

Reconstituting the Fur Trade Community of the Assiniboine Basin,

1793 to 1812.

by

Margaret L. Clarke

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**RECONSTITUTING THE FUR TRADE COMMUNITY
OF THE ASSINIBOINE BASIN, 1793 to 1812**

BY

MARGARET L. CLARKE

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
of
MASTER OF ARTS**

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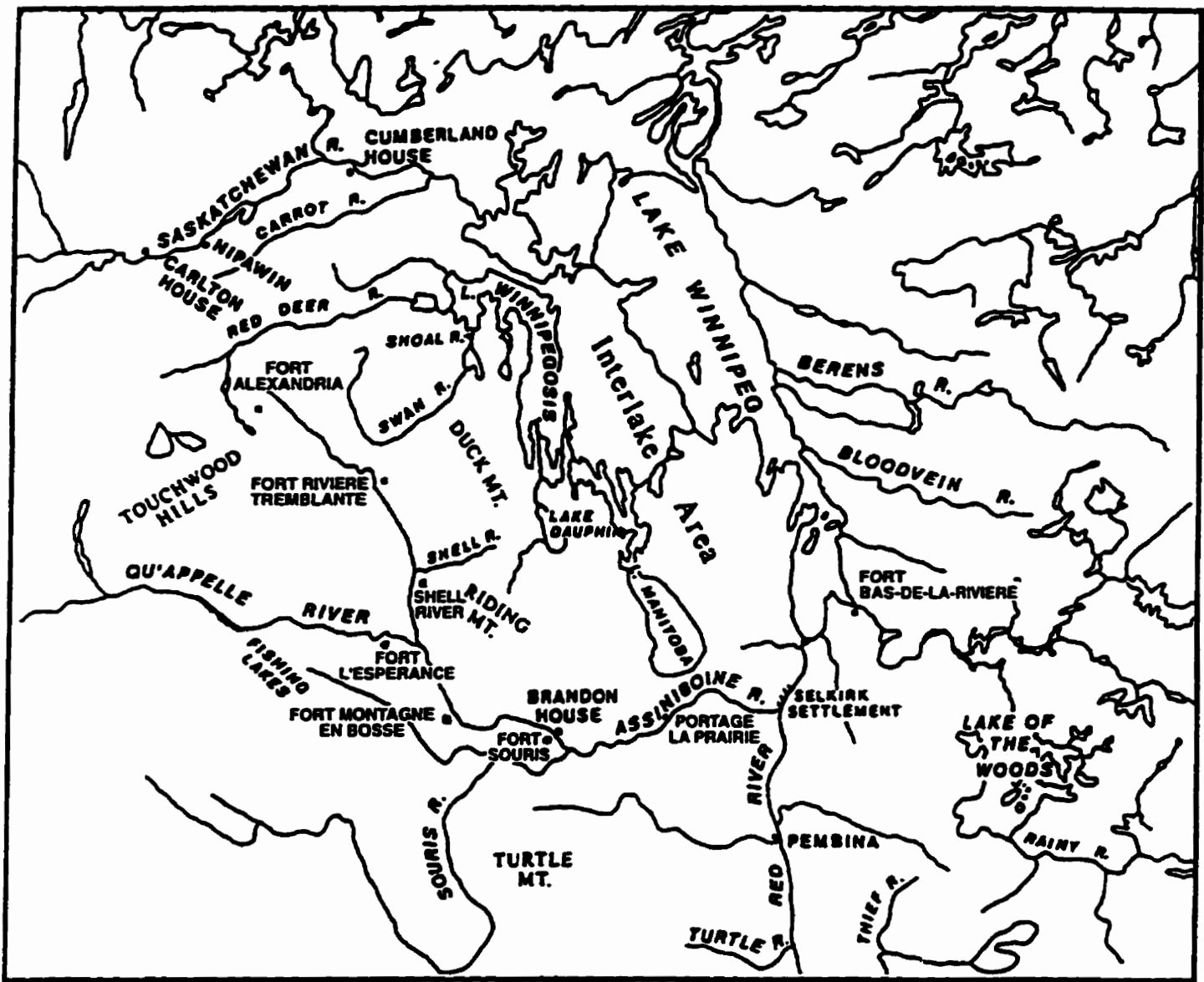
This study would not have begun without the research and collecting of T.R. (Pat) McCloy on the descendants of John McKay that I first encountered in the Glenbow Museum Archives, Calgary. My thanks to the staff there for guidance and assistance throughout my studies. I am grateful also to Charles Denney for his research into the families of Red River and for making his collection accessible to researchers at the Glenbow Museum and the Edmonton Branch Library of the Alberta Genealogy Society. My thanks to the volunteers there who do so much in assisting those looking for their families. My personal thanks to Geoff Burtonshaw for his assistance in my research, and for his work with family researchers in Calgary. Likewise, my personal thanks to Alfred Fortier, and La Société Historique de Saint-Boniface, for opening their database to me. This study could not have been conducted without the permission of the Hudson's Bay Company to research in and quote from their archives. Warm thanks to Isaac Addai, who introduced me to historical demography. My deepest thanks to my thesis advisor, Professor Jennifer S.H. Brown whose continuous support, assistance and patience through the long editing process helped give my research readable form.

Reconstituting the Fur Trade Community of the Assiniboine Basin, 1793 to 1812.

Abstract

Scholarship on Metis and fur trade history has tended to categorize French Métis and English mixed blood groups as separate ethnicities without accounting for the frequent cross-marriages between the groups. Studies have examined ethnic change in later Red River society from the standpoint of the (paternal) European ethnicity or of aboriginal heritage.

In this examination of a fur trade community in the Assiniboine River basin, an analysis of the ethnic origins of fur trade employees and the intermarriages of their children is combined with the narrative of cross-company cooperation between the Northwest Company employees and the Hudson's Bay Company men. By reconstituting the community of the Assiniboine basin Margaret Clarke tested the hypothesis that cross-cultural intermarriages were explainable by membership in a geographically bonded community and found that for specific fur trade employees, categorized as "stayers", the hypothesis was true.



Map 1. Assiniboine Basin and Area
 from Map 1 (drawn by Victor Lytwyn) in *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870*, Laura Peers, 1994
 (University of Manitoba Press)

Chapter One : Introduction

The Geography of the Assiniboine Basin

The Assiniboine basin at the turn of the nineteenth century was a fascinating place. The Assiniboine River flows through parkland, the transitional zone between forest and prairie, for most of its length, from its source west of the Lake Winnipegosis drainage basin on the central western rim of what is now Manitoba, to its confluence with the Red River. The basin forms an “L” which covers a distance of approximately 500 kilometres, although the river is much longer, due to its serpentine course, so typical of a prairie river. Before the intrusion of the fur trade into the area, the area was used by the Assiniboine or “Stone” Indians and the Plains Cree. During the early fur trade period, from 1790 to 1820, the Ojibwa entered the eastern portion of the area.¹ The basin also connected with the Missouri watershed through a route which began at the mouth of the Souris River, at its entry into the Assiniboine. Thus it represented something of a crossroads for the native population, a place where plains provisions, forest furs and agricultural products could be exchanged.

The Ojibwa trapping in the bush country around Lake Winnipegosis took their furs to posts in the basin such as Shell River and River Tremblante, while the Cree and Assiniboine, as well as the traders’ men, brought in plains provisions from the prairies.²

¹ Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994) p. 31.

² A.J. Ray, *The Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Land Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660 - 1870*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 102-104.

John McDonell described the Assiniboine basin between the Forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, and Fort Esperance on the Qu'Appelle River, in 1797.³

From the Forks of the Assiniboil and Red rivers, the plains are quite near the banks, and so extensive that a man may travel from here to *Fort des Prairies*, Rocky Mountain, Missouri, Mississippi and many other places without passing a wood a mile long. All the wood here, as in the rest of the plains, being only small tufts, here and there, called by the French, [I]lets de bois, surrounded by the plains the same as an island is encompassed by water, and slips that grow on the richest lands, on low points near the river and on its banks.⁴

About eight days travel upriver from the mouth of the Red River, and two days from the Forks was Portage La Prairie:

Across this portage, which is about twelve miles over, the *Fort Dauphin* goods used to be carried under the French *commandants* to Lake Manitoubah and from thence to River *Dauphine*.

Three leagues farther up the river stood Le Fort des Trembles (Poplar Fort), and above it was

a wood, called *La Grande Trembliere*, which stretches a considerable distance into the plains, so that the common road is through the centre of it. . . . Above the Grand Trembliere, the soil changes suddenly; the lower parts . . . being generally good soil, . . . whereas, above it, the soil has attained such a mixture of yellow sand, that it is, in some places, covered with grass . . . very sparingly.⁵

This change in soil appears to coincide with the beginning of forest. As McDonell continued upriver, he detailed next a region of sandy hills which ended two leagues west of Pine Fort.⁶ After discussing River la Souris, and the trade there with "Krees", "Assiniboils", and "roving Sauteux", and the Mandan trade, McDonell returned to

³ John McDonell, "Some account of the Red River (about 1797)" in Masson, Vol. 1, pp.265-281.

⁴ Ibid. p. 269.

⁵ Ibid. pp. 270, 271.

⁶ Ibid. pp. 271, 272.

describing the river and countryside again. The direction of travel changed at River la Souris from west to north. He described the river as very shallow and full of rapids to the Barriere but fine after that up to the sand banks past Mountain La Bosse. He next described a ridge of hills that began about a league above the Barriere, the top of which was even with the rest of the plains. The Assiniboine River ran at the bottom of this "vale". The French called the hills which result from the winding of the river through this ridge, the "Grandes Cotes".

Those who go up by land, owing to the continual windings of the river, have plenty of time to hunt buffalo, moose deer, caberie (?) [probably pronghorn antelope] and fowls of all kinds which abound in this country, and at the same time keep up with the canoes. The country is so plentiful that the canoes have always either fresh meat or fowls in their kettles.

The country here is, as below, one large plain, interspersed with small islands of wood here and there, but the low points of land near the water are frequently shaded with groves of venerable oaks and elms. The soil of the plains is a mixture of sand, clay, gravel and stones in many places, but the glen wherein the river runs is a mixture of clay and black mould.⁷

Besides being a locus of rivalry among three fur trade companies in the years 1798 to 1805, it was one of the first places where the Métis, descendants of the St. Lawrence-based fur trade, lived beside the children and grandchildren of the Hudson's Bay Company employees and their native wives. Trade opportunities there brought the Cree, the Assiniboine and the Ojibwa into conjunction as well as linking them with the important Missouri basin Mandan trade. Many of the events of the Red River Pemmican War (1814-1818) took place in the basin.

⁷ Ibid. pp. 273, 274.

The area of the Assiniboine valley from 1793 to 1816 included at least two Hudson's Bay Company posts, Brandon House and the Elbow (situated where the Assiniboine River changes directions from east to south above the mouth of the Whitesand River) and at least four fur trade forts for the North West Company: Fort Alexandria (upriver from the Elbow), Qu'Appelle (up the Qu'Appelle River about a day's march) also known as Fort Espérance, Mountain à la Bosse (south of the mouth of the Qu'Appelle), and Fort à la Souris (opposite Brandon House at the mouth of the Souris). As well, the X.Y. Company in 1797 to 1805 had posts beside Fort à la Souris, and Mountain a la Bosse as well as outposts upriver⁸. [see Map 1]

Much of what we know about fur trade life on the Assiniboine is revealed by the writings of officers and clerks: Chief Traders Robert Goodwin and John McKay for the Hudson's Bay Company in the Brandon journals⁹; John McDonnell¹⁰ and Charles Chaboillez¹¹ clerks Daniel Harmon in his personal memoir,¹² and J.B. Larocque in his story of a trip to the Rocky Mountains,¹³ all for the North West Company; and John

⁸ Compiled from the following sources: Mrs. A.E. Brown, "The Fur Trade Posts of the Souris Mouth Area," in *Papers read before the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba*. Series III, Number 18, 1961-62, ed. Douglas Kemp. Winnipeg, 1964. Charles M. Gates, ed. "Diary of Archibald N. Macleod," in *Five Fur Traders of the Northwest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1933). (Map, p. 128). H. Mackie, *Preliminary Report. Pine Fort*, 1972, p. 5,7. John McDonnell, "Some account of the Red River (about 1797)" in L. R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord Ouest* (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960) Vol. I, pp. 270, 275. David A. Stewart, "Early Assiniboine Trading Posts of the Souris Mouth Group, 1785-1832." *Transaction No. 5 (New Series) Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba* (1930).

