 1 February 1837, HBCA A.8/2, fo. 83, in HBCA search file “Columbia District.” The “colonies and settlements” Simpson referred to, somewhat disingenuously, were Nisqually and Cowlitz.}

In the same month, the Governor and Committee recognised these two distinct halves of the company’s Pacific business by proposing to divide its coastal operations in half, immediately, and form a new depot within the Straits of Juan de Fuca or Puget Sound, owing in part to the bar of the Columbia. They wrote:

Besides this principal Depot, we intend that Fort Vancouver should be maintained as a Depot for the business of the Columbia River, New Caledonia, and the Trapping Expeditions, likewise for the business with the Sandwich Islands, and as an Agricultural and Grazing Establishment on a large scale, but to be supplied with Goods from the New Depot, which is to be named Fort Adelaide.\footnote{G&G to Simpson, 15 February 1837, HBCA D.5/4, fos. 237-245d; 238d.}

The south end of the island was likely to remain British in the event even of an unfavourable boundary settlement; it contained good harbours convenient to the trades of the Pacific, North West Coast, and Gulf of Georgia; and the department’s furs would be sent from the new depot to England.\footnote{Ibid.} McLoughlin, who earlier had failed to report to the
Governor and Committee on the potential of the Whidbey Island depot, did nothing about building the new northern depot until Simpson’s visit of 1841-42. His activity was limited to instructing Captain McNeill of the Beaver, in December 1836, to examine the "south end of Vancouver’s Island for the purpose of selecting a convenient situation for an Establishment on a large scale, possessing all the requisites for farming rearing of cattle together with a good harbour and abundance of timber, in short combining every advantage which is desirable such a situation should finish."

In 1837, McNeill found "an excellent harbour and a fine open country well adapted for both tillage and pasturage, but saw no river sufficiently extensive for mills." McLoughlin himself visited the site in 1837. A depot here would serve Fort Langley, the Gulf of Georgia, and the Puget Sound posts.

Simpson’s 1841-42 decision to activate the 1837 plan and build a new depot on Vancouver Island was part of his total restructuring of the company’s business on the Pacific, what Douglas called the "concentration of the trade on the Coast;" namely the centralization of the company’s business in the regions reached through the Strait of Juan de Fuca, southern Vancouver Island, the Gulf of Georgia, Puget Sound, and the Fraser River. In its broad significance it was not unlike the plans Simpson made for the coast before he

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21McLoughlin to Work, 8 December 1836, HBCA B.223/b/15, fo. 117.

22Apparently from Fort Simpson Journal, 10 August 1837, "F.J. Box 660," in HBCA search file "Vancouver Island."


24Douglas to Ross, 12 March 1844, Donald Ross Papers, BCARS. Lamb called it "the reorganization of the trade of the North West Coast in 1841-42" (HBRS 7, p. 167 n 1), and Ormsby referred to "this period of reorganization and readjustment of operations in the Columbia Department." Ormsby, *British Columbia*, p. 84. See also Galbraith, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, pp. 222-224.
discovered the impassibility of the Fraser canyon in 1828. This concentration involved the closure of the company's operations in California, the abandonment of the posts in Russian America, the building of a new depot on Vancouver Island, and the commercial development of a broad range of resources in the Gulf of Georgia and Straits of Juan de Fuca. Thus the company's centre of gravity began to shift from the south to the north. All the major elements of Simpson's reorganization were aimed at restricting the company's extended operations and shifting them to a more northerly point. Simpson prepared for the abandonment of the Columbia River itself by moving the depot to Vancouver Island and strengthening the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company's business in Puget Sound. He feared, rightly as it turned out, that the new international boundary would be drawn in a line westward to a point on Puget Sound or even along the forty-ninth parallel, though publicly he stated (as late as 1843) that the boundary was likely to follow the Columbia, Snake, and Clearwater rivers to the continental divide. In 1841 the Americans were increasingly active on the Columbia River, tenure was still undecided, and the time was ripe for such a move.

Simpson did not share the Columbians' optimism about the commercial prospects of California. In November 1841 he pointed out that the most recent Buenaventura party had "made indifferent hunts, principally within the tide-range from the Bay of San Francisco; on the outlets of the Buenaventura & other streams falling into that Bay; bringing out about 1200 Beaver & Otter," but that the profits on the year's operations were only about £350. This was a very small return in the company's scheme of things. Early in 1842 Simpson

\[^{25}\text{Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 82.}\]

\[^{26}\text{Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBCA D.4/111, fo. 42 (quoted in HBCA search file "Oregon Notes").}\]
visited San Francisco and Monterey and found the fur trade of the Sacramento River and surrounding country "exhausted." Francis Ermatinger told Simpson that beaver on all the rivers falling into San Francisco Bay "were becoming scarce, and he did not think there would be remunerating occupation for a trapping party in that quarter another year. . . ."

Bands of American trappers, Simpson learned, working from the east, had rendered the Rio Colorado "totally destitute of fur bearing animals." Simpson decided to break up the Bonaventura Expedition because no further benefit could arise from continuing trapping in California. Three McLoughlin, however, ignored Simpson's directives and authorized the departure of the Southern Party from Yerba Buena for another two years.

Simpson took a similarly dim view of the new agency in California. Although Douglas and Rae had recently negotiated concessions from the Mexican government, bought property, and set up an agency at Yerba Buena, Simpson had no hesitation in abandoning California. In November 1841 he reported privately to Donald Ross on his plans for the company's business in California:

>T]he consignments sent to . . . California, has commanded higher prices, but upon Credit, & from the rapid decline of the hide trade in that quarter, owing to the greatly reduced Stock of Cattle, I am very doubtful, notwithstanding the flattering reports of prospects, that our operations there will not turn out so profitably as could be wished; of this however, I shall be a better judge on my return. The Doctor & Douglas are

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28 In 1843 the Southern Party "made out miserably," having procured fewer than 650 otter and beaver skins. Rae to Simpson, 27 August 1843, quoted in Simpson to G&C, 24 August 1844, HBCA A.12/2, fos. 337-39; fo. 338. In 1845 the Southern Party was not re-equipped, Simpson said, "as the last collection of furs barely covered the expenses, from which it would appear that, the Country is exhausted." Simpson to G&C, 20 June 1845, HBCA A.12/2 fos. 530-52; fo. 552.
very sanguine of great results . . . I am not however, so much so, & should be very agreeably surprised if we benefit much by those new branches of trade.29

And in March 1842 Simpson reported to the Governor and Committee on the company’s business at Yerba Buena:

[I]n this village the Honourable Company have a small establishment under the charge of Mr Rae, who was sent from the Columbia in the month of June last, with instructions to purchase the premises, and there to open a store or shop, with the view of entering on a new branch of business, in the hide trade of California.

Simpson did not think it would work and wanted to withdraw. He learned that California’s "whole exports or marketable produce" consisted annually of 50-60,000 ox and cow hides and 25-30,000 quintals of tallow. "The only source of commerce that this country at present possesses arises from its numerous herds of black cattle. . . ."30 For such a fine country this was a pathetic output and Simpson ordered the closure of the agency, but due to McLoughlin’s procrastinations the post was not sold until 1846. Simpson’s enthusiasm about the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company did not extend to the company’s California business because by 1841 Simpson realised the tenuous political importance of the company’s northern regions. McLoughlin, by contrast, had no such interest; two of his daughters were in California.

Simpson applied an equally sharp knife to the northern posts. Since the Beaver was doing such a fine job of collecting pelts on the coast, forts Taku, Stikine, and McLoughlin

29Simpson to Donald Ross, 6 November 1841, Ross Papers, BCARS.

30Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1842, HBRS 29, pp. 114, 147.
could be dispensed with despite their productive fur trades.\textsuperscript{31} The vessel's regular visits were enough to engross the fur trade of the coast and keep American traders at bay. Fort Simpson, however, would be maintained as the anchor of the North West Coast fur trade, the only coastal post north of Fort Langley. Moreover, the company had no competition in the interior and it was now safe to intercept interior furs that made their way to the coast. For example, a portion of Fort Stikine's returns came from "the Nahanis" in the interior: "Nearly all the furs collected at this post," Simpson wrote, "which are appropriated by us, are brought from the British interior territory. . . ."\textsuperscript{32}

The closure of these posts and their substitution with the \textit{Beaver} would save £4,000 a year. This vessel could collect the 10,000 otter and beaver skins available annually on the North West Coast. "The trade of the coast, cannot with any hope of making it a profitable business, afford the maintenance of so many establishments as are now occupied for its protection. . . ."\textsuperscript{33} In a sense these posts fell victim to the industrial revolution. The \textit{Beaver}, Simpson wrote, could visit the coast six times a year at "stated periods" which . . . would be conveniently often for the purpose of collecting the trade, and of supplying the Indians, and would be more convenient to the natives generally, than the permanent trading establishments now occupied, which many of the more remote

\textsuperscript{31}Simpson noted that Fort Taku's 1840-41 returns were "about 1400 beaver and otter, besides small furs, yielding a profit of about £1000. . . ." and Fort Stikine's returns amounted "to about 1500 beaver and otter, besides small furs, estimated at about £3000, of which £1500 forms an item of charge, so that the nett profits of the post are about £1500 per annum." Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBRS 29, p. 63-64. John Dunn, concerning the Stikine people, wrote in 1844 that "Furs are numerous amongst them, and of a good quality." Dunn, \textit{History of the Oregon Country}, p. 288. The advent of the \textit{Beaver}, rather than a decline in coastal fur returns (as Gibson suggests), prompted Simpson to close these northern posts. Gibson, \textit{Otter Skins}, p. 82.

\textsuperscript{32}Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBRS 29, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., pp. 67-68.
Indians are unable to visit, in some instances on account of the distance, and in others from an apprehension of difficulty with the home-guards of the different posts, who look on such visits with much jealousy, desirous as they are of having the trade entirely in their own hands, by acting as middlemen between the fort and those distant tribes, in order that they may have the benefit of an agency by the transaction.\(^{34}\)

If the \textit{Beaver} were kept in constant operation, Simpson told McLoughlin, "& if actively employed, she will be found quite equal to all the inland transport work from the depot in the Straits of De Fuca, including Puget Sound and Frasers River, up to Cape Spencer, so that no sailing vessel need ever enter that inland navigation. . . . "\(^{35}\) The vessel was then based at Fort Nisqually.\(^{36}\)

The success of the \textit{Beaver} in navigating the coastal inlets also cut into Fort McLoughlin's returns, Simpson said, and he declared it redundant.\(^{37}\) The post had been formed for the protection of the fur trade "while American opposition existed on the coast," but it "may now with others be abandoned without either loss or inconvenience to the business."\(^{38}\) It was, the Governor and Committee told McLoughlin, a "measure of economy."\(^{39}\) Fort McLoughlin was closed in 1843; Fort Taku was abandoned in the same year, and Fort Stikine was closed in 1849. Some local fur traders were upset with Simpson’s economies and his supreme faith in the efficiency of the \textit{Beaver} to manage the coastal fur

\(^{34}\)Ibid., p. 67.


\(^{36}\)G&C to McLoughlin, 21 December 1842, HBRS 6, p. 301.


\(^{39}\)G&C to McLoughlin, 21 December 1842, HBRS 6, p. 296.
trade. In March 1842, John Tod wrote that "The whole chain of Forts on the Nor. West Coast, which cost such immense sums to establish, but which now may be maintained at a comparatively small expense, are to be abandoned, and the trade there in future carried on by means of a steamer. . . ."\textsuperscript{40}

No post was formed thereafter on the Pacific coast for the fur trade alone. While Simpson was shutting down these fur trading posts on the coast he was opening others intended for general commerce and agricultural production. Simpson's 1841-42 visit marks the dawn of the mid- and late-nineteenth century commercial era on the coast of British Columbia and the beginning of a new economic order. The company's move to Vancouver Island marked the beginning of a new northerly maritime orientation for the Hudson's Bay Company and the company's embarkation on the general commerce of Vancouver Island.

Simpson was pleased with the state of shipping, the new export trades, and the profit of the Oahu agency.\textsuperscript{41} He proposed a new shipping arrangement, in which the two ships the company sent annually to North America—one to York Factory and one to Fort Vancouver—would be supplemented by a third vessel. Two would go to Fort Vancouver in 1842; one in 1843; two in 1844, and so on. Each ship should "stow away a great many goods, I think little short of £18,000 to £20,000 worth of general cargo." The demand for the third ship, Simpson realised, was greater on the west coast. "The extra ship will find full occupation by coming here [Fort Vancouver] again," he wrote, "as I think from the increasing demands of the Russ. Am. Coy, we shall in future require one ship entirely for

\textsuperscript{40}Tod to Hargrave, March 1842, Glazebrook, \textit{Hargrave Correspondence}, p. 371.

\textsuperscript{41}The Governor and Committee were also enthusiastic about sales of Columbia Produce at the Oahu Agency. See G&C to McLoughlin, 21 December 1842, HBRS 6, pp. 298-301.
that concern." This indicates just how active the company's business was becoming north of the Columbia.

He found good reasons (commercial, political, strategic) for wanting to move the depot away from the Columbia River, just as he found good reasons for wanting to move the depot to Vancouver Island. His decision to move the depot to Vancouver Island was, Galbraith concludes, motivated primarily by "commercial consideration" and "economic purpose." A major disadvantage of the Columbia was the bar at the mouth of the river. "I have been informed by Mr Douglas and Mr Finlesson," Nathaniel Wyeth wrote in 1832, "that vessels have laid off the bar 7 weeks before they could enter." Simpson was disgusted with his enforced idleness at the mouth of the river in August 1841. The bar was time-consuming to cross and also highly dangerous. Arriving at Fort Vancouver on 25 August, after a three week wait behind the bar, Simpson told Ross privately that:

At this place I found Commodore Wilkes & the officers of the U. S. discovery Squadron; they had been occupied on this coast & river during the summer in surveying, & lost one of their largest vessels, the Peacock, in crossing the bar;—that bar is the great protection to us in this quarter, as we should have had many a troublesome visitor among us, if it had not existed, & the loss of the Peacock will I think do much good, as it will of course make a conspicuous incident in the narrative which is about to be published. I wish to God, the whole Squadron had been similarly disposed of, if the people had been saved. That bar however, & the difficulties of the navigation of this River, will prevent it from becoming a Settlement of great importance for many years to come.

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42 Simpson to Ross, 6 November 1841, Poss Papers, BCARS. See also Simpson to G&C, 25 November 1841, HBRS 29, p. 87.

43 Galbraith, Hudson's Bay Company, p. 224.

44 Nathaniel Wyeth, Journal, 19 November 1832, in Young, ed., Wyeth Correspondence.

45 Simpson to Ross, 6 November 1841, Donald Ross Papers, BCARS.
Simpson was also very impressed with the potential of the country inside the Stait of Juan de Fuca. There were, he continued, real advantages to the company's northern regions. "The country within the Straits of De Fuca, will in my opinion be settled much earlier, & is altogether a more valuable district, in as much as there is abundance of good soil, the waters absolutely alive with fish (which must become in due time the staple article of trade from this quarter), and accessible at all seasons, whereas the Columbia River is inaccessible for about half the year . . . and the climate so unhealthy, that fully one half the inhabitants are laid up for a portion of the year by Intermittent fever."

By March 1842 Simpson had galvanized these thoughts into a coherent new policy with immense implications, in which the fur trade warranted scarcely a mention. He told the Governor and Committee that his long wait inside Cape Disappointment had reminded him "very forcibly to the importance of a depot being formed for such portion of the Company's business as is more immediately connected with the foreign trade and shipping department, on some eligible part of the coast. . . ." Simpson's important dispatch is quoted at length below because it contains a blueprint for the company's business on the Pacific until 1858. He wrote:

In measure as the natural resources and sources of commerce of the Northern Pacific and its shores and interior country develop themselves, in like measure does it become apparent that we cannot avail ourselves of them advantageously, while entirely dependent on Fort Vancouver as the principal depot; as independent of the dangers of the bar, the time lost in watching opportunities either to get out or in (frequently from a month to six weeks, while three weeks more are are often consumed after crossing the bar, in getting from cape Disappointment up to Fort Vancouver) renders it impossible to calculate with any degree of certainty on the quantum of work that ought to be performed by the shipping, deranging the best laid plans, burdening the different branches of the business with very heavy shipping charges, and depriving us of the means of embarking in other branches of commerce,

46Ibid.
which might be carried on with great advantage, had we a depot eligibly situated on the coast.