⁹ Brandon House Journal, 1805, HBCA, B.22/a/12, 13.

¹⁰ Excerpted in *Five Fur Traders* (1793. 10 May, 8 October), Masson (excerpts from 1793, 11 October, 6 June, 1795) and Mackie (excerpts from September 1793, 16 and 26 May 1795).

¹¹ Harold Hickerson. "Journal of Charles Jean Baptiste Chaboillez, 1797, 1798," *Ethnohistory*, 6(3), 6(4), 1959.

¹² W. Kaye Lamb, *Sixteen Years in the Indian Country. the Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon* (Toronto: MacMillan Company of Canada, Ltd. 1957).

¹³ Larocque, F.A. "Journal of an Excursion of Discovery to the Rocky Mountains by Mr. Larocque in the year 1805 from the 2nd of June to the 18th of October." in *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders Among the*

Pritchard for the X.Y. Company, who left the story of his wanderings in the summer of 1804 in a letter to his brother.¹⁴ A.N. McLeod's North West Company journal from the year 1800/01 at Alexandria sheds light on relationships among traders of the era.¹⁵

Charles McKenzie's diaries of trips to the Mandans in 1804-1807 for the North West Company provide thumbnail sketches of the region and some of the bourgeois on those trips.¹⁶

The fur trade created a most complex and interesting web of relationships and mixing of peoples in this area. The bourgeois from Montreal such as John McDonell and the Grants were new immigrants, first generation Canadians. In contrast, their employees, the engagés from Canada, were from old families with long histories in Canada. In some cases third or fourth generation traders and voyageurs, they included men with Great Lakes Métis ancestry. Some of the HBC officers served lengthy terms in the basin, and for them and their families, this area became home. The HBC servants included what one officer called "Creoles"¹⁷ or first and second generation mixed bloods. They and their trade rivals were all people experiencing cultural modification, integration into a new life, and for some, a new identity. The Scots NWC officers provide one instance of

Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818, W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985).

¹⁴ John Pritchard, "Lost in the Prairies," *Beaver*, June, 1942, pp. 36-39.

¹⁵ Grace Lee Nute, ed. "Diary of Archibald N. Macleod," in *Five Fur Traders of the Northwest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1933).

¹⁶ Charles MacKenzie, "Some account of the Missouri Indians in the years 1804, 5, 6, 7." in *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders Among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818*, W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985): sketches of Charles Chaboillez and Alexander Henry the Younger, p. 285.

¹⁷ HBCA, B/22/a/2, f.1, Robert Goodwin referring to Hugh Linklater and Thomas Richards.

such adaptations. Notable for their use of kin and friendship ties both in the emigration process and in entering the fur trade, they further

resembled in some respects other ethnic groups known in various parts of the world – “groups with strong kin ties, but with insufficient economic opportunity in their home areas, that have slipped into the trader role in so many peasant societies.” A group of this type is, Lloyd Fallers observes, “productive of associations”; since it lacks “satisfying and reliable moral ties with the indigenous local community,” it is “typically a socially segregated and hostilely-regarded community of kinship units, knit together and defended by associational ties.”¹⁸

Dislocations seem to prepare people for assimilation into new areas and communities. The more complete the dislocation and the fewer their numbers, the more readily assimilable they seem to become. Dislocations could be defined as situations in which a person cannot return home, or cannot maintain a former identity. Or sometimes life in one’s home community is not economically viable and the group of new arrivals cannot recreate its home community elsewhere due to its small numbers.¹⁹

As the people from the two streams of trade entered the area, they first experienced cross-cultural contact to which they responded as individuals. Some men immersed themselves in the ‘new’ community, while others seem to have been relatively impervious to change. Some individuals were transformed by the native cultures around them, such as the “residents” described by Wood and Thiessen.²⁰ Many of the men made native unions. Intermarriage among the smaller native populations and expanding

¹⁸ Jennifer, S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, p. 104.

¹⁹ See Madeline A. Richard, *Ethnic Groups and Marital Choices* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991) chapter two “The Relationship between Intermarriage and Assimilation: Patterns, Correlates, and Determinants.” and Christine Hart, “Alienation and Ethnicity,” unpublished paper, Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association, Conference, The University of Calgary, 1994.

²⁰ W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen, *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders Among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians. 1738-1818*, p. 43.

mixed populations,²¹ along with adaptive changes to new environments created the base for the ‘traditional’ Red River Métis, and it is here that they were first identified as a specific ethnicity or “nation”.²² For all these reasons and more, the Assiniboine basin fur trade community deserves deeper examination.

Problem

In recent years, genealogical studies of Red River/ Métis families have shown numerous instances of cross-cultural marriages between French Métis families and English mixed blood families.²³ Most scholars have described these two groups as separate ethnicities or cultures.²⁴ If it can be shown, however, that the two groups had regular family and community associations from the beginning of their development, then there are grounds for postulating the existence of a single fur trade community rather than two separate groups. This study attempts a reconstitution of the community or communities of the Assiniboine basin to test that hypothesis. In the process, other patterns of behaviour were uncovered which enrich current understanding of fur trade communities.

²¹ Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, pp. 88, 89.

²² See Margaret McLeod, *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown*, p. 23, 23 n13, for a discussion of this.

²³ For examples, see D.N. Sprague, “The New Math of the New Indian Act: $6(2)+6(2)=6(1)$.” *Native Studies Review*, 10, no. 1 (1995); HBCA, “James Anderson” prepared biography; T. R. McCloy, Table A, the family of Edward McKay.

²⁴ Thomas Flanagan and John E. Foster, “Introduction: The Métis, Past and Present,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies. Special Issue: The Metis. Past and Present*, Vol. 17, 1985, p. iii; P.R. Mailhot, and D.N. Sprague, “Persistent Settlers: The Dispersal and Resettlement of the Red River Métis, 1870-1885,” *ibid.*, p. 1.

In times of fur trade competition, the close proximity of rival posts, in some cases for one or more generations, could paradoxically lead to the formation of a common fur trade community. Such a community contained within it the full spectrum of all those involved in the trade, from the native families who traded at the posts, while still immersed in their own culture, to the white wintering partner or chief factor with his head turned mainly towards British or Euro-Canadian culture. In the middle were the workers who, over time, pulled together a regularized set of customs and practices adapted to their setting. Because of political and ethnic differences, and the relatively shallow time depth of their communities, they were less successful at forging a new ethnic identity acceptable to all.²⁵ Nevertheless, these people knew who belonged to their own common group by their patterns of compliance to accepted customs.

This group dynamic of self-definition accords well with the definition of ethnicity as elaborated by Laura Peers:

An ethnic group distinguishes its own members by behaviours and beliefs that the members of the group perceive as significant characteristics, values, and standards of the group. These function to sustain group identity and boundaries between members of the group (who conform to such standards) and outsiders (who do not).²⁶

It is possible to recognize and trace the beginning of such a culture or community in the Assiniboine basin, thanks to the amount of information available from the two larger companies from the 1790s to 1810. Both sets of records contain evidence for a

²⁵ For a discussion of ethnic formation, see Christine Hart "The Structure of Ethnicity." *Multicultural Education Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Fall 1993, pp. 20-36.

²⁶ Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), p. xi, referring to Fredrik Barth's discussion of ethnicity in "Introduction." *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970), pp. 10-15.

joint social life. The decision to conclude with the year 1812 rather than the more well-known year of 1821 when the two companies formally amalgamated, is based on documentary evidence of a disjunction in the community, a loss of continuity, signalled by the mutiny in Brandon House and the consequences of that action. Events surrounding the arrival of the Selkirk Settlers and the beginning of the Red River community also had an impact on the community upriver. The analysis of marriages, however, obviously goes beyond that year since these alliances were rooted in pre-existing social ties.

In an effort to reveal more about the lives of the people in the posts, this study uses tools of historical demography to build a picture of the web of associations among workers and their families. The variety and number of cross-marriages among the ethnic groups connected with the Basin are striking. The partners to these unions grew up in the context of their fathers' employment in the same area, suggesting childhood contacts and an intensification of associations across company lines.

“Fur Trade Society”

Any discussion of a ‘fur trade society’ requires some attention to its definition. The use of this term is specific to North American historiography, for here the transition from purely indigenous systems and populations to European-dominated ones, was through a form of society that on the surface was purely economic, but which presaged the transformation of an entire indigenous population from autonomy to a state of domination, politically, socially and numerically, by immigrant Europeans. A careful study of social structures in the fur trade can help delineate the early stages of the transformation. Historical demography, with its techniques of family reconstitution and

integration of data, offers the best method for studying who was in the area, for what period of time, in what capacity, and for tracing the kinds of associations they formed while in that area.

Scholars have commonly postulated the existence in Rupert's Land of two distinct demographic communities, the English mixed-bloods and the French Métis, resulting from fur trade miscegenation. This issue encompasses all the problems of ethnic definition so common in Rupert's Land historiography (see, eg., Brown, 1985, and 1994; Spry, 1985 and Foster, 1986) and as such strikes at the formation of mixed ethnic identities in Western Canada. The two demographic communities have been seen variously as extending to the temporal and geographic limits of the fur trade, including the earlier Great Lakes experience as well as the Rupert's Land community extending into the late nineteenth century (Flanagan and Foster, 1985) or as limited to Red River in the 1860s and 1870s (Mailhot and Sprague, 1985).

The social history of the fur trade in Canada has only been a topic of scholarly inquiry for some twenty years. That is not to say that no one talked about everyday life in trading posts or relationships between trading partners prior to 1973, when John E. Foster completed his Ph.D. dissertation, "The Country-born in the Red River Settlement: 1820 - 1850." Even as the settlement of Red River grew out of the fur trade, some of its inhabitants saw fit to write and publish their views of this transitional society as they saw it. At best, such narratives as R.G. MacBeth's *The Making of the Canadian West* (1898) and Alexander Ross's *The Red River Settlement* (1856), must be seen as coming from participant-observers, men who thought they knew what they were looking at, but who

did not realize that, as white anglophones living in Red River in a period when most of the population was of mixed descent, they were relative outsiders. Their works were also marred by Red River myopia, a concentration on Red River as the whole universe.

In 1945, Marcel Giraud, a French ethnologist, published a major monograph on the métis . Although marred by its social evolutionist concepts of primitive versus civilized and its reliance on racial stereotypes, *The Métis in the Canadian West*²⁷ was the first scholarly attempt to analyse the new peoples who arose from the fur trade. Because it covered such a wide area and timespan, it only sketched the broad outlines of life in the fur trade. Giraud was the first, however, to do so on the basis of intensive reading in the HBC Archives.

Since Giraud's work, a considerable body of work has developed on the social history of the fur trade. Yet only a small portion of that work has examined the forms of kinship systems and marriage relationships, and an even smaller portion has concentrated on reconstituting actual "social networks of the past."²⁸

Fur Trade Studies Since 1970

Beginning with John E. Foster and Frits Pannekoek in 1973, five scholars completed dissertations on fur trade social history in eight years, opening a new field of studies. John Foster, in "The Country-Born in the Red River Settlement: 1826-1850", focused on the development and identity of the "Country-born" or English mixed-blood

²⁷ Giraud, Marcel. *The Métis in the Canadian West*. 2 vols., Translated by George Woodcock, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press. 1986).