The southern end of Vancouver’s Island, forming the northern side of the Straits of de Fuca, appears to me the best situation for such an establishment as is required. From the very superficial examination that has been made, it is ascertained that there are several good harbours in that neighbourhood: no place, however, has yet been found, combining all the advantages required, the most important of which are, a safe and accessible harbour, well situated for defence, with waterpower for grist and saw mills; abundance of timber for house construction and exportation; and the adjacent country well adapted for tillage and pasture farms on an extensive scale. I had not an opportunity of landing on the southern end of the island, but from the distant view we had of it in passing between Puget Sound and the Gulf of Georgia, and the report of Chief Factor McLoughlin and others who have been there, we have every reason to believe there will be no difficulty in finding an eligible situation in that quarter for the establishments in question.47

And he continued that this plan would negate the worst possible outcome in the political negotiations about to take place between the British and American governments:

Independent of the reasons already given for establishing another depot, there are two which occur to me of much importance; the one is that the proximity to Fort Vancouver of the Willamette Settlement, composed as the majority of its inhabitants is, of worthless and lawless characters of every description from the United States, is productive of well grounded alarm for the safety of the valuable property deposited there, rendering it highly expedient to lessen the risk by separating it between two depots. The other reason is, that in the final adjustment of the boundary question, it is more than probable that a line drawn through the Straits of de Fuca till it strikes the mainland south of Whidbey’s Island, will become the coast boundary between Great Britain and the United States, in the Northern Pacific. I say so, because I am of opinion the Government of the United States will insist on having a port on the North West Coast, and that Great Britain will, for the sake of peace, accept the Straits of de Fuca as a boundary on the coast, and thereby give up Puget Sound and Hoods Canal, together with the country situated between those inlets and the lower parts of the Columbia. In that case, I presume the line would be continued from the southern end of Whidbey’s Island, in an easterly direction, till it struck Lewis [Snake] River, and following up that river till it struck the Rocky Mountains. It is exceedingly desirable, however, for the British interest in this quarter and for the national honour, that Her Majesty’s Government should not submit to such degrading conditions; but I think it is nevertheless well to be prepared for the worst, and under all circumstances I am of opinion that another depot should be established with the least possible delay, and that

on the southern end of Vancouver's Island, such establishment to be the depot of the coast, and Fort Vancouver that for the interior of the Columbia, including New Caledonia, and for any trapping parties it may be advisable to maintain.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 107-08.}

Simpson's new plan extended from the general to the specific. It is hard not to see Douglas's influence behind several of Simpson's specific recommendations. Douglas had already spent a season—the summer of 1840—exploring the coast with its larger commercial potential in view; McLoughlin, by contrast, was content to stay put on the Columbia. In the summer of 1843 Douglas would be given the responsibility of putting the new plan into effect.\footnote{Douglas to Ross, 12 March 1844, Donald Ross Papers, BCARS. "You have however the advantage of having Mr Douglas for a correspondent," Ogden once told Donald Ross of Norway House; "he writes a plain legible hand and will give you more news and information in one line than I can give in a sheet." Ogden to Ross, 10 March 1848, Ibid.}

There were two branches of trade, Simpson wrote, which in his opinion could be carried on with "great advantage" from the new depot: salmon-fishing and whaling:

Immense shoals of salmon and of very superior quality, are to be found periodically between the mainland and the shores of Vancouvers Island; and as the demand for that fish is increasing and promises to become very great, ... I think the salmon fisheries of this coast are highly deserving of attention, as a growing and almost inexhaustible source of trade.\footnote{Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1842, HBRS 29, p. 109.}

Simpson devised an incredible plan to tow a lighter (a barge) of 100 to 150 tons behind the Beaver down the entire length of coast between Cape Spencer and the new depot, stopping to trade salmon among the "Comoues, the Quakeeolths, the Newettees and other tribes who give their attention to fishery." In this way the fur and salmon trades of the coast could be

\textit{\textsuperscript{Ibid.}}
secured cheaply and in one fell swoop. The plan was abandoned owing to the lack of proper lumber for such a vessel, the expense of copper plating, and the fear of shipworm. Spoilage would also have been a factor.

He was most interested in the new depot’s potential as a whaling centre. Whale oil, in its distilled form of benzene, was used in lighting London streets. It was dense and valuable and easily stowed. Simpson conceived an ambitious whaling plan on his 1841-42 visit. He learned of a visit to the coast by a French whaler, and in March 1842, characteristically spoke of the importance of whaling and whale products as provisions in the Native economies of the coast. It would not have been the first Native provision co-opted for the company’s export trades:

With regard to the whale fishery of the North West Coast, my attention was first directed to that branch of commerce while on my visit of inspection of the northern establishments last autumn. At each of those establishments, I saw sperm and black oil in small quantities, which had been traded from the Indians, who occasionally killed, and frequently found, dead whales in the channels and inlets of the coast, and who represented those animals as being exceedingly numerous. For many years it has been known that whales were very numerous about the Straits of de Fuca and in the Gulf of Georgia, and that the Indians of Cape Flattery and the Straits of de Fuca were expert, even with their bone lances, grass lines, and other rude implements of their own manufacture, in killing them, the flesh or blubber being with them a favourite article of food, and the oil an article of trade or barter with the interior tribes

At first, Simpson proposed to hire one Captain Hoyer, the master of a whaler outfitted from Oahu, who was "not unwilling" to enter the company’s service. Hoyer believed that Right Whales (Balaena mysticetus) bred "somewhere in the bays along the

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51 Ibid.

52 G&C to McLoughlin, 21 December 1842, HBRS 6, p. 296; see also p. 331.

53 Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1842, HBRS 29, pp. 109-10. On Native whaling see Kane, Wanderings, pp. 147; 160.
North West Coast; these bays, however, have not as yet been discovered, but in his opinion, they must be inside Vancouver’s Island, or some of the inlets and channels in that vicinity."

Simpson believed that a post in the Straits of de Fuca would be "admirably adapted for prosecuting that branch of business with every prospect of success," and he proposed that the company buy a fast sailing vessel of from 250 to 300 tons. "I think so well of this branch of business," he concluded, "that although perfectly sensible our engagements in this quarter are become so mutifarious and complex as to be difficult of management, I cannot help recommending it. . . ." 54 His plan is reminiscent of Douglas’s sea otter contract of the previous decade with Captain Bancroft.

A few months later, however, Simpson abandoned his scheme to buy a whaling ship after learning that whales lived on the inside passages where sailing vessels could not navigate. Instead, he told McLoughlin, he wanted "a few active experienced Harpooners and other Whale Fishers, to form part of the Crew of the Steamer" as well as two fast whaleboats. The Beaver should take a lighter in tow for the transport of bulky goods that could not be taken on board conveniently; he proposed, then, to combine whaling "with the transport & other Country duties, merely directing their attention to the fishery as they fell in with Whales in passing up & down the Coast." 55 He believed that a sufficient quantity of oil could always be collected in this way to fill up the English ship until other cargoes were available. Finally, such a scheme would "not involve any outlay of capital nor direct attention from the other important branches of business." 56 This scheme was not acted on,


55Simpson to McLoughlin, 18 May 1842, HBRS 6, p. 289.

56Simpson to G&C, 6 July 1842, HBRS 29, p. 166.
though whale oil from Cape Flattery and the west coast of Vancouver Island came to Fort Victoria in increasing quantities through the Native trade after 1843.\(^{57}\)

Simpson proposed that the company open a sawmill on Vancouver Island. In December 1842 the Governor and Committee, in response, suggested that the grist and saw mills sent out by the *Vancouver* be erected "near the new depot at Vancouver's Island" if a favourable location existed for them, because they were more urgently required there than at Willamette Falls, their original destination.\(^{58}\) In June 1843 Simpson told the Governor and Committee that "There is a good deal of valuable timber in the neighbourhood" of Fort Victoria.\(^{59}\) The sawmill in question was known as the Abernethy Mill, made in Aberdeen by Abernethy & Co. in 1841 as a flour or barley mill for the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company.\(^{60}\) It was transferred from the agricultural company to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1843\(^{61}\) with the plan that it would be erected at Willamette Falls. Simpson ordered that the mill be set up at Victoria in 1843, but McLoughlin ignored him.\(^{62}\) In June 1844 Simpson wrote to McLoughlin as follows:

\(^{57}\)See Fur Trade Returns: Columbia District and New Caledonia 1825-1857, BCARS; HBCA A.53/1; Fort Vancouver Account Book, 1836-1860, HBCA B.223/d/212.