²⁸ Giraud, p. 72.

group. He argued that their existence as an ethnic community in Red River was due to the influence of life under the Hudson's Bay Company system, which he described as a "pyramidal social hierarchy, derived [from] occupational status."²⁹ His emphasis on Red River as a world unto itself limited his view of the fur trade world, as did his emphasis on the elite.

In the same year, Frits Pannekoek addressed the divisions in the Red River society visible in 1869. He saw the missionaries as promoting religious divisions which created the split in the Red River community so visible during Louis Riel's provisional government of 1869-70. His book, *A Snug Little Flock*, published in 1991, basically recapitulated that point of view. It is marred by a concentration on the missionaries themselves without reference to other sources from within the Red River community. His contention that "the country-born . . . and the metis of Red River Settlement 'were at odds years before the [Riel] resistance, and the origins of that hatred lay in the nature of Red River society' " has been criticized by Irene Spry whose analysis of Red River marriages by surname alone revealed many cross marriages.³⁰

Sylvia Van Kirk, in her dissertation, "The Role of Women in the Fur Trade Society of the Canadian West" (1975), addressed the roles of women in the fur trade. She argued that racial consciousness increased in the early nineteenth century among the fur trade elite as they moved from unions with natives to unions with mixed-bloods, to

²⁹ John E. Foster, "The Country Born in the Red River Settlement: 1826-1850," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, p.27.

³⁰ Irene Spry, "The métis and mixed-bloods of Rupert's Land before 1870," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, eds. pp. 95-118. The quotes are from p. 95.

unions with white women.³¹ Her work was limited by a concentration on men in the upper rank, rather than a broad spectrum of the population. Brian Gallagher argued that her conclusions were “based on impressionistic narrative historical research coupled with a tendency to disregard the economic factors which shaped fur trade society.” He further suggested that Van Kirk’s “simple progression . . . from Indian to Métis, and finally to European wives . . . is a profoundly anachronistic view of society in Red River because, in the last two decades before Confederation, nearly all the most powerful men in Red River were married to Métis women.”³²

Jennifer S. H. Brown, in her dissertation, “Company Men and Native Families: Fur Trade Social and Domestic Relations in Canada’s Old Northwest,” discussed the different kin-systems and varying family paths which evolved from the two differing fur trade structures of the North West Company and Hudson’s Bay Company.³³ Her research established a background for further work in the reconstitution of fur trade families. Her article, “A Demographic Transition in the Fur Trade Country: Family Sizes and Fertility of Company Officers and Country Wives, 1750-1850,” is probably her most explicitly demographic, but as a journal article, it did not include background data. In a more recent work, she discussed such concepts as the determination of ethnicity by the presence or

³¹ She published her work as *Many Tender Ties*, in 1980.

³² Brian Gallagher, “A Re-Examination of Race, Class, and Society in Red River,” *Native Studies Review*, 4, Nos 1 & 2, 1988. This study ties the development of a métis merchant elite with analysis of a continued pattern of métis/white cross marriages. Some have argued with his use of the term ‘metis’ for all people with mixed heritage. For further discussion of the use of such terms in fur trade history, see John Foster, “The Metis: the people and the term,” *Prairie Forum*, 3, No.1 (1978). I have chosen to follow the example of Foster in using “métis” for all people of mixed heritage and carefully differentiating that term from “Métis” which is used for the French/Catholic group.

³³ Published as *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, in 1980.

absence of European fathers³⁴ and the differences in company experience that shaped the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company country marriages.³⁵

The fifth dissertation, Jacqueline Peterson's "The People in Between: Indian-White Marriage and the Genesis of a Métis Society and Culture in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1830," (1981), is a thorough examination of the origins of the Métis in the Great Lakes fur trade. In it, she laid out the origins and evolution of marriage *a la façon du pays*, and the forms it took. She delineated kinship and work partnership systems in the area around the Great Lakes, reconstituting those communities and revealing the transitional kinship forms that accompanied the formation of mixed marriages and the society that resulted. She concluded with an exploration of mixed populations and *métissage*. Her work presented a model of *métissage* that is still sound today.

These five scholars, focusing on the social life of fur trade peoples, and examining different components and structures, laid a base of information about the social life of the fur trade.³⁶ Their works have received widespread acceptance in academic circles. As well, Van Kirk's and Brown's books have a high level of acceptance in Métis groups.

³⁴ Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Fur Trade as Centrifuge: Familial Dispersal and Offspring Identity in Two Company Contexts." *North American Indian Anthropology: Essays on Society and Culture*, ed. by Raymond DeMallie and Alfonso Ortiz (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 1995.

³⁵ Ibid. pp. 199-202 For some relevant examples of Brown's articles, see the Bibliography. Her work comes the closest of any of the classics to historical demography.

³⁶ For those seeking a more comprehensive discussion of fur trade studies since 1970, I would suggest the following review articles. Michael Payne, "Fur Trade Social History and Fur Trade Sites: Historiography and the Logic of Site Development." *Proceedings of the 6th North American Fur Trade Conference. Makinac Island*, (1994); Jacqueline Peterson and John Anfinson, "The Indian and the Fur Trade." in *Scholars and the Indian Experience*, ed. W. Swagerty. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Sylvia Van Kirk. "Fur Trade Social History: Some Recent Trends." in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*. eds. Carol Judd and Arthur J. Ray. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Discussion of the term “Fur Trade Society”

‘Fur trade society’ is a controversial phrase. Van Kirk and Peterson use the term³⁷ while Brown and Foster do not. Brown has called the term “problematic”, expressing concerns with its use as a “black box” which rather than inviting discussion of the structures of fur trade communities, tends to reify the concept.³⁸ Foster stated explicitly “the mixed-bloods in Red River were and remained two distinct communities.”³⁹ On this topic, fur trade historiography exhibits diverse perspectives that continue to manifest themselves.

The seeming acceptance in Canadian historiography of a view of Rupert’s Land society as being characterized by divisions between French and English mixed-bloods who resided almost exclusively in Red River begins in the these five dissertations. Subsequent writings have sometimes resorted to a too easy generalization, as do Flanagan and Foster in their introduction to a special edition of *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, devoted to the Métis:

The two dominant métis traditions, that derived from the fur trade based on the Hudson Bay and that derived from the fur trade based on the St. Lawrence - Great Lakes water systems, remained distinct, even when they settled in the same area, as in the Red River Colony.⁴⁰

³⁷ Sylvia Van Kirk, “Fur Trade Social History: Some Recent Trends.” *The Prairie West Historical Readings*. R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer, eds. (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985), p. 71, and Jacqueline Peterson, “The People in Between . . .” p. 160.

³⁸ Jennifer Brown, “Fur Trade as Centrifuge: . . .” p. 40.

³⁹ John Foster, “Country-Born . . .” p.207.

⁴⁰ Flanagan, Thomas, and John E. Foster, “Introduction: The Métis , Past and Present,” *Canadian Eihnic Studies*. Vol. 17. 1985. p. iii.

Similarly, Mailhot and Sprague in their article, "Persistent Settlers: The Dispersal and Resettlement of the Red River Métis, 1870-1885," state in the same journal, "it is well known that the population of part-Indian ancestry in the Red River Settlement represented two distinct ethnic groups with separate origins in the history of the fur trade."⁴¹

However, little demographic work has been done to support these generalizations, and therefore, to test statements that would define or deny the existence of a unitary fur trade society. The work of Irene Spry, cited earlier, showed relationships between the two groups, and recent genealogical studies have documented a longitudinal dimension to the overlapping social networks. Genealogical records revealed a repeating pattern of marriage between the two ethnic groups for several generations in the period from 1814 to 1870.⁴²

The five dissertations cited above were based on secondary and archival accounts, fur trade journals, employment records and wills, as well as such personal correspondence and journals as were available. Such written records limit our view of society, in that they focus mainly on the literate upper class. In an attempt to broaden perspectives, some historians have begun preliminary statistical record linkage.

⁴¹ Mailhot, P.R. and D.N. Sprague, "Persistent Settlers: The Dispersal and Resettlement of the Red River Métis, 1870-1885," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*. Vol. 17, 1985, p. 1.

⁴² Margaret L. Clarke, "John Richards McKay's Spyglass," *Papers of the 1994 Rupert's Land Colloquium*, edited by Ian MacLaren, Michael Payne and Heather Rollason. Centre for Rupert's Land Studies. University of Winnipeg, 1997.

Record Linkage

The first of these is *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation*, by D. N. Sprague and R.P. Frye (1983). Sprague and Frye used the Red River censuses which run in an irregular pattern from 1824 to 1849, as well as material from parish registers and genealogical affidavits taken by the federal government in 1875, to begin a delineation of the social structure of the settlement. The focus of the book and data base is explicitly the Red River Settlement.

Other scholars working on the history of the Métis and Red River have found their work useful, as have genealogists working on family reconstitution. Understandably, however, in such a large compendium, there are some errors, omissions and inconsistencies. For example, Cecile Henry, member of the Stettler (Alberta) Métis Association, pointed out that Table 1 lists John Farquarhson (index #1506) married to Josephite Morrisette, born in 1820, whose father was Franco Morrisette (# 3206). Franco's father has a number (#3208), but no individual in their lists has that number.⁴³ In another case, the book's Table 1 lists a John McKay married to Marie Favell, which agrees with the McKay genealogy developed by T.R. McCloy, but Sprague and Frye, however, give their birthdates as 1814 and 1816, while the McCloy genealogy dates their deaths to 1810. The McCloy genealogy does include a grandson John born in 1816, but no one born in 1814.⁴⁴

⁴³ Cecile Henry, personal interview, town of Mirror, Alberta, interview, 21 Dec. 1993.

⁴⁴ T. R. McCloy, "Table A, a table of the first three generations of the descendants of John McKay (ca. 1763 -5 July 1810) and Mary Favell (d. 19 March 1810)." private collection. Calgary. Hereafter referred to simply as "Table A".

These problems of differentiating between individuals with the same name point to the need for systematic record linkage. As Flanagan pointed out,

The various sources . . . often disagree, not only about such minor matters as the spelling of names but about such major matters as who was married to whom. The complexities of métis kinship, including death and remarriage, child adoption, fostering, serial and (rarely) simultaneous polygamy, and marriage a la facon du pays, can often be sensed but not always deciphered in the documents. Confusion is often multiplied by the repetition of names, inevitable in a community generated by a small number of paternal ancestors.⁴⁵

Fur trade familial networks were complex, and establishing with certainty the identity of all the various actors is a very challenging task.⁴⁶

Recently, scholars have turned increasingly to record linkage. Nicole St. Onge, in her master's thesis, "Métis and Merchant Capital in Red River: The Decline of Pointe à Grouette" (1984), examined post-1870 landholding transitions for that community. In a chapter entitled "Kinship Patterns in Pointe à Grouette and their relationship to Land Claims," she undertook to reconstitute and delineate the families that constituted the community, using local genealogies to supplement Sprague and Frye in this area. Her work makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the repercussions of provincial status on a previously stable Métis community, although her period of study is too late to shed light on the fur trade societal issues considered here.

⁴⁵ Flanagan, Thomas, Review of the *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation*, *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Special Issue, Vol. 17, 1985, p. 148.

⁴⁶ A more recent publication, *The English River Book: A North West Company Journal and Account Book of 1786*, by Harry W. Duckworth (1989), is likewise most useful as a resource or tool for historical research or family reconstitution. While the body of the work consists of the Journal and Account Book, Duckworth has included a very useful appendix which consists of the employment record of the North West Company for the northern route for 1786, and a brief biography for each of the employees. This makes the book a valuable resource, as few records are generally available for that period or company.

Others have used Sprague and Frye as a basis for quantitative analysis of the Red River community.⁴⁷ Gerhard Ens, in his 1989 Ph.D. dissertation, "Kinship, Ethnicity, Class and the Red River Métis," began with *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation* to compare two Red River parishes. His work probably came closer than that of any other historian to being a scientific examination of communities based on the techniques of historical demography. Unfortunately, his work took insufficient account of the characteristics of Red River parishes as parts of a whole, and as quite different in type from European parishes. Red River was linked to a relatively mobile and dispersed population, while European parishes were distinct communities with considerable persistence of habitation and high rates of endogamy. The Red River parishes included families and parts of families that had recently settled in the area, while other members remained inland.