\(^{58}\)G&C to McLoughlin, 21 December 1842, HBR 6, p. 297.

\(^{59}\)Simpson to G&C, 21 June 1843, HBCA A.12/2, fo. 171.

\(^{60}\)It was described in 1841 as "a flour and barley Mill with Patent dressing Machine and every thing requisite." HBCA Search file, "Oregon," ("Abernethy's Mill").

\(^{61}\)McLoughlin wrote that "The country is not sufficiently advanced to require so complete an article of the kind." McLoughlin to Pelly, Colvile, and Simpson, October 1842, quoted in Search file "Abernethy's Mill."

\(^{62}\)"As it was not set up last year at Fort Victoria, as suggested in some of my former communications to C. F. McLoughlin, it is to be regretted it was not erected at the Willamette Falls. . . . The want of lime is represented as an obstacle to its being put up at the Willamette Falls, but that could easily have been removed by getting shells as ballast from the Sandwich Islands or California." Simpson to G&C, 20 June 1844, HBCA A.12/2, fo. 374.
We understand from the report of Mr C. F. Douglas that there is a good situation for a tide mill at Camosun Arm, and if there be sufficient timber in the neighbourhood to form an export in that article, we think the mill in question ought to be erected there.

Simpson left it up to the local management to move the mill to Fort Victoria, Fort Nisqually, or even Fort Simpson, but a mill was not actually opened at Fort Victoria until 1849. Simpson was aware that the general direction of his restructuring would not appeal to McLoughlin, who had devoted his life's work to the company's Columbia business; who had been as far north as Fort Langley only twice and had never visited the North West Coast; whose private business interests intersected increasingly with those of the incoming American settlers; and who still believed the Columbia River might form the international border. McLoughlin fought tenaciously, but in vain, to convince the Governor and Committee to ignore Simpson's proposals. Two days after writing officially to the Governor and Committee with his plans for the abandonment of the Californian business and the North West Coast posts, Simpson wrote privately to Chief Factor Donald Ross, referring him to the public correspondence:

From that correspondence you will see that some branches of the business promise well, while others which afforded great expectations, would if persevered in, been productive of more harm than good; & notwithstanding all my good feelings toward the Doctor, you will notice that I have not overlarded him or his management with praise. The fact is, I am not quite clear that the business is managed in the best


65 This is the theme of HBRS 7.
possible way, owing more to the want of system than a want of energy; and perhaps our engagements are rather too complicated & multifarious for the habits of business of our management.66

A draft of Ross's response of August 1842 has survived. In this revealing letter Ross referred with admiration to the "sweeping nature" of Simpson's changes. "As for the California business" he wrote, "I think it was a wise move to shut it up at once, even at a considerable sacrifice,— the Fur Trade is our proper business and I fear we shall never do much good in any other." This is a curious statement, given Simpson's plans for the Strait of Juan de Fuca region, and it suggests that Ross was unaware of the full range of Simpson's plans. "The Doctor is a proud and pompous man," he continued, "somewhat vain in his own parts as a man of business. . . ."67 "We now see that we had too many Irons in the fire, some of which have been over heated, and rendered useless," John Lee Lewes of Mackenzie River wrote in April 1843.68

All the elements of the company's commercial and Indian policies were brought to bear on this first European settlement on Vancouver Island since the abandonment of the Spanish garrison at Nootka in 1795. The new depot was built at a place known to the Songhees people as Camosun or Camosack, or Ku-sing-ay-lass, which Joe McKay translated as "the place of the strong fibre." On what is now downtown Victoria grew willow trees, the inner bark of which, McKay wrote, was used "for strapping stones for sinkers in deep-

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66 Simpson (Honolulu) to Ross, 12 March 1842, Donald Ross Papers, BCARS.
67 Ross to Simpson (draft), 15 August 1842, Donald Ross Papers, BCARS.
68 John Lee Lewes to Hargrave, 1 April 1843, in Glazebrook, Hargrave Correspondence, p. 429.
sea fishing." On 16 March 1843, James Douglas recorded this initial construction in his journal:

The weather is clear and warm. The gooseberry bushes growing in the woods beginning to bud . . . . Put 6 men to dig a well and 6 others to square building material. Spoke to the Samose [Songhees] to-day and informed them of our intention of building in this place which appeared to please them very much and they immediately offered their services in procuring pickets for the establishment, an offer which I gladly accepted, and promised to pay them a Blanket for every forty pickets of 22 feet by 36 inches which they bring.70

Three days later, 1,200 Native people were baptised by the Oblate Missionary, Father Bolduc, in Douglas's presence, on the fort site.71 After ten weeks the pickets were up, lumber prepared, and construction of the fort buildings under way. On 5 June 1843 clerks Charles Ross, Roderick Finlayson, Thomas Lowe and a large group of company and Native labourers "Commenced laying the foundation for the future Emporium of the Columbia."

"The Fort is a quadrangle of 330 by 300 ft," Charles Ross wrote a few months later; "The Buildings, exclusive of Bastions, are to be eight in number—of large dimensions, measuring 60 by 40 & 30 ft with 17 ft. Posts & Pavilion Roofs. . . ." "The Country is, so far as regards climate & scenery, the finest I have ever seen."72


70Personal communication, John Adams, 1993.

71A. G. Morice, History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada, 1659-1895, pp. 292-293.

72Charles Ross to Hargrave, 10 January 1844, Hargrave Papers, NAC. Resolution: "That the new Establishment to be formed on the Straits de Fuca to be named Fort Victoria be erected on a scale sufficiently extensive to answer the purpose of the Depot; the square of the Fort to be not less than 150 yards; . . . " Minutes of Council 1843, in Oliver, The Canadian North-West, Vol 2, p. 862. See also W. Kaye Lamb, "The Founding of Fort Victoria," BCHQ 7
Imposing as it was, this fort was placed in the thick of a Native world. Victoria harbour was chosen as fort site over the superior harbour at Esquimalt because, McKay's daughter recalled, "Camosun was more convenient for the Indians to beach their canoes." This was to be a commercial establishment, the centre of extensive provision trades with Native people. "The natives of the surrounding country," Walbran wrote, "known as the Songhies tribe, then resided at what is known as Cadboro Bay, but seeing the advantage of being near the white men they removed from their old home to the vicinity of the fort." Until the 1880s Native people would outnumber non-Natives on Vancouver Island.

The fort was visited by many Native groups. In 1847, for example, artist Paul Kane met the "Clallums," who he described as the home Indians, the "Eus-a-nich," the "Sinahomas," and the "Cowitchans," the last two from the Gulf of Georgia. These people relied on the sea for much of their sustenance. Kane, in 1847, wrote that "[T]hey have salmon, cod, sturgeon, and other excellent fish in great abundance." A magnificent halibut bank lay off the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The means of living at the new post, Simpson said in 1844, were "abundant, say fish, venison, domestic cattle & agricultural produce."
Victoria possessed other attractions. "The place itself appears a perfect 'Eden' in the midst of the dreary wilderness of the North west coast," Douglas wrote in 1843, "and so different is its general aspect from the wooded, rugged regions around, that one might be pardoned for supposing it had dropped from the clouds into its present position." Simpson regarded it as "a very Elysium in point of climate and scenery." The southern end of the island, exposed to the Pacific Ocean, got less rain, fewer mosquitoes, and more sunshine than the mountainous and cloud-locked mainland. Adam Dundas, a Royal Navy officer who visited Victoria in 1848, commented that "Though fever and ague are very prevalent on the Main land yet from the absence of low and marshy ground they are unknown here."