For instance, his lack of appreciation for the unique qualities of Red River led him to include the Hudson's Bay Company English and Anglican family of John Richards McKay in the enumeration of Saint François Xavier French Catholic parish members who moved to the plains.⁴⁸ While this family undoubtedly owned lots in the parish area,⁴⁹ their vital events were recorded at Anglican parishes.⁵⁰ Whether this

⁴⁷ Brian Gallagher, Master's thesis, "The Whig Interpretation of the History of the Red River" -University of British Columbia (1986).

⁴⁸ Ens, Gerhard, PhD dissertation, p. 235. The categories are his.

⁴⁹ St. Francois Xavier census 1870, John Richards McKay shown as occupying lot W37, with his son Alexander and family, while his son Edward occupied lot W46, another son John McNab Ballenden (Jerry) occupied lot W32, and yet another son, Joseph, lived on lot W20.

⁵⁰ John Richards McKay was married by John West at Brandon, and buried at St. Clements. His sons Alexander and Jerry were married at St. Andrews. (McCloy, Table A).

family were members of the SFX parish depends on the definition of parish used. More important is the relevance of their physical presence in the parish. Ens' work depends on assigned ethnicity by parish residency, yet fails to do a sample analysis to check the correctness of such designations. From his study, it is not possible to detect the presence of such atypical residents, much less their prevalence in Red River parishes. Such fur trade families were highly mobile, and many vital events in their lives were not recorded in Red River records. Hence, some Red River families may have had branches in several parishes.⁵¹

Another scholar who turned to Sprague and Frye was Ruth Swan in her master's thesis, "Ethnicity and the Canadianization of Red River."⁵² She derived nominative data on the members of the first legislature of Manitoba in the 1870s, and explored the membership of various politicians in five different ethnic groups which formed three different political parties. Her research reveals the political split between the English and French mixed-bloods in the earliest years of Manitoba after 1870. Again, as with St. Onge, the period of her research is too late to help resolve questions about fur trade society.

John Nicks, in his article, "Orkneymen in the Hudson's Bay Company 1780-1821," presented useful findings about the biographies of a representative sample of Orcadian employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. He intended to use nominative data

⁵¹ Some of these difficulties are resolved in the published form of the thesis, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1996. See pp. 188-121 and Appendix A, p. 179 and p. 225 n7.

⁵² Ruth Swan, "Ethnicity and the Canadianization of Red River" University of Winnipeg, Master's Thesis, 1991.

to trace their HBC career patterns, also reconstituting their communities of origin, in the Orkneys. To do this, he used work records which included parish of origin, and wills where available, supplemented by “data derived from servants’ bills, documents drawn up to authorize withdrawals from servants accounts.”⁵³ Unfortunately for the field of fur trade historical demography, he never completed the project.

A more recent use of reconstitution techniques occurs in Raymond Beaumont’s article, “Origins and Influences: The Family Ties of Reverend Henry Budd.”⁵⁴ In it he began with a missionary’s account of Budd, a child of Cree and HBC descent, and using account book records from Red River and York Factory, trade journals, wills and correspondence, he reconstructed a kin network that links chief factors, native hunters, and the ‘native’ students in the Church Missionary Society school in Red River. Along the way, he illuminates the transitional position of the Home Guard Cree first described by John Foster. Because of the biographical emphasis of the work, it does not address the question of fur trade society.

Methodology

The process of network analysis begins with defining the geographic boundaries of the community to be studied, and the compiling of an inventory of primary and secondary source materials. From 1793 to 1820, the boundaries of this dual community were defined by the administrative districts of the companies. The North West

⁵³ Ibid. p. 109.

⁵⁴ *Prairie Forum*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Fall 1992.

Company's "Upper Red River"⁵⁵ included the drainage basin of the Assiniboine River from present-day Portage la Prairie to the upper reaches of the river with Fort Alexandria and Upper Assiniboine River Post, north of present-day Roblin, Manitoba. It included the posts on the Qu'Appelle River. Although the Hudson's Bay Company at this time still kept records as if everything was controlled from the forts on the Bay or from London, Brandon House was the *de facto* trade centre for the HBC in the basin. The Brandon master⁵⁶ was usually appointed by the factor at Albany Factory and began each trading season in Martin's Falls, inland at the forks of the Albany River, which was used as a staging point for assembling crews. Men were sent out from Brandon House to posts farther up the Assiniboine, to counter the North West Company trade wherever they found it.

Journals of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company in the Assiniboine basin from the beginning of their rivalry in 1793 until the crisis at Brandon House in 1810-11 reveal a surprising sense of community as well as competition. The Assiniboine basin journals demonstrate social, cultural and kin relationships among the men of the dual stream of trade into the basin and among the people who accompanied them. This study attempts a reconstruction of their relationships.

⁵⁵ Coues, Elliot, ed., *The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and of David Thompson 1799-1814* (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines Inc., 1965), Vol. 1, p. 45, n52, which reads, in part, "Turning now to the other fork - the Assiniboine, as it is now called in Canada, . . . : This was the Red r. of various writers, both before and during Henry's time . . . When such double employ of "Red" was in vogue, the present Red r. used to be qualified as Lower Red r., while the Assiniboine was called Upper Red r., and such were their respective official designations in the N.W.Co."

⁵⁶ The term "master" was in use in this period to refer to the HBC officer in charge of an inland post. The designation should not be confused with the term "postmaster" used after 1820 for (usually mixed blood) servants placed in charge of small branch posts. The latter designation was ranked below clerk, while the former one is over clerks and occasionally over other masters of branch or upriver posts.

The nominal data from such diverse sources as census records, employment records, genealogical compilations,⁵⁷ and family histories⁵⁸ provide a relatively complete picture and were linked to create demographic and employment files for individuals and families. The resultant data base permits the investigating of kinship networks, and the tracing of intermarriages among families which built on a web of pre-existing occupational interactions and ethnic relationships.

The linking of these records required gaining sufficient identifying information for each individual in the area during the period. Identifying individuals properly is crucial. Fur trade records are full of persons of approximately the same age, with the same name but with very different careers. For example, three William McKays were involved in the Plains fur trade in the early nineteenth century. They are distinguishable primarily by their family information. One William McKay married Josette Latour and was posted to Lake Winnipeg during the first decade of the century for the North West Company.⁵⁹ Another, a son of Mad Donald McKay, was married to Julie Chalifoux in 1826.⁶⁰ The third William, the son of John McKay, was born in 1793 and living at Brandon House in 1805.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Genealogical collections such as the Denney collection at the Glenbow Museum, the privately held McCloy collection (focused on the descendants of John McKay), and the St. Boniface Historical Society collections, compiled from Roman Catholic parish records and historical sources, as well as the North West Company employment records as compiled by Masson were used after being evaluated for reliability and comparability.

⁵⁸ See Michael Erben, "Genealogy and Sociology: A Preliminary Set of Statements and Speculations." *Sociology*, Vol 25, No. 2, 1991, pp. 275-292, for a discussion of the theories behind genealogy and the uses of family histories.

⁵⁹ Masson, p.64; DCB VI, p. 465

⁶⁰ Duckworth, 1988; Spry, 1985, p.101

⁶¹ McCloy, Table A.

It is important to define what is meant by “marriage” in this study. For the most part, the definition of relationships *a la façon du pays* follows the criteria set out by the Connolly trial in Montreal in the 1860s. When the court declared the fur trade marriage of former North West Company partner William Connolly and his Cree wife legitimate, it was because “a stable familial relationship formed in the Indian country was apparently continued and the formal legal status of these “wives” was unchallenged.”⁶² If the country relationships were enduring, if the participants acknowledged each other as spouses, and if the relationship was acknowledged by their community (name, duration, repute) then it was seen as a valid marriage.

There was another fur trade custom relating to marriage which must be touched on, as it is relevant in one or two cases in the study. Although the custom of “turning off” was described by Sylvia Van Kirk “whereby the bourgeois leaving the country arranged to have his spouse placed under the protection of another officer or, in many cases, an *engagé*”⁶³ as originating in the North West Company, a similar tactic appears to have been used by Hudson’s Bay Company men at times to provide for their wives and families when they were ordered home.

However, because some of the relationships in the database are based on the sole criterion of the existence of a child of the union (instances which may reflect lack of preservation of data, rather than absence of an ongoing relationship), the previous criterion for a marriage has not been strictly applied in the quantitative analysis. In

⁶² Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, p. 90.

⁶³ Sylvia Van Kirk, “Many Tender Ties” *Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*, p. 50.

numerous instances, however, the existence of a large, regularly spaced family suggests continuity of relationship, providing a basis for judging individual cases.

The Database

The completed database was composed of 172 NWC employees, for whom minimal work records were available, and 171 HBC employees for whom the work record including total time spent employed in Brandon House has been collected from HBC journals. For these individuals, records of a relationship have been found for 71 NWC employees and 18 HBC employees, resulting in 139 children of the NWC and 59 children of the HBC for whom records have been found.⁶⁴

Hudson's Bay Company portions were compiled by going through the journals, year by year, to trace individual employment histories. Those employees were then cross-referenced to existing biographies in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, and other sources. Family data came from the same sources, plus the Denney collection and the work of T.R. (Pat) McCloy (who has compiled an exhaustive set of records around the John McKay family).

The North West Company data came from the Assiniboine basin journals (listed elsewhere) as well as lists in Masson⁶⁵ and the census records in Henry.⁶⁶ Family data for this group was found through exhaustive examination of the St. Boniface database, which

⁶⁴ The numerical disparity here reflects the real numerical predominance of North-West Company employees over HBC employees, a situation commented on at the time. For instance, see HBCA B.22/a/8, 24 Aug. 1801.

⁶⁵ "Arrangements of the Proprietors, clerks, interpreters, &c., of the North-West Company in the Indian Departments 1799, (the old Company)": "Liste des "bourgeois," commis, engagés, et "voyageurs" de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest, après la fusion de 1804." L.R. Masson. *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest* (New York: Antiquarian Press Ltd.), 1960, Vol. I, pp. 61-66, 395-413.

⁶⁶ Coucs, *Alexander Henry's Journal*, p. 282.

also provided information about the ethnicity of the men, ie., whether they were from Quebec or inland and whether they were known to be of mixed descent.

Problems with Databases

The Charles D. Denney Papers are the result of an extended random gleaning, focusing on the best known, dominant Red River families and their collaterals.⁶⁷ It appears that Denney tried to gather as much information as possible, on each of the target families. At times, the material contradicts itself, but it is usually apparent which account is more plausible or truthful. For instance, a birth year given in a death record may be quite unreliable. More specifically, a baptismal record, made at the time of that event, has higher validity than a birthdate listed in a claim for scrip, but if a baptismal record does not agree with a marriage, employment, or death record, those records would be accorded a greater validity with reference to the event at hand. Similarly, records that agree among themselves have higher validity than a single record which does not. The Charles Denney Papers, although not exhaustive in themselves, offer many valuable leads.

The St. Boniface Historical Society database is focused on the descendants of old voyageurs and has somewhat less material on families who could not be traced back to a mid-eighteenth century connection with Quebec. Of all the collections, it was the best organized and easiest to use.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ The Charles D. Denney Papers, Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta. There is also a complete copy available in the Alberta Genealogy Association, Edmonton Chapter Library.

⁶⁸ The St. Boniface Historical Society database, "Le Peuple de l'Ouest: Les Precursurs Recensement Riviere Rouge - 1831 - 56." La Soci t  Historique de Saint-Boniface: Alfred Fortier. Archiviste. C.P. 125, 200 av. de la Cath drale, Saint-Boniface, Manitoba.