Significantly, Simpson and other fur traders never regarded the fur trade of the island as an object of notice. "I do not expect," Simpson wrote in 1842 regarding the proposed new post, "that any material benefit, as regards an increase of returns in the article of furs, will arise from this establishment. . . ." The Natives around the new post, Simpson reported two years later, were friendly "but as yet, judging from the quantity of furs brought in, it does not appear they are very active either as hunters or traders, or that their country is rich in that way." In the post's first year of operation, only 400 beaver and land-otter skins

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79 Douglas to Hargrave, 5 February 1843, Hargrave Papers, NAC.
80 Simpson to Charles Ross, 20 June 1844, quoted in Ormsby, British Columbia, p. 85.
81 Adam Dundas to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 May 1848, in Papers Relating to the Colonization of Vancouver Island, p. 49.
82 Simpson to G&C, 1 March 1842, HBRS 29, pp. 111-12.
were collected. Charles Ross, wrote to a friend on Hudson Bay that "We have got very few skins since our arrival, and it is not likely that this will ever become a lucrative Post in that ilk." James Douglas, at the end of the decade, observed drily that Fort Victoria "is not very productive in furs," and a Royal Navy officer visiting Victoria in 1848 learned from company officials that beaver had "hardly any value now."

These impressions are supported by modern zoological studies. Many valuable mainland species including fox, lynx, fisher, and badger do not live on Vancouver Island. The mild climate made it possible for the Native people to wear cedar bark clothing, not animal pelts, and to go barefoot year round. Paul Kane, who spent two months at Fort Victoria in 1847, observed that Native men wore no clothing at all in the summer, and nothing but a cedar bark shawl or an English blanket in the winter. "The women wear only an apron of twisted cedar-bark shreds, tied round the waste and hanging down in front only, almost to the knees."

The Victoria region contained more than enough agricultural land to maintain a fur trade post, though Fort Victoria's farm did not approach Fort Vancouver's in size or quality. Simpson wrote of "a range of prairie" between six and nine miles square "extending as far as

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84 Charles Ross to Simpson, cited in Ormsby, British Columbia, p. 85.

85 Charles Ross to Hargrave, 10 January 1844, Hargrave Papers, NAC.


89 Kane, Wanderings, p. 145. See also Swan, The North-West Coast, p. 155 on the ubiquity of cedar-bark clothing.
Port Gonzalo, well adapted for tillage & pasture.* The Beaver brought horses and wild Spanish cattle from Fort Nisqually to the new post in October 1843, and by the end of the year five acres had been seeded to wheat. 91 Berthold Seemann, the naturalist on board H. M. S. Herald, which visited the post in July 1846, reported as follows:

We were astonished at what we saw. About 160 acres are cultivated with oats, wheat, potatoes, turnips, carrots, and other vegetables, and every day more land is converted into fields. Barely three years had elapsed since the settlement was made, yet all the necessaries and most of the comforts of civilized life already existed in what was a wilderness. The company, when forming an establishment such as Victoria, provide the party with food for the first year and necessary seed for the forthcoming season; after that time it is expected that the settlements will provide completely for their future subsistence. 92

Intended as the new depot, the first vessel arrived at Fort Victoria, direct from London, in the spring of 1845, 93 but the first shipment of Columbia department fur returns from Victoria was not made until 10 December 1846, when the Vancouver left for London. 94

In 1843, then, with the founding of Fort Victoria, the centre of gravity of the company's operations began to shift. The new post combined with the provision posts at Langley and Nisqually constituted the basis of a new regional economy. The region already exported salmon and foodstuffs, while the coastal fur trade had reached its maximum limit.

90Simpson to G&C, 21 June 1843, HBCA A.12/2, fo. 171.
91Ormsby, British Columbia, p. 85.
With the founding of Fort Victoria and the establishment of export trades there, the move of British commercial capital to the north had started in earnest. The company’s Columbia business may, as Lewes feared, have been dished by the Oregon Treaty, but the rest of the coast remained at the company’s disposal.

It was just as well that Simpson ordered this move to a resource-rich northern region bearing an excellent commercial opportunity because in the 1830s the fur trade of the whole continent began to decline. Columbia Department profits levelled off in the late 1830s and early 1840s (table 6). This was despite the fact that it was only during Simpson’s regime that such regions as the Mackenzie, Yukon, Columbia, and Fraser watersheds, and the Pacific coast, first came fully under the company’s control, bringing profitable new fur-bearing districts with them. From the middle of the nineteenth century, Rich concluded, "fur returns from the main areas of the Company’s territories steadily declined."97

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95 Innis noted a "constant decline in the supply of valuable furs in the more southern districts" between 1821 and 1869. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 332. "The fur trade was rapidly fading from a mainstay of the economy of not only the Oregon Country but all of British North America as well;" beaver returns from the Columbia District declined drastically between 1826 and 1846: Gibson, Farming the Frontier, pp. 200, 202; see also Otter Skins, pp. 82-3. See also Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, pp. 117-123; Francis and Morantz, Partners in Fur, pp. 130-131; Hammond, "Marketing Wildlife," pp. 18-23; on the depletion of beaver in the petit nord see Victor P. Lytwyn, "Transportation in the Petit Nord," in Harris, ed., Historical Atlas, plate 63; on the decline in the beaver trade in the Columbia Department between 1825 and 1855 see Robert M. Galois and Arthur J. Ray, "The Fur Trade in the Cordillera, 1821-1857," in Historical Atlas of Canada (Plate 16, Vol 2, forthcoming).

96 "The bulk [of returns] was maintained by the Columbia trade and its satellites in the Snake Country and New Caledonia, and in part by Mackenzie River." "It was of course true that, each in its sphere, Mackenzie River and the Columbia Department were the most fruitful of the Company’s territories. But that only made it the more of a handicap that they suffered from such delays in transport." Rich, HBC, Vol. 3, pp. 495-497.

The decline was due in part to a growing scarcity of furs right across the continent. Innis estimated the aboriginal beaver population of North America at ten million, a large resource in an enormous area but a diminishing resource all the same.98 Beginning in the late 1830s the company's dividends began to decline, which had a negative effect on morale. "The Fur Trade," John Tod wrote in 1843, "evidently is declining in all quarters. . . . This is a subject that no doubt admits of some grave commentary, but it is too gloomy to be dwelt upon, altho' at times I cannot avoid a furtive glance into futurity, and wonder what eventually is to become of many worthy men. . . ."99 Around the same time Duncan Finlayson wrote that "the profits of the Fur Trade will, now, be so very small, that I am very seriously looking out for something else, to which I might turn my attention, as I am afraid it will scarcely be worth the trouble and anxiety it causes those who are engaged therein."100 Donald Ross, one of Simpson's most senior colleagues, recommended in 1848 that the company sell or relinquish to the British government all its territories and exclusive trade rights rather than "continue to hold them on their present rather precarious footing," and in the same year John Lee Lewes of Fort Edmonton referred to "the funeral knell that has been tolling in the west regarding the fur trade." "The fur trade will only be a thing that

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98 Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 4.

99 Tod [Thompson's River] to Hargrave, 15 March 1843, in Glazebrook, Hargrave Correspondence, pp. 422-23.

100 Duncan Finlayson to Donald Ross (private), 16 December 1846, Donald Ross Papers, BCARS. A declining fur trade did, in fact, lead Simpson and members of the London committee to branch out, on their own account, into the Baltic timber trade in the 1840s; fur traders on both sides of the Rockies entrusted their earnings to Simpson, who invested them in railways in Canada and in Pelly, Simpson & Company, a Norwegian timber export company controlled by Simpson and the Pelly family. On Canadian railways see Rich, HBC, Vol. 3, p. 485; on Pelly, Simpson and Company see ibid., p. 819, and Mackie, "Colonial Land, Indian Labour, and Company Capital," p. 216.
was and is no more. Such sentiments continued; in 1857 Edward Ellice estimated that fur returns in the company's southern districts had decreased since 1803-1804 by one half to two thirds.

A combination of technological, natural, and market factors lay behind this decline, and fur traders argued over causes and solutions. The three most obvious causes were overhunting, the introduction of steel traps, the introduction of silk hats, and the failure of the country to "recruit" after the period of competition before 1821. John McLoughlin told newcomer William Fraser Tolmie in 1833 that:

Furs are already becoming scarce & the present supply is obtained by an almost exterminating system of hunting. In 1792 the NW. Coy. sent more furs from a comparatively small space of country than is now sent to Britain from all the HBCoy's country & the Government post in Canada.

After 1821 Simpson applied a comprehensive set of conservation measures to the company's territories in an effort to increase the number of beaver, but these fur trade strategies met with limited success. His plan, for example, to establish a "Beaver Park" at Oxford House in 1832 did not work. He tried to "nurse" the country back to health after the period of competition by such measures as replacing beaver with muskrat, marten,

101 John Lee Lewes is quoted in Anderson, "Notes and Comments," p. 118; Ross to Simpson (private), 21 August 1848, Donald Ross Papers, BCARS.