The absence of Great Lakes families of mixed descent in the St. Boniface database illustrates a problem common to this research in all locales. When mixed blood families returned to their maternal native communities (as many did), they left very little trace in the records of the dominant society; these sources give very little data on aboriginal families.

Problems with Church Records

The most prominent problem seen in church records of mixed blood families has been expressed in the aphorism, "Money bleaches".⁶⁹ This refers to how clergy changed the ethnicity of the children they baptised based on success of family. It is less of a concern in this study than in those focusing on a later period. For most individuals in this study, the descent path is still fairly short and clear. Another problem is the practice, in the early years of the Red River community, of the clergy frequently baptising the children of a family on the same day that they married the parents, or baptising the wife just before marriage, such that we have no firm data on when the union actually began. These types of records simply reflect the absence of clergy when the union was formed as well as the increased pressure of the dominant society to sanctify or legitimate families. A good example of this is the James Anderson family record discussed later.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ For a discussion of this idea in relation to Métis history, see Richard Slobodin, *Métis of the Mackenzie District*, (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Anthropology, Saint Paul University), 1966, p. 2-5.

⁷⁰ See Van Kirk, p. 165 for a discussion of the view of the clergy toward these proceedings.

Chapter Two : “Bound Together in a Knot” : Forerunners to 1800

The entry of the North West Company into the Assiniboine Valley in 1787¹ was not the first incursion of fur traders into the area. Earlier posts included Fort La Reine on the Assiniboine built by La Verendrye,² and Pine Fort, established by Thomas Corry and Charles Boyer in 1767.³ However, not until the dual trade diasporas of the North West Company and then the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1793, do the first glimpses of fur trade families appear in the records.

Trade Diasporas

The concept of “trade diasporas” is used by Philip Curtin in *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* to refer to movements deep into the foreign territory of a host culture by traders from an alien one: “The result (is) an interrelating net of commercial communities forming a trade network, or trade diaspora.”⁴ In the context of the northwest fur trade, the two trade diasporas, the North West Company’s with its origins in the old Canadien trade and the Hudson’s Bay Company’s with its London-based

¹ Gordon Charles Davidson included a discussion of the difficulty in dating the “English” presence in the Assiniboine basin in his history of the North West Company, *The North West Company* (New York: Russell & Russell, [1918] 1967), p. 46. The date used here is the date given by John McDonnell for the establishment of Fort Esperance.

² Roy W. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), p. 22.

³ H. Mackie, *Pine Post, North West Company Post: A Preliminary Report, 1972* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature), p. 5.

⁴ Philip Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 2.

origins, had widely divergent geographic beginnings and quite different patterns of employment. As well, they offered contrasts of language, ethnicity and stratification or structure.

Jennifer Brown said of them:

There were a number of striking differences between the Montreal North Westers and the Hudson's Bay Company men whose trade monopoly they challenged. Because they often had extensive involvement in North American colonial society, the North Westers were in the process of becoming Canadians, while the Hudson's Bay men continued to be hired directly from Britain and, before 1821, typically returned there after their years of service (Davies 1966: 168). Most North Westers were emigrants who were already enmeshed in networks of kin and friends who either emigrated with them or had preceded them to America. While these men went on to make careers in the fur trade, their relatives were making new homes in such centres as Montreal and Glengarry County, where winterers in the Indian country could find congenial communities when they retired.⁵

However, in the competition for trade, members of the two trade diasporas frequently found themselves neighbours, building variants of what Curtin characterized as merchant towns, which sometimes included separate wards for each different group of merchants.⁶ Marcel Giraud said of fur traders in Rupert's Land, "in practice the good relationship sometimes went as far as building a common palisade around the rival posts to protect them."⁷ For instance, on the North Saskatchewan, the Hudson's Bay Company built Buckingham House in 1792 beside the Northwesters' Fort George. Fort Augustus, built by the North West Company in 1794, was followed by Fort Edmonton, which was

⁵ Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, p. 42.

⁶ Curtin, p. 38 - 40.

⁷ Giraud, p. 198.

built nearby in 1795 by the Hudson's Bay Company.⁸ These were often located on or near traditional trading locations of the host culture. Recent archaeological work along the Saskatchewan River has found considerable congruence between Amerindian trade sites and fur trade posts and routes.⁹

Early Cross Connections

In these situations, the officers of the trade found that their relatively similar cultural and occupational backgrounds, interests and problematic new relations with unfamiliar others (Native peoples), encouraged contact, familiarity and, at times, friendly cooperation with their rivals. As Marcel Giraud said with reference to the late 1700s,

At first, the hostility which these rival enterprises could not fail to arouse had taken the form of a commercial rivalry, sometimes accompanied by reciprocal courtesies and by a promptness to help each other in difficult situations. Of that comparative cordiality which mitigated the bitterness of competition there were many examples.¹⁰

For example, Hudson's Bay Company man Matthew Cocking became friendly with Francois le Blanc (1772-73), Andrew Graham with Joseph Frobisher (1774), and Holmes of Sturgeon Fort had his rival Hudson's Bay Company officers as guests for the Christmas of 1779.¹¹

⁸ Ernest Voorhis, *Historic Forts and Trading Posts of the French Regime and of the English Fur Trading Companies* (Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1930), p. 35.

⁹ David Meyer, Terry Gibson and Dale Russell, "The Quest for Pasquatinow," *Prairie Forum* (1992) 17, 2, and class discussion with Leigh Syms, "Special Topics on Social History: Documenting Native History" Joint Masters' class, U of M/ Uof W, Dr. Jennifer Brown, fall 1993; David Meyer and Paul C. Thistle, "Saskatchewan River Rendezvous Centers and Trading Posts: Continuity in a Cree Social Geography," *Ethnohistory*, 42, 3, 1995, 403-444.

¹⁰ Marcel Giraud, *The Metis of the Canadian West*, Vol. 1, translated by George Woodcock (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986), p. 197, 198.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

At times, other factors led to even closer relationships between men working for competitors. For example, men occasionally moved between the two companies if an opportunity to advance their position presented itself. John McKay, a figure central to this study, was one of those men. Apparently a Scottish Highlander, he joined the HBC at Albany Factory¹² from the Montreal trade, where he had worked for the Cotté - Shaw partnership,¹³ representing Alexander Shaw and his son Angus at Lac Ste Anne (present-day Lake Nipigon).¹⁴ McKay signed up saying he was most recently from Montreal.¹⁵ In 1792, the HBC sent him back to the area to open a post in opposition to the Canadians. For the next three decades, he was an integral part of the battle for the fur trade. He spent six more years in various posts between James Bay and Lake Winnipeg, an area known as the "Little North", before being put in charge of Brandon House in 1801 where he spent the rest of his career until his death in 1810.¹⁶

In contrast, Robert Goodwin, another HBC master at Brandon, spent his entire career with the HBC. After six years at Albany as Surgeon, he was posted inland to Gloucester House in the "Little North" as a Trader in the fall of 1787. From 1788 to 1794 he was master at Osnaburgh House. During his time in the Little North, he played an important role in the push inland.¹⁷ He spent the next two years in charge at Brandon

¹² Victor P. Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North. Indians, Pedlars and Englishmen East of Lake Winnipeg, 1760-1821* (Winnipeg: Rupert's Land Research Centre), p. 63, 64.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 58; HBCA, B.3/b/28, f. 13.

¹⁵ T.R. McCloy's annotated manuscript version of his DCB biography cites HBCA, A.32/4, f. 84 (his contract with the HBC dated 7 May 1791); B.3/b/28, f. 9, which tells of McKay's arrival at Albany with a letter of introduction from Duncan Cameron.

¹⁶ T.R. McCloy, *ibid.*

¹⁷ Lytwyn, pp. 56-60.

House. After a year's leave, he remained at Albany for a year before returning to Brandon House in 1798. In 1801, he was promoted to Second at Fort Albany, a position he maintained until 1804 when he took charge at Osnaburgh House. He died in 1805 on his way out to the Bay. His career is fairly conventional in HBC records.¹⁸

Cuthbert Grant, Sr.'s career was fairly typical of that of a wintering partner in the North West Company. In 1786, his career took him to the Athabasca where he served until 1789 or later.¹⁹ By 1791 he was trading in the upper Assiniboine valley, where he established himself on Aspen Creek. His post there, known as Fort Rivière Tremblante, was where his sons were born.²⁰ In 1793, he took part in establishing the first North West Company post at the Souris River mouth where the Assiniboine bends from south to east, in opposition to some independent traders.²¹ Later that year, the HBC, represented by his former NWC colleague, Donald McKay, built Brandon House to oppose them both.²²

Although these men worked in the same area, there is no evidence that they ever met. Cuthbert Grant, Sr. died on his way out to Montreal in the spring of 1798, having wintered at Fort Augustus.²³ John McKay spent that winter as his first in charge at Brandon House,²⁴ while Robert Goodwin was still in Albany after returning from

¹⁸ HBCA, prepared biography, JHB/ek, June 1987.

¹⁹ Duckworth, *English River Book*, pp. 147-149.

²⁰ In spite of the efforts of many historians and genealogists, the mother of Cuthbert Grant, Sr.'s children remains unknown.

²¹ As detailed in Duckworth, *The English River Book: A North West Company Journal and Account Book of 1786*, pp. 147-149. and MacLeod, *Grant of Grantown*, p. 3.

²² HBCA, B.22.a/1, f.1, *Brandon House Journal*, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg.

²³ MacLeod, p. 4; Duckworth, p. 149.

²⁴ HBCA, B.22.a/5, f.1.

London.²⁵ Their significance for this study lies in the relationships formed among their native-born offspring.

Other early traders in the basin included bourgeois John McDonell, "Le Prêtre,"²⁶ brother to Miles McDonell and married to Magdeleine Poitras who was the daughter of commis Andre Poitras, Sr.²⁷ and his native wife;²⁸ commis Angus McGillis who married Marguerite (Vent de bout) and was the son of Mary McDonell;²⁹ commis Pierre Falcon, Sr.,³⁰ who married Pas au Traverse's daughter and whose son, Pierre Jr. married Mary Grant, daughter of Cuthbert Grant, Sr.;³¹ Andre Poitras, Jr. who married Marguerite Grant³² (father unknown); and bourgeois A.N. McLeod (married to a Snake woman)³³ who established upper Fort Alexandria.

²⁵ There is evidence in the Servants Accounts that Robert Goodwin and John McKay had perhaps crossed trails. Goodwin's [personal order] account for 1801 includes the line "3 Women's Shifts the same kind as was sent to Mr. J. McKay. 4/6 13.6" HBCA, A.16/111, (1801). It suggests that either the wives were talking to each other, or that the husbands were discussing their wives' clothing.

²⁶ as he is distinguished in A.G. Morice, "Miles McDonell and His Brothers." *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. X, No. 3, Toronto, 1929, p. 322. See also A.G. Morice, "A Canadian Pioneer: Spanish John." *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. X, No. 3, p. 227; "Sidelights on the Careers of Miles MacDonell and His Brothers." *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. X, No. 4, pp. 323, 324.

²⁷ McDonell, John, "The Red River (1793-1797)" in Masson, Vol. 1, p. 285, 288.

²⁸ Poitras' wife's father was identified by John McDonell, 12 Feb. 1794, "The Red River (1793-1797)" in Masson, *Les Bourgeois*, Vol. 1, p. 288.

²⁹ Clarence Kipling, "McGillis Family," The Charles Denney Papers, Glenbow Museum archives. It is unknown exactly how Mary McDonell is connected to John and Miles.

³⁰ Birth of his son to daughter of Pas au Traverse, Cree, 1849 Saint Francois Xavier census; S.F.X. Register of death, 26/10/1876, age 83 years, 4 mos. 22 days; Scrip Application, S.F.X. 1876 which gives birthdate of 4/6/1793. all from Denney Papers; Roderick McKenzie, "Reminiscences," in Masson, Vol. 1, p. 63.