102 Ellice is cited in Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, pp. 332.


104 Tolmie had in mind the King's Posts on the north shore of the St. Lawrence. Tolmie, Journals, pp. 178-79 (12 May 1833). Innis blamed the decline in more southerly districts to more effective trapping methods and to a greater number of Native trappers. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p. 332.

and other "small furs;" discontinuing the use of steel traps and castoreum baits, imposing a quota system, and restricting trapping during the summer when pelts were poor. American traders operating from the south and French Canadian or Métis traders from Red River had, however, sabotaged these measures; and, Ray argues, such conservation measures were "alien" to Native people who "lived for the present." Simpson blamed the problem on managerial resistance: he believed that few commissioned officers were willing to impose conservation measures that would affect the short-term productivity of their posts; in 1829 he stated that competition on the company's southern frontiers was inevitable and would continue "until the fur-bearing race becomes extinct, which must at no great distance of time be the case." Conservation policies were exercised more effectively in monopoly areas than on the competitive frontiers.

Natural factors contributed to the decline. Fur-bearing animals were subject to the cyclical peaks and troughs characteristic of predator-prey populations. Native people and traders were powerless to increase artificially the number of fur-bearing mammals above the upper limit of these peaks, or beyond the upper limit of the troughs. They were constrained by factors of wildlife demography that were not examined until the 1930s and are still subject


\footnote{Hammond, "Marketing Wildlife," p. 20.}

\footnote{Simpson to G&C, 30 June 1829, quoted in Mitchell, Fort Timiskaming, p. 159.}
of debate. Moreover, these animals were a finite resource inhabiting a finite area; the fur trade was incapable of infinite expansion after reaching the Pacific and Arctic oceans and Canadian and American settlements to the south; and even the most sensitive conservation measures could not increase the number of fur-bearing mammals beyond what the land could support. The fur trade frontier in British North America reached its outer limits in the 1840s, when all the main regions of the fur trade had been incorporated in the company's continental economy. In 1845 John McLean argued that nothing could reverse the "destruction of fur-bearing animals," and that conservation measures amounted to "shutting the stable door after the steed was stolen."

Market factors did not help. Made first in about 1824, silk hats began in the 1830s to replace beaver hats in the fashionable world, and by 1840, Hugh Grant writes, "the Parisian silk hat had all but eliminated the English felt-hat industry and precipitated major changes in the demand for Canadian beaver." The Governor and Committee wrote in 1845 that the best description of silk hats "may be purchased at retail shops in London about fifty percent

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110McLean, Notes, p. 353.

cheaper than the first quality beaver hat."\textsuperscript{112} Lack of demand resulted in what the Northern Council referred to in 1846 as "The present distressed state of the English market for Beaver."\textsuperscript{113} Total profits, of course, had been tied closely to auction sales of beaver.\textsuperscript{114} Tolmie wrote that the company's profits decreased steadily in the 1830s, "owing in part, to the depreciation in Beaver, occasioned by improvements in the manufacture of Silk Hats; but chiefly, to diminished Returns; caused by the exterminating system of hunting pursued, which if not checked, will speedily eventuate in the destruction of the more valuable Fur-bearing animals."\textsuperscript{115} A lower price for beaver prompted attempts at "species mix," a form of economic diversification and a very old strategy which, however, could not bring into the market an entirely new resource.\textsuperscript{116} In general, the declining beaver trade of the Columbia Department was offset, after 1838, by increases in marten returns, mainly in New Caledonia.\textsuperscript{117}


\textsuperscript{113}Article 75 of Hudson's Bay Company, "Standing Rules & Regulations," (amendments), Donald Ross Papers, BCARS. John Tod and John Work blamed the fall in the price of beaver on the introduction of silk hats: Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 199.

\textsuperscript{114}As McLoughlin said in 1830, "[R]ecollect it is not returns that bring profit so much as the price the furs sell for which certainly are very fine and I have seen the North West Company from the very high prices in 1814 clear £75,000—the highest sum they ever cleared though it was the year they sent the least quantity of furs to Market." McLoughlin to John McLeod, 1 February 1830, McLeod Papers, NAC.

\textsuperscript{115}Tolmie, Journals, p. 334 (also quoted in Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 199).

\textsuperscript{116}Rich, HBC, Vol. 1, p. 109 on a seventeenth century attempt to diversify the company's trade by sending home small fur instead of beaver. In 1851 Donald Ross stated that "in former days people always calculated their prospective profits by the number of Beaver sent to market." Donald Ross to Eden Colvile, 5 March 1851, Donald Ross Papers, BCARS. On "species mix" see Harris, ed., Historical Atlas, plate 61; Morton, A History of the Canadian West, pp. 697-698.

\textsuperscript{117}"New Caledonia's fur-based economy responded quickly to new markets due to the flexibility of its species mix." Hammond, "Marketing Wildlife," p. 22.
These natural and market factors translated directly into decreased profits. Company dividends fell between 1838 and 1843 from 25% (a record high) to 23% to 15% to 10%, causing alarm in the company's officer ranks. In September 1843 the Governor and Committee told McLoughlin that Columbia Department fur had sold only for a "tolerable price" in the August auction:

In that Staple article [fur] there has been, we regret to say a further depression to a considerable extent. This continually decreasing price, when considered in connexion with a constantly decreasing supply, holds out no very cheering prospect for the future, unless the tides of fashion change, and the consumption of Beaver in the manufacture of hats become more general than it has been for some time past.

Douglas blamed low beaver prices and a declining fur trade for these poor dividends:

The dividends of '40 and '41 fell much below the lowest estimates ever made, by the least sanguine of our friends, and gives no very exalted idea of Indian trade. Could the world believe that a business enjoying the industrial produce with the absolute possession of one large third of North America, is indesputably less productive than many a ten square mile province in Europe. Yet it is a fact, which cannot be concealed, and if known to the world would have the effect of lowering the idea of high importance, attached to the fur trade.

Panic over falling fur returns in the early 1840s applied to the Columbia Department as well as points east. When Simpson saw the unusually low returns of 1840 and 1841, he wrote that "We cannot indeed contemplate either the present or future prospects of the fur trade on the west side of the Mountains without Anxiety. . . . the trade has fallen off greatly

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119G&C to McLoughlin, 27 September 1843, quoted in HBRS 6, p. 306. On poor fur sales at this time see also Work to Edward Ermatinger, 6 February 1844, Ermatinger Papers, NAC, quoted in Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 82.

120Douglas to Hargrave (private), 10 February 1845, Hargrave papers, NAC.
for two successive years, marking, it is to be feared, a rapidly progressive diminution of the fur bearing animals."121 In 1841, Archibald McDonald suggested that a nature preserve be formed in Puget Sound before the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company colonised the region. "I move that the Clalum district in a line from Hood’s Canal to the Pacific be barred up & appropriated to the preservation of the poor expiring Beaver race, still, leaving country for the ostensible objects of the Agricultural Company," he wrote.122 And on his visit to Fort Vancouver in 1840, American John Wilkes was told that the fur trade had declined by fifty percent.123

On the west coast the vulnerability of the fur trade promoted economic diversification; exports of salmon, lumber, and agricultural foodstuffs promised good profit in Pacific markets. Concerning the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company, Archibald McDonald wrote in 1839 that "The harvest is far more promising than the Beaver trade & will no doubt ere long become the grand consideration everywhere west side of the Rocky Mountains."124 Similarly, retired fur trader Alexander Ross wrote (in 1855) that a century earlier the country had been rich in furs, but now "the wild animals are completely swept away, and the Company, in a manner, as much occupied everywhere in farming operations as in the

121Simpson to G&C, 1 June 1843, quoted in Throckmorton, Oregon Argonauts, p. 40.

122McDonald is quoted in Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 199.

123Wilkes is cited in Ibid., p. 199.

124McDonald [c.1839]; McDonald to Douglas, 11 January 1841, quoted in Cole, Exile in the Wilderness, p. 183. Others were less sure that farming would save the fur trade. "It is true we are told by a few sapient men, not to despair, that if the Fur Trade fails us we have yet bright prospects in the Agl Company, but I am greatly mistaken if this business does not prove a mere soap bubble," Tod told Hargrave in 1843. Tod [Thompson’s River] to Hargrave, 15 March 1843, in Glazebrook, ed., Hargrave Correspondence, pp. 422-23.
pursuits of hunting." Silicon Holmes, an American who visited Fort Vancouver in 1840 with the Wilkes expedition, ascribed the rise of export trades directly to the decline in the fur trade. He wrote that "it is stated that the income of the H.B.C. from their fur trade is gradually diminishing; but that the deficit is more than supplied by their exports of flour, beef and agricultural products generally, with the lumber, of which they export a considerable quantity."  

Thus, in an era of a declining fur trade, Simpson looked to alternative sources of wealth and formulated a new commercial policy for the coastal regions to the north of the Columbia. Before the end of the decade the company would undertake the colonization of Vancouver Island for its advantages to general commerce; the Hudson’s Bay Company that presided over the creation of British Columbia society in 1849 was not the mythical fur trade company of birchbark canoes and beaver pelts but a general resource company that had adapted its business to an abundant environment and a broad and unexploited commercial opportunity.  

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126 Holmes is quoted in Gibson, Farming the Frontier, p. 200.

CHAPTER 12
CONCLUSION

Previous to 1821, the business of the Columbia department was very greatly limited; but it has since been very greatly extended and at much expense, and I am sorry to say, at a considerable sacrifice of life . . . it now [includes] 22 trading establishments, besides several migratory, hunting and trading expeditions, and six armed vessels on the north-west coast.

George Simpson, 1837.¹

The Columbia Department in 1843 was very different from what it had been in 1821 (Maps 4 and 8). Simpson, master of the strategies of the British fur trade, had visited the coast on three occasions, each time imposing policies that his able local management put in place. On his first visit he formulated a plan for economic survival: he ordered the extension of the fur trade throughout the department, ordered a stop to waste and extravagance, and sought self-sufficiency in provisions. This entailed the development of secure salmon and agricultural trades. He laid off extra employees, merged New Caledonia with the Columbia Department, took measures to challenge American traders on the North West Coast and on the Columbia River, and foresaw the need for the company to diversify economically and to develop export trades with Pacific markets. By the time of his second visit, self-sufficiency in foodstuffs had been attained and the company was ready to embark on the export of surplus produce. By the time of his third visit, the company had forced the Americans to abandon the fur trade of the North West Coast and much of the interior, earning, in the process, a trading monopoly in most regions. By defeating American competition, the

¹Simpson to J. H. Pelly, 1 February 1837, quoted in HBCA search file "Trade."
company had achieved, for the time being, an effective commercial monopoly of coastal resources.

By 1843, as a result of these strategies, the Hudson’s Bay Company had expanded to its greatest territorial extent and the Columbia Department had reached its spatial maximum. The department controlled the trade of most of the Cordillera: its activities extended from the headwaters of the Snake and Sacramento rivers to San Francisco Bay in the south to the Fraser, Nass, Stikine, and Taku rivers in the north. Forts had been opened on the central coast, Puget Sound, and Vancouver Island. The Beaver had plumbed the reaches of the coastal inlets (though generally the vessel traded on the outer coast), and an agency had been opened in Honolulu. The North West Coast, terra incognita to the North West Company, was well under British commercial control; in 1821 only a few furs from the North West Coast had found their way southward, through Native trade routes, to the company’s posts on the Columbia River. In effect, the Hudson’s Bay Company had invaded the resource-rich territory of the Native people of the whole of the ethnographic Northwest Coast. As can be seen in its domination of the haiku trade, the company was in the process of colonising the Native economy and redirecting its produce to foreign markets. Native people, who in 1821 had worked primarily as providers of pelts, in 1843 worked actively for the company at all its coastal establishments. Still they provided furs to the company, but increasingly they traded other things, and what they traded at first as provisions they later traded for export. They provided salmon, herring, oolichan, sturgeon, whale and fish oil, cranberries, timber, shingles, masts, and spars for the company’s provision and export trades. Their seasonal rounds of activity were flexible enough to cope with these changes, but increasingly, they worked not within their traditional economy but within the company’s provision and export
economies as labourers. Still, the great majority of Native people were distant from this sort of labour force.

The company and its Native customers had extended a trade language, Chinook, to do business on the coast; this language, of course, originated before the company's arrival. The spread of Chinook, however, paralleled the company's extension of trade and remained behind as an artifact of the company's presence. The company's monopoly, earned by defeating foreign competition, allowed it to impose uniform trade standards and a uniform "Indian policy" over a vast area. The company reached into the Native economy in search of provisions, fur, and other exports. These were crucial years of transition between a largely Native world and a world intersected with the scheduled routes of company steamers, schooners, and commerce.

Basic changes had taken place in commodities, markets, and labour. Although the company had extended its fur trade everywhere west of the Rockies, reaping large profit from New Caledonia and from the exhaustive Snake River expeditions, the overall value of the trade in furs had reached its natural limit and in some places was declining; the company could not obtain more fur than the land possessed. Fur-bearing animals were scarce on much of the mild and mountainous coast. The company, however, had supplemented its profits by developing export trades in other resources on the Columbia and Fraser rivers. On the coast, only forts Langley, Simpson, and McLoughlin had been formed specifically for the trade in furs. The others had been formed as farms or as administrative depots, and no more would be formed for the fur trade alone. After fur, the most important exports were salmon, lumber, and flour. The trade of the Columbia Department in 1821 was essentially a seventeenth or eighteenth century riverine fur trade; by 1843 it possessed the rudimentary materials of a nineteenth century commercial economy: a steamship and fleet of ships,
growing export trades, accessible local markets, a large and cheap labour supply. The company had started to develop a general commerce on the Pacific coast.

Bulky commodities like lumber required Pacific markets if they were to emerge as profitable exports. The tropical trade route sought by Dalrymple and the Northwesterners was found in the Hudson’s Bay Company’s quiet way in 1833 with the opening of the Oahu agency. After 1839, large quantities of agricultural provisions, principally flour, were exported to the Russian American Company at Sitka, and in 1841 the Hudson’s Bay Company opened a short-lived post at San Francisco for the hide, tallow, and retail trades. London remained the sole market for furs and also the destination of a range of exports including hides, tallow, and isinglass.

New exports, new markets, and retailing all required new, largely waterborne, forms of transport. In 1821 the company’s "country marine" had been non-existent; the only ship that visited the coast was the annual supply ship from England. Shortly afterwards the company created a Marine Department that, by 1836, possessed a fleet of seven ships whose job it was to collect coastal exports and transport them to the depot or to markets overseas. These ships had quite specialised functions: the Beaver traded fur along the coast for shipment to London on the annual vessel; other vessels traded salmon and lumber to Oahu in exchange for salt, sugar, and molasses.

Company officials on the coast had adapted their trade to a new commercial situation. Agricultural trades were so promising that in 1839 Simpson negotiated a ten-year provision contract with the Russian American Company and presided over the creation of the Puget’s Sound Agricultural Company. Both developments indicate the agricultural value of Puget Sound and the Columbia River. Faced with the possibility of an unfavourable boundary settlement, the company moved its depot north to Vancouver Island in 1843 and prepared to
develop a range of resources there. The main outlines had been drawn for a viable regional economy.

The company’s transformation into a resource development company required a large imported labouring corps. Engineers, blacksmiths, bailiffs, millwrights, carpenters, masons, sawyers, coopers, sailmakers, and shipwrights worked for the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1843. Others continued to fill all the traditional positions—accountants, clerks, packers, builders, traders, interpreters, hunters, boatmen, voyageurs, labourers, but every year brought greater occupational diversity. The non-native population attached to the company’s posts had tripled, from about 200 in 1821 to 600 in 1843. Most were French Canadians, Scots, and Kanakas, and all but a few lived with, or had married, Native or Métis women. Thirty-five Kanakas had been in the company’s coastal service in 1825; in 1844 as many as three or four hundred remained on the coast. In 1821 the company’s workforce, provision, and transport systems worked solely at ensuring the export of animal pelts to England, but gradually, the diverse workforce of a nineteenth century commercial economy was superimposed on the outline of an eighteenth century fur trading economy. The potential for colonization with such a workforce was obvious.