³¹ "Falcon Pierre Died 26/10/1876, age 83 yrs. 4 mos. 22 days husband of Marie Grant" SFX Register, Denney Papers; Scrip Affidavit of Pierre Falcon, Jr., SFX Scrip, Denney Papers; Margaret MacLeod, *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown* p. 3.

³² St. Boniface Database, #350, "Poitras, Andre, son of Poitras, Andre, m. Grant Marguerite." Registration of marriages.

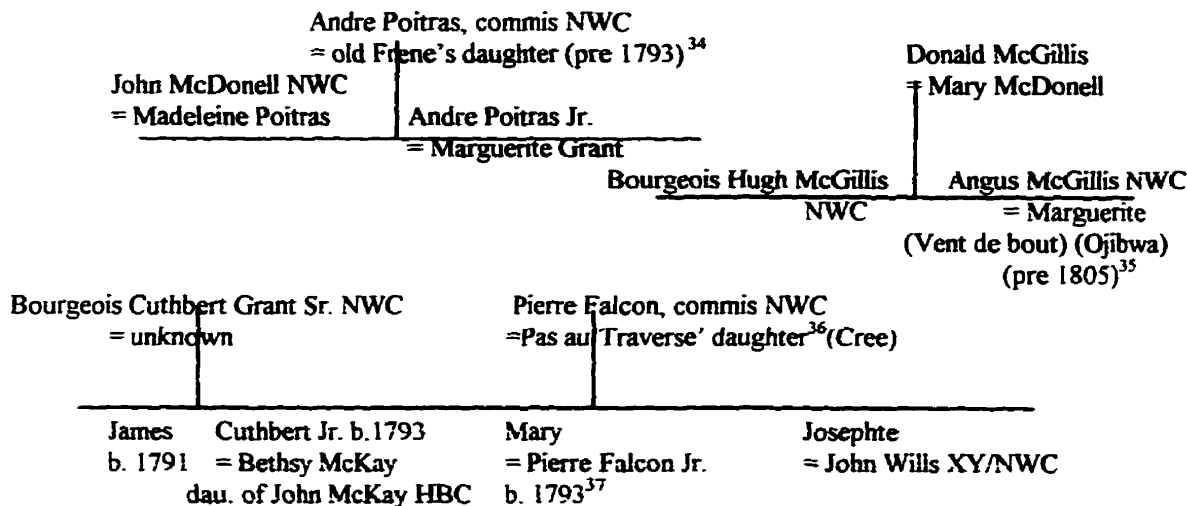
³³ Daniel Harmon, *Sixteen Years in Indian Country: The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon, 1800-1816*. W.Kaye Lamb, ed. (Toronto: McMillan Company of Canada, Ltd.), p. 50.

Figure 1: Traders' Length of Service. Assiniboine Basin. 1793-1800

| Year | John McKay HBC | Robert Goodwin HBC | Cuthbert Grant Sr. NWC | John McDonell NWC | Andre Poitras Sr. NWC | Pierre Falcon Sr. NWC |
|------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1793 | | | yes | Yes | yes | yes |
| 1794 | | yes | | yes | yes | |
| 1795 | | yes | | yes | | |
| 1796 | | | | yes | | |
| 1797 | yes | | | yes | yes | |
| 1798 | | yes | | yes | | |
| 1799 | | yes | | yes | | yes |
| 1800 | yes | | | yes | yes | |

This table traces the documented presence of certain traders. The presence of Andre Poitras, Sr. and Pierre Falcon, Sr. and later, their sons, suggests the possibility of their continual employment in that area.

Figure 2: Early Marriage Relations



Company affiliation is given where known.

³⁴ John McDonell, "The Red River, (1793-1797)" in Masson, Vol. I, p. 285.

³⁵ Clarence Kipling, "McGillis Family", Charles Denney Papers, Glenbow Archives, Calgary.

³⁶ A.N. McLeod, Grace Lee Nute, ed. "Diary of Archibald N. McLeod," in *Five Fur Traders of the Northwest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1933), p. 165.

³⁷ Saint Francois Xavier Register of death, 26/10/1876, age 83 years, 4 mos. 22 days: Scrip Application, S.F.X. 1876 which gives birthdate of 4/6/1793. all from Denney Papers.

These relationships demonstrate a late eighteenth century formation of a family network among the officers and clerks of the NWC in the Assiniboine basin.

Two other men were important in the Assiniboine basin in this period, particularly because they left journals behind. Bourgeois Archibald Norman McLeod (already mentioned), and clerk Daniel Harmon both served in the upper reaches of the Assiniboine basin for the North West Company. Masson reported McLeod as proprietor at Fort Dauphin in 1799,³⁸ and as bourgeois in 1804.³⁹ Although Fort Dauphin is technically outside the basin, McLeod's journal reveals overlaps in native groups and traders. He had been with the North West Company since 1787, and he was already a partner when Harmon served under him in Swan River District, according to W. Kaye Lamb who found that his post journal forms "an interesting contrast to Harmon's tranquil personal narrative, kept at the same post at the same time."⁴⁰ MacLeod was transferred to Athabasca in 1802.⁴¹

Daniel Harmon joined the NWC and travelled inland in the spring of 1800.⁴² He served until 1821 when he retired.⁴³ He spent his first five years in the Swan River District, which lay to the west of Lake Winnipegosis. Indeed, for most of his service he was stationed at three posts, Swan River Fort and Bird Mountain, both on Swan River,

³⁸ Masson, Vol. I, p. 62.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 395.

⁴⁰ Lamb, p. xxi.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Lamb, p. xii.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, xvi.

and Fort Alexandria, on the upper branch of the Assiniboine River,⁴⁴ all in the forested zone between Lake Winnipegosis and the parkland on the west side of the Assiniboine basin.

All the employees mentioned so far formed families during their time in the interior. Nine of them had begun families by 1800. The group illustrates the state of native unions at that point.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, xii.

Figure 3: Fur Trade Families in the Assiniboine Basin before 1800

| Men | Ethnicity of husband | Position | Wife | Ethnicity of wife | Children before 1800 | Children Total |
|----------------|------------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| A.N. McLeod | Scottish/ American? | Partner | | a Rapid Indian | 1 | at least one |
| Andre Poitras | Canadien | commis | Frene's daughter | Cree | 1 | at least two |
| Cuthbert Grant | Scottish | Partner | unknown | unknown | 2-4 | 5? |
| Donald McKay | Highland Scot | Master | | Cree (second) Scottish | 2 | 2 mixed 2 from Scottish wife |
| John McDonell | Scottish | Partner | Magdeleine Poitras | Cree?/ Canadien | 1 | 6 |
| John McKay | Highland Scot or Scot/ Canadian | Master | Mary Favell | mixed Cree/English | 5 | 8 |
| Pierre Falcon | Canadien | commis | Pas au Traverse' daughter | Cree | 1 | at least one |
| Robert Goodwin | English | Master | Mistigoose Jane/Jenny | Cree (second) Mixed | 5 | 4 2 from second wife |

The Winter of 1796-1797

The most explicit illustration of the intertwining relationships between men in this early period is the record of incidents in the winter of 1796/97 at Brandon House. That season, with James Sutherland in charge for the Hudson's Bay Company against John McDonell for the North West Company, saw desertions, reconciliations, cross-company fraternizing, joint hunting expeditions, a near death from exposure and the abrupt demise of the HBC master.

The events of that season revealed tensions between master and servant, between the superiors of the two companies in that area, and in the relationships formed between the servants of both companies as they attempted to reconcile the conflicting goals of company and kin.

Tensions between master and servant were apparent in the Hudson's Bay Company Red River crew from the beginning of the outfit. James Sutherland, a trader with a record of long service on the frontier of the HBC territory in the Little North,⁴⁵ indicated that the men were poorly outfitted at the time of their departure for Brandon from Martin's Falls, and commented on the expense of outfitting them, considering that they "scarcely hav[e] a Blanket to their bed, shirt or Jacket to their backs, but what has been taken out of this outfit"⁴⁶ "notwithstanding I have given them almost half my outfit

⁴⁵ Lytwyn, pp. 46, 47, 51, 60, 61, 63.

⁴⁶ HBCA. B.22/a/4, f.13d.

to Cloath them etc.”⁴⁷ Nevertheless he begrudged them the supplies he dispensed on their arrival at Brandon House.⁴⁸

Tensions during the trip inward can be shown by two examples. On 19 August 1796, Sutherland recorded, “put up rather to[o] soon I wanted the people to work to take advantage of the good weather, for which they got three pints of grog to a man, they will only work however as they please what a hairry crew these Red River men are ~”⁴⁹ Again on 21 August he made this telling comment: “Self slept at the further end of the Carrying Place, the man who sleeps in my Tent [a personal servant?] was grumbled at by the rest for carrying over a parcel with him when came to sleep. N.B. I only insert this to show how these men are bound together in a knot, to study only their own interest and to opose command, I have never had ocasion to observe the like before.”⁵⁰

He had problems throughout the trip with either leaking kegs of brandy⁵¹ or with tipping crew, as suggested by the changes implemented by the Albany Factor for the next season.⁵² Tensions may later have been exacerbated by the lack of usual medicines in the post. For instance, he commented on the lack of Rigor Balsam,⁵³ with which he wanted to treat one of the men who suffered frostbite later in the season.

⁴⁷ HBCA. B.22.a/4, f. 19d.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 12d, f. 13.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 8d.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, f. 12d, 13.

⁵² HBCA. B.22.a/4, f. 39d, 40.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, f. 24d.

James Sutherland seemed to have a way of directing matters which exacerbated normal tensions between master and servants. He recorded ordering the men to serve in a rotation of daily tasks. In other years, the men had served in consistent assigned roles, which gave them more autonomy and independence of action (a method of command also found in records of the same time period at Buckingham House).⁵⁴ Three months later, a rash of desertions began with a refusal by Jacob Henderson to gather wood on his rotation.⁵⁵

Sutherland recorded in some detail the desertions of Jacob Henderson on 17 November, Thomas Richards that same evening and the attempted desertion of John Easter on the 19th.⁵⁶ He blamed these events on the Canadien men “Who is using every means to debauch our men, but particularly the Ignorant who can’t see an Inch before their nose.” Of Easter, he said, “his ignorance gets the better of his reason.”⁵⁷

The language Sutherland used in recording problems with the men is revealing of his strong views of the difference in status between himself and the men. In writing about the desertions, he called Henderson “the contracted servant”⁵⁸ and John Easter “the Company slave.”⁵⁹ In contrast, John McKay used much milder language when he commented on Easter’s illness eight years later, on 8 May 1804: “Jn Easter is so ill he

⁵⁴ Babcock, Douglas R., *Opponents and Neighbours: A Narrative History of Fort George and Buckingham House, 1792-1800* (Edmonton: Historic Sites Service, Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism), p. 125, quoting Michael Payne “The Most Respectable Place in the Territory” *A Social History of York Factory*, Ottawa: 1980, pp. 51, 52.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 17d, 12 November 1796.

⁵⁶ HBCA, B.22/a/4, f. 17d, 19, 19d.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 19.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* f. 17d.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* f. 19. This is the only place where this use of the term was seen.

cannot get out of bed without help, it is a pity, he is a good lad a good Steersman and very serviceable in many other respects.”⁶⁰

In this year marked by material shortages, Sutherland also ordered the men to build him a separate room when he found the accommodations inadequate.⁶¹ This would have further removed him from the men. He apparently felt it important to maintain a strong class/rank distinction, unlike the masters before and after him, who seemed to use a more benignly paternal form of governing.

He seemingly had no misgivings, however, about socializing with John McDonell, the wintering partner of the North West Company who was opposing him. This fraternizing of HBC master and NWC partner may be seen as a meeting of equals, of two educated anglophones in the wilderness. In this record, it did not carry the elements of deliberate one-upmanship and irritation observed on other occasions. Previously, when Sutherland was opposing Duncan Cameron at Red Lake post in 1790 he “was made painfully aware of the abundant resources of his opponent”⁶² while he wrestled with inadequate materials, men, knowledge and trade goods. At Brandon the situation seemed much more equal. The HBC had to some extent, caught up in the interior.

Other evidence of a convivial relationship between Sutherland and McDonell may be found in the letters exchanged when Henderson deserted. Sutherland warned, “I should be sorry that such a worthless being as the subject of this should be the means of

⁶⁰ B.22/a/11, f.12, 12d.

⁶¹ B.22/a/4, f.13d, 14, 20.

⁶² Lytwyn, p. 61.

laying the foundation of any misunderstanding between us.”⁶³ In his journal he blamed the Canadian men, not their North West Company superior, for luring away his servants. McDonnell, meanwhile, claimed that Henderson had previously arranged with one of his men (whose name Sutherland spelled “Pellie” in one instance and “Pettrie” in another⁶⁴ [possibly Poitras]) for shelter.

Relations between the employees of the two companies are revealed in several ways. Sutherland recorded joint hunting expeditions,⁶⁵ and complained about his men trading with the Canadians for clothing.⁶⁶ During the desertions, his complaint of the Canadians seducing his men away⁶⁷ revealed ongoing interaction between the servants of the two companies. That records of such joint endeavors as the hunting expeditions, private trading and conversations exist from a period of official rivalry suggests the possibility of more unrecorded and completely unofficial cooperation between employees.

It is possible that Andre Poitras, Senior, was the “Pellie” who sheltered Henderson. Masson recorded no man by that name employed in 1800. There is evidence in surviving North West Company journals, however, that Poitras was known to play host to newcomers.⁶⁸ As McDonnell’s father-in-law, his involvement with deserters would have been seen to have implicated that partner.

⁶³ HBCA, B.22.a/4, f. 18, 18d.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid. f. 19, 24d.

⁶⁶ Ibid., f. 19d.

⁶⁷ Ibid., f. 19, 19d, 35d.

⁶⁸ Francois-Antoine Larocque. “Yellowstone Journal,” in Wood. Thiessen, p. 200.

In this chapter, we have examined relationships between the employees of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in the Assiniboine basin before 1800. While the social relationship between the masters is well drawn, those between the men is faintly sketched, and must be extrapolated from the remarks about joint expeditions and the "seducing" of men to leave their employment. It is also clear that the men within Brandon House had a tight sense of community, as expressed in James Sutherland's phrase, "bound together in a knot". The next chapter will explore that sense of community as it revealed itself in 1805, and expand on cross-company relationships.

Chapter Three : "A Real North West Ball" : the Assiniboine Fur Trade Community 1800-1805

May 27, Monday. [1805] Riviere a la Souris or Mouse River [Fort Assiniboine, also known as Fort La Souris]. Here are three Forts belonging to the North West XY & Hudson's Bay Companies. Last evening Mr. Chaboillez invited the People of the other two Forts to a Dance and we had a real North West Ball, for when three fourths of the People were so much intoxicated as not to be able to walk streight, the other fourth put an end to the Ball or rather Bawl! And this morning we were invited to breakfast at the Hudson's Bay House with a Mr. [John] McKay and in the evening to a Ball, which however ended in a more decent manner than the one we had the preceding evening at our House _ not that all were sober, but we had no fighting.¹

The winter of 1804/05 was a pivotal year in the history of the fur trade. The North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company had been in direct opposition in the provisioning posts on the prairies since 1793. The XY Company was formed in 1795 when some partners, notably Alexander Mackenzie, withdrew from the North West Company, and began independent trading under the auspices of Forsyth, Richardson and Company. It had been operating in opposition in the area since 1798. During the winter of 1804/05, the two Montreal firms sent word to their traders of the amalgamation of their firms. Word also came to all the traders through their Mandan trade, of the presence of Lewis and Clark on a United States government-sponsored expedition across

¹ W. Kaye Lamb, ed. *Sixteen Years in the Indian Country: the Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon*, pp. 89-90.

the continent to the Oregon country,² an event which was understood, even at that time, to be a claim to that territory³ following upon the Americans' purchase of Louisiana from the French in 1803. The traders, in their trips to the Mandans, were much more aware of the various aboriginal nations' presence there, than they were of which colonial power currently claimed the territory.

Examination of the writings of the traders in the Assiniboine valley that winter reveals ongoing social interaction and a sense of community that goes beyond what current historiography would lead us to expect. The weekend ball in May 1805, which Harmon described, included residents of the North West, XY and Hudson's Bay Company posts. A close examination of the probable participants in that event reveals familial and friendship ties suggestive of an expanding fur trade social network.

The Community of 1805

By 1805, two of the fur trading companies had been in active competition in the Assiniboine valley for thirteen years. The Brandon journals show that five of the Hudson's Bay Company men had been employed at Brandon or at other HBC posts in the area continuously for a decade or more, while eight others exhibited patterns of long employment. The following chart shows the employment patterns for Brandon House up to 1805.

² Lamb, pp. 86. 85.

³ John McKay, HBCA, B.22.a/12. 12 April 1805.

Figure 4: Length of Service in the Assiniboine Basin - Hudson's Bay Company, as of 1805

| Length of stay | Number of Men (1793-1805) N= 119 | | Number of men in (1804/ 1805) N= 22 | | Number with families predating 1806. |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|--|-------|---|
| One to four years | 90 | 75.6% | 9 | 40.9% | 3 |
| Five to nine years | 24 | 20.1% | 10 | 45% | 7 |
| Ten or more years | 5 | 4.2% | 3 | 13.6% | 3 |

As Figure 4 reveals in the first column, between 1793 and 1805, 119 men were employed by the Hudson's Bay Company in the Assiniboine basin. While about 76% (90) of those men spent less than five years in the area, 24% (29) spent five or more years (of those five spent more than ten years in the same area). The second column shows the number of men in the crew of the 1804/05 season in each category. More than half of that crew had long experience in the area. The third column reveals that of the 90 short-term men, three formed families, while seven of the 24 medium term men did, and three of the five longterm men formed families. This proportion is suggestive as a minimum and may rise as further evidence becomes available. It suggests that there is correlation between duration and family formation. However this should be taken with caution as the search for families was not exhaustive.

The table also documents a small but persisting group of employees who can be designated as "stayers", that is, men of a trading diaspora who remain in an area and form relationships with the original residents, as opposed to those who move back and forth.⁴ This pattern corresponds to Curtin's distinction between

⁴ Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 53.

those who stayed put in a particular node in the trade network, and those who moved back and forth in charge of the merchandise. Those who stayed tended to be informal cross-cultural brokers. They were often landlords [not true, of course, for fur traders] as well as formal commercial brokers in the sense of arranging the terms of specific transactions.⁵

Louis JollyCouer, a Canadian, and John Easter, an Inuit, entered the valley in 1793, brought in by HBC inland post master⁶ Donald McKay. Their names appeared on every surviving employment list through 1805 and in journal entries in years when an employment list is lacking. JollyCouer usually acted as guard and caretaker of the horses, a position later known as “wrangler”. Easter was generally employed in provisioning the post, especially in times of shortage. Both men married native women. Louis JollyCouer’s marriage with Sussette, a Cree woman, was recorded on a scrip affidavit filled out by descendants of their daughter Josette or Josephthe, born in 1810, who married Peter Pruden.⁷ John Easter formally married Nancy, an Indian woman, 14 June 1831,⁸ but as he was apparently born in about 1776,⁹ he would have been 56 at the time of that marriage. The chances are high that this church marriage represented the sanctifying of a long-term relationship which began in the Brandon area.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ This position, designating Master of an inland post, is not to be confused with the position of Postmaster created by Governor Simpson for mixed-blood men. The latter was under the position of clerk in the Company after 1820, while the former was the man in charge of a post before the re-organization of 1811.

⁷ St. Boniface Historical Society database, affidavit.

⁸ Denney Papers, Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta, St. Johns’ marriage record, “Easter John a Eskimo, now residing, at Red River Settlement, & Nancy a Indian Woman of the same place, were married at Red River Settlement. By banns, on June 14, 1831 (S.J.) By Rev. William Cockran.”

⁹ His history with the HBC began with this notation in the Albany Fort Journal, 19 April 1783, by Edward Jarvis: “Traded an Esquimaux boy, who I found the Indians were for murdering if I had not done so. paid 30 beaver for him, and hope as he is only about 7 yrs. old a promising servant to the Company, being traded on Easter Eve named him Easter.” (HBCA. B/3/a/81. f. 24).

The other men who had served ten or more years in 1805 were James Anderson the tailor, William Louttit, and James Slater, while James Inkster, cooper and John Lyons had served nine. Two of the masters who served in Brandon House had put in longer than average terms. Robert Goodwin had served there for five consecutive years, while John McKay, in charge in 1805, was serving his seventh year in the area. Records of native families have been found for all these men except Louttit.

In spite of a problem with early records, the existence of these families before 1806 can be verified for James Anderson, James Slater, Robert Goodwin and John McKay, where the birthdates of some or all of the children are known. In some cases, the data comes from an age given in a Red River census.¹⁰ In other cases, the child and relationship are only preserved in the form of an affidavit in an application for scrip by a grandchild.¹¹

James Anderson's HBCA prepared biography¹² shows that he entered HBC service in 1796 from Stenness, Orkney as a tailor, serving out of Churchill first, then out of Albany, in Brandon House from 1812 to 1819 and finally in York Factory from 1819 to 1823. Brandon House journals show him employed at Brandon from 1796 on. The biography also reveals that his wife Mary, a Saulteaux Indian, was baptised on 23 January 1821, the same day they were married and six of their children were baptised.

¹⁰ For instance, John Lyons' first child by Margaret Kipling appears to be Sophia Lyons whose age is given in the 1849 Red River census as 38. Denney Papers, Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta.

¹¹ For instance, James Slater's marriage can be dated by a scrip record from Baie St. Paul for his daughter Charlotte who was born in 1805. Denney Papers, Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta, from Gail Morin's database. (Gail Morin, P.O. Box 275, Elmer City, WA, 99124-0275 USA)

¹² HBCA, prepared biography, MGM/avg, October 1985, revised 6/89, JHB.

This family size is a clue to the real length of the relationship. Family genealogical records¹³ do give birthdates for the children, providing a tentative beginning date for the relationship.

The HBCA prepared biography of James Inkster¹⁴ shows that he joined the HBC from Orphir, Orkney in 1796 and served as a cooper out of Albany from 1796 to 1811, as cooper in Winnipeg District from 1811 to 1814 and in Brandon House, Winnipeg District, from 1814 to 1821. The Brandon journals show him in Brandon from 1796 to 1814. The biography again reveals a formal marriage in the 1820s, to Mary “a Cree Indian woman” on 26 October 1824. Their three children had been baptised on 23 January 1821. While the biography lists two of them as born before 1811, it is not possible to establish a beginning date for this relationship at this point. However, marriage records used in genealogical collections give birthdates of 1806 for John, the eldest, 1809 for James and 1811 for Mary.¹⁵

While many of the men with medium or long term service served under one master for his entire time in the area, and then continued under the next master, a few men with medium lengths of service served only under one master. For example, Humphrey Favell was hired en route to Brandon in 1802 by John McKay, his brother-in-law, to replace sick and wounded men.¹⁶ He appears to have served his entire HBC career of five years under his brother-in-law.

¹³ Eleanor Anderson, letter and genealogical charts. October 21, 1993.

¹⁴ HBCA, prepared biography, JHB/jhb, December, 1990.

¹⁵ Charles D. Denney Papers, Glenbow Archives, Calgary Alberta, as quoted in the Gail Morin database. Gail Morin, P.O. Box 275, Elmer City, WA, 99124-0275, USA.

¹⁶ HBCA. B.22.a/9. f. 1.

Records are not adequate for a similar examination of NWC employment, but family histories and references to family groupings suggest that NWC men were also establishing native families of long duration. While records of children or families have been found for 39 NWC men, the best records from the journals are for the families of Andre Poitras, Pierre Falcon and the Ducharmes.