In several places the fur trade was a thing of the past, though all coastal posts retained some fur trading function. The fur trade of the new depot, Fort Victoria, was very unpromising. Exports of country produce from the lower Columbia and Fraser rivers had increased steadily since their inception; such exports, together with retail sales of English goods at Oahu and Fort Vancouver, contributed at least £4,000 toward departmental profit. The Russian contract required substantial agricultural production, and coal, salmon, and timber resources on Vancouver Island had been examined with their export potential in mind.
Demographically the department was at a watershed in 1843. The company initiated a new regional economy based at Fort Victoria just as the Oregon Trail became a reality for the expansionist Americans. John McLoughlin in 1846 wrote that 137 Americans had come in 1842, 875 in 1843, 1,475 in 1844, and 3,000 in 1845. Nonetheless, the political status of the region was no different in 1843 than it had been in 1821; the Oregon Treaty was still a few years down the road, and over the next fifteen years two British colonies (Vancouver Island, 1849, and British Columbia, 1858) and two American territories (Oregon Territory, 1848, and Washington Territory, 1853) would be carved out of what had been the Columbia Department. After the Oregon Treaty the Americans, while hating every physical vestige of the company’s presence, inherited with equanimity the regional economy, resources, markets, and Indian policy imposed by the company south of the forty-ninth parallel.

In 1843, when the new depot was built, the American presence on the Columbia River was taking semi-permanent form in the shape of the Oregon Provisional Government, and Simpson and other company officials had their doubts about the outcome of the treaty. But even the most unfavourable boundary settlement would not affect the operations of the new depot; indeed, Fort Victoria was selected for its unhindered, outward, Pacific orientation, for its access to local resources, to the company’s coastal shipping, and for its proximity to coastal provision centres. Fort Victoria was the Pacific entrepot envisaged by Dalrymple and Mackenzie and conceived by Simpson, and in time the community would become the centre of a diverse coastal trade; the next decade and a half (1843-1858)

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witnessed the company's massive economic diversification on Vancouver Island and elsewhere. In time Victoria would forget its origin as the most westerly depot of the Canadian fur trade—perhaps because so little fur was traded there. Its commercial prominence would only be eclipsed fifty years later by the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the subsequent rise of the city of Vancouver which, like its predecessor on the Columbia River, would look as much to the interior as to the Pacific.

In 1843 the Hudson's Bay Company operated two overlapping economies on the west coast. The first was the company's traditional economy, in which an annual ship collected Columbia Department furs for the London market. This economy was dominated by the valuable fur returns of the interior. It had a parallel on Hudson Bay where an English supply ship made an annual voyage for fur, just as it had since the late seventeenth century. (Indeed, vessels, ship captains, and crew alternated between the York Factory and Fort Vancouver voyages). Open only a month or two of the year to ship traffic, Hudson Bay had a very rudimentary and seasonal coasting trade, no profitable local exports other than fur, a sparse Native population, and no local markets.

The great difference between Hudson Bay and the Pacific coast lay in the second economy made up of regional and Pacific trades. In a broad sense the company had adapted to new resources, new markets, and had exhibited a impressive degree of corporate and managerial flexibility. After nearly two centuries of exporting fur from the regions east of the Rockies, the company willingly and deftly broadened its resource base and corporate structure to cope with new environmental and market conditions. The company's west coast shipping department functioned outside the London-Fort Vancouver fur axis and serviced extensive and varied provision trades. This economy was based on the exploitation of coastal resources and on the demands of Pacific markets. It relied on Native resources, Native
labour, and extensive and functioning Native trade routes. The company’s vast but land-
locked, isolated, and intemperate eastern districts offered no such commercial opportunity in
1843.

This regional economy could survive, if necessary, quite satisfactorily on its own; it
looked not eastward to the St. Lawrence or to Hudson Bay, but outward to London,
Honolulu, and California, and indirectly to Asia, the Orient, and Australia. There was great
economic potential on the coast and in the interior, but coastal resources were more
accessible. Fur traders thought there was enough salmon to feed all the people of Rupert’s
Land, enough potatoes to supply the Royal Navy, enough spars for all Her Majesty’s ships.
Potential exports could be fished from the rivers, gathered from the beaches, delivered to the
ocean. While the interior also possessed tremendous economic potential, all its resources
except fur remained inaccessible, a disadvantage that was brought home forcibly in 1844 with
Archibald McDonald’s discovery of silver and lead on Flat Bow (Kootenay) Lake. "It is not
probable that mining operations could be carried on to advantage at Flat Bow Lake,
"McLoughlin commented; "the distance being about 600 miles from the sea coast, and the
water navigation, so difficult, and dangerous, that the metal would have to be transported
with packhorses, more than half the distance by land." Famous later as Cominco’s Bluebell
mine at Riondel, this mine was not developed commercially for some fifty years.

A paradox, then, emerges from the company’s Columbia Department business. From
a commercial point of view the Columbia Department was notable in possessing some of the

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4McLoughlin to Barclay, 23 November 1844, quoted in HBRS 7, pp. 61-62. A sample was
sent to London for examination by Heathfield & Burgess, Experimental Chemists, who
confirmed a high proportion of silver. Cole, Exile in the Wilderness, pp. 218, 255. Samuel
Black had found iron pyrites on the Finlay River in 1824. See R. M. Patterson, "The Strangest
last untapped fur resources in North America, and in developing, simultaneously, new markets, transport systems, and export trades. The fur trade of a district like New Caledonia was as traditional as the company could offer, while the business on the Pacific had in many places left the fur trade behind. An understanding of different export opportunities between the coast and cordillera resolves the paradox. Fur traders applied the economic strategies of the fur trade to the two regions with very different results.

Labour, resource procurement, transport, and market patterns characteristic of the nineteenth century British Columbian economy were established by the Hudson’s Bay Company before 1843. The essentials of British Columbia’s coastal transport system were established at this time to extend the fur trade and service new export trades. The brief gold rushes of the 1850s and 1860s would not permanently alter choices of labour, transport, commodity, and market devised by the company in these early years. Economic diversity characterized the province just as it had the department. The company would continue to tap the resources of the Native economy. After 1849, this regional economy would operate quite well under colonial and provincial management; it would take British Columbians 150 years to deplete the abundant and varied resources of the coastline north of the forty-ninth parallel.

The successful implementation of the commercial strategies of the fur trade resulted, then, in the emergence of a distinctive regional economy within "fur trade" territory between 1821 and 1843. Company officials gradually abandoned the continental fur trade routes that

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5British Columbia’s "economic development has been based on the successive emergence of new staples with the continued importance of the old." "Of all the Canadian regional economies which have evolved from non-agricultural staple-export origins only British Columbia has continued to be an economy directed by the export performance of the natural-resource sector." Marr and Patterson, Canada: An Economic History, p. 445. The regional economy is still based on logging, mining, fishing, and farming.
had brought them to the coast in the first place. The export of fur to London by sea instead of overland to Hudson Bay marked the beginning of sixty years of isolation from the economy of the rest of British North America. This isolation was heightened by the success of local markets, provisions, exports, and the creation of a viable regional economy. Between 1821 and 1843 the company’s main external connections were, in order of importance, Honolulu, London, Hudson Bay, California, and Canada. Despite the presence of many French and English Canadian fur traders on the west coast, Canada became an increasingly distant and tenuous connection in the 1840s and 1850s. The island-based and colonial years between 1843 and 1871 only encouraged this isolation. British (and other) immigrants with no Canadian experience began to arrive in numbers after 1849. Only with the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1886 would the pre-1821, transcontinental connections of the North West Company be revived. A regional economy consisting of island, mainland, north coast, south coast, and interior, formed in the fur trade period. Even the name "British Columbia," while taken from the river and not the department,\(^6\) inadvertently reflects our institutional, political, and commercial descent from the vast and ultimately truncated Columbia Department.

\(^6\)Queen Victoria named the colony in 1858 (presumably by looking at a map). Ormsby, *British Columbia*, p. 151. The river itself took its name from Gray’s *Columbia Rediviva* in 1788. Gibson, *Otter Skins*, p. 38.
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Abbreviations Used

BCHN  British Columbia Historical News
BCHQ  British Columbia Historical Quarterly
BCARS  British Columbia Archives and Record Service
HBCA  Hudson’s Bay Company Archives
HBRS  Hudson’s Bay Record Society
NAC  National Archives of Canada
OHQ  Oregon Historical Quarterly

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