Andre Poitras, Senior was a NWC commis in Qu'Appelle in 1805.¹⁷ Andre Poitras, Junior, his son, is recorded as married to Marguerite Grant.¹⁸ A descendant of the family, working with Alfred Fortier of the St. Boniface Historical Society, has compiled a family history which traces the family four generations back before Andre, Senior in Canada, and forward five generations to the present. The family is still present in the Qu'Appelle valley.

There are also several references to the family in the journals. John McDonell, for example, recorded on 2 December 1793, "Poitra's wife made me nine pairs of shoes."¹⁹ On 12 February 1794, he reported "*Vieux Frère, Camarade de Paulette*, -- Poitras' father [in-law?] -- and five young men came *sans dessein* from the Forks."²⁰

Daniel Harmon also mentioned the family. His entry for 26 October 1804 reads in part, "on the 9th we reached Riviere Qui Appelle [Qu'Appelle River] where the North

¹⁷ Masson, p. 402.

¹⁸ St. Boniface Historical Society Database, quoting S.F.X. records.

¹⁹ John McDonell, "The Red River, (1793-1797)" in Masson, Vol. I, p. 285.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

West & XY Coys. have each a Fort and where we passed one night with Monsr. [Andre] Poitras who has charge of the Post.”²¹

Francois-Antoine Larocque in 1805 also reported [Andre] Poitras had been in charge at Qu’Appelle, noting his replacement by F.N. Lamothe “in the [previous] spring.”²²

The Falcon family also had a long history of service in the area. The “arrangements of the Proprietors, clerks, interpreters, &c., of the North-West Company in the Indian Departments 1799 (the old Company),” probably prepared by Roderick McKenzie, listed Pierre Falcon in Upper Red River, under John McDonell, proprietor.²³ He appears again as commis in a more complete list of NWC bourgeois and employees just after the merger of 1804.

Francois-Antoine Larocque also recorded visiting “Mr. [Pierre] Falcon at the Grand Bois about 15 miles above this [Mount a la Bosse fort]” where he had built a house to winter in, on 18 October 1805.²⁴ A journal entry from A.N. McLeod on 16 March 1801 reveals the name of Falcon’s father-in-law. “Ten Crees arrived here in the afternoon. they have very little of anything, they are our two hunters, Falcon’s fatherinlaw Old Pass au Traverse & son with Petit Sonnant &c.”²⁵

²¹ Harmon, p. 84.

²² Larocque, Francois-Antoine, “Yellowhead Journal,” in W. Raymond Wood, and Thomas D. Thiessen, *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders Among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), p. 290.

²³ Roderick McKenzie, “Reminiscences,” in Masson, Vol. I, p. 63.

²⁴ F.A. Larocque, in Wood and Thiessen, p. 200.

²⁵ A.N. McLeod, Grace Lee Nute, ed. “Diary of Archibald N. McLeod,” in *Five Fur Traders of the Northwest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1933), p. 165.

Pierre Falcon, Senior, also seems to be the person to whom John McKay referred as his sometime travelling companion²⁶ and nurse, according to his account of his illness, later in this chapter. John McDonald of Garth in his autobiographical notes (1807) recorded his apparent death that year (Falcon being an uncommon name): "A Clerk at Riviere la Souris, one Falcon, died in the course of the winter."²⁷

Pierre Falcon, junior, was born in 1793, a year after John Richards McKay, the eldest son of John McKay.²⁸ He was married to Mary, daughter of Cuthbert Grant, Sr. and sister to Cuthbert Grant, junior.²⁹

Another family that shows early traces in the upper Assiniboine basin is the Ducharme family. The evidence in the journals is less definitive than for the other families, but suggests that Pierre,³⁰ born in 1776, took a Saulteaux wife, whom he called Catharine.³¹ A.N. McLeod also mentioned an Ettiene and a Collish,³² who was married

²⁶ HBCA, B.22/a/12, f.2d On 17 July 1804, "Self, Henderson, Mssr Falcon & two Indians started for Mountain a la Bas."

²⁷ "John McDonald of Garth: Autobiographical Notes, 1791-1816." in L.R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest* (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), Vol. 2, pp. 36, 37.

²⁸ 1849 S.F.X. census: S.F.X. Register of death 26/10/1876, age 83 years, 4 mos. , 22 days: Scrip Application, S.F.X. 1876 which gives birthdate of 4/6/1793. All from Denney Papers, Glenbow Museum Archives.

²⁹ S.F.X. Register of Death, St. Annes 1876 Scrip Application, Denney Papers.

³⁰ Masson, 1804 list, p. 403: Alfred Fortier, *Le Peuple de L'Ouest: Les Précurseurs*, St. Boniface Historical Society [engagements des voyageurs: 1788-1822]. This gives his place of engagement as Lachine.

³¹ Denney Papers, St. Boniface 1876 Scrip, St. Vital 1876 Scrip, Red River Census 1831, age 55.

³² McLeod, p. 161.

to a Charlotte Amerindian;³³ a Nicholas, whose spouse was known as Charlotte;³⁴ and an H. Ducharme.³⁵

A series of entries in the McLeod journal between 4 January and 1 February 1801 demonstrate the part played by Ettiene and others in provisioning the post. He recorded sending “the two Ducharmes” out to hunt buffalo,³⁶ and on 18 January “La Frenier came from the Ducharm’s lodge who have killed he says 21 Cows, they are near white Mud river.”³⁷ The next seven days’ entries mention sending men to the Ducharmes’ for meat. On 1 February, he recorded “Ettiene Ducharme came here to inform me that there are six tents of Crees where they are who have got a great many Sledges load of provisions & a good many skins.”³⁸ These entries accord very well with the description of “fort hunters” described by Babcock in his depiction of life in Fort George and Buckingham House.³⁹ The entries also suggest the possibility of a family lodge established away from the post.

The Brandon journals revealed a similar pattern of fort hunters and of sending men out en derouine to fetch furs, as this excerpt from 1805-06 illustrates:

³³ Denney Papers, Baie St. Paul 1876 Scrip Application.

³⁴ McLeod, p. 171; Denney Papers, S.F.X. Register, Marriage of Pierre, son of Nicholas Ducharme and Charlotte Saulteaux to Marie Desjarlais.

³⁵ McLeod, p. 133.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³⁷ McLeod, p. 153.

³⁸ McLeod, p. 156.

³⁹ Douglas R. Babcock. *Opponents and Neighbours: A Narrative History of Fort George and Buckingham House Fur Trade posts. 1792 - 1800* (Edmonton: Historic Sites Service. Alberta Culture & Multiculturalism). p. 94.

“Feb. 21st Friday. Wm Yorston Js Short & G. Spence returned from the Round Hill’s tent with sixty five beaver and forty bladders of fat, J. Easter and Tom Cragy came from their own tent with the meat of one cow.”⁴⁰

Henry’s Census

Another document adds specific quantitative data to the picture of the community. The journal of Alexander Henry the Younger contains a chart titled “Report of Northwest Population, 1805.”⁴¹ The chart lists the population of the North West Company territory by departments, divided into categories of race and gender. However, as Coues pointed out, “In this census the Indian wives and half-breed children appear to be enumerated as “whites”; there were no white women in the country.” While the figures for the Indian population have been included in studies of native demography,⁴² it would seem that few, if any, fur trade historians have followed up on the hint dropped by Coues: “The table is interesting as indicating the percentage of men who took Indian wives.”⁴³ Because we know that there were no white women in the territory, the figures in the category “white women” in fact refer to native wives. Therefore, without requiring statistical accuracy, it is possible to get some idea of the number of native unions with North West Company men in each department. It is also possible to get a rough approximation of the proportion of employees in such a relationship.

⁴⁰ HBCA, B.22/a/13, f. 13d.

⁴¹ Coues, *Alexander Henry’s Journal*, p. 282.

⁴² Henry F. Dobyns, *Native American Historical Demography: a Critical Bibliography*, Newberry Library Centre for the History of the American Indian Bibliography Series, Francis Jennings, gen. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976).

⁴³ Henry, Alexander, the Younger, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson*. ed. Elliot Coues (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines Inc., 1965) p. 282.

For the Upper Red River department, the table records 56 white men and 52 white women, the only department in which white men and “white women” appear in anything close to an equal proportion. This, along with other evidence, suggests that most white men in the area had “country” wives. In contrast, the neighbouring Fort Dauphin department was listed as having 45 white men and 22 “white” women, while Fort des Prairies department, which evidently included much of the prairie region, was listed as having 136 white men and 59 “white” women. The following table, drawn from Henry’s “Report of Northwest Population, 1805,” gives the full tally for a few departments as well as the ratio of white men to “white” women for each and Henry’s original totals.

Figure 5: Male/ female Ratios based on Alexander Henry the Younger's Census. 1805

| Departments | White Men | “White” Women | ratio women/ men ⁴⁴ | “White” Children | Indians Men | Indians Women | Indian Children |
|----------------------|-----------|---------------|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| English River | 78 | 40 | 0.513 | 63 | 211 | 380 | 1100 |
| Fort des Prairies | 136 | 59 | 0.434 | 103 | 4823 | 13,632 | 45,906 |
| Fort Dauphin | 45 | 22 | 0.489 | 18 | 19 | 17 | 31 |
| Upper Red River | 56 | 52 | 0.929 | 82 | 1170 | 1200 | 2500 |
| Lower Red River | 75 | 40 | 0.533 | 60 | 160 | 190 | 250 |
| Totals ⁴⁵ | 1610 | 405 | 0.251 | 600 | 7502 | 16,995 | 52,871 |

The employment lists from the Brandon House journal for the year, which record 22 men, and Masson’s list for “Haut de la Riviere Rouge” which records 85 men, give a total of 107 men working in the fur trade in the Upper Red River department in

⁴⁴ not in original.

⁴⁵ Henry, Alexander, the Younger, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson*. p. 282.

1804/05.⁴⁶ compared to Henry's total of 56. As Henry's census does not include the XY men (in the department figures) or the HBC men, the difference between his figures and Masson's suggest that there may have been 29 XY men in the area. Because there are no nominative records for the XY company of the types available for the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, and because this was the year of the amalgamation of the North West Company and XY Company, it is unclear how many men remained inland but unemployed. Nevertheless, it is possible to analyze the available sample for ethnicity and company allegiance. Figure 6 includes men named in the journals and/or employment lists for the year 1804/05, which gives a total of 89 men.

The term, **Scottish**, refers to persons whose family records show that they were born in Scotland (excluding Orkney) while **Orcadian** refers to those born in Orkney. **English** refers specifically to persons known to have been born in England. **Scots-Canadian** or **English-Canadian** refers to men known to be children of families newly emigrated to Canada, while **Canadien** refers to men from the French communities in Lower Canada. **Mixed-blood** refers to persons known to have mixed European-Amerindian parentage. **Indian** refers to persons living as Amerindians and accepted by an Amerindian band as a member.

⁴⁶ This accords well with the figures given for the population of Fort George/ Buckingham House given by Babcock, for 1794-95. Douglas R. Babcock, *Opponents and Neighbours: A Narrative History of Fort George and Buckingham House Fur Trade posts, 1792 - 1800* (Edmonton: Historic Sites Service, Alberta Culture & Multiculturalism), p.85.

Figure 6: *Ethnicity and Company: The Assiniboine Basin in 1804*

| Ethnicity | HBC | NWC | XYCo | Totals |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|---------------|
| Scottish | | | | |
| Orcadian | 16 | | | 16 |
| English | 1 | | 1 | 2 |
| Scots-Canadian | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| English-Canadian | | 5 | | 5 |
| Canadien | 1 | 38 | | 39 |
| Mixed-blood | 3 | 18 | | 21 |
| Inuit | 1 | | | 1 |
| Total | 23 | 63 | 3 | 89 |

Some of those counted as Canadien employed by the North West Company could have been Metis. For the purposes of the chart, Canadiens were deemed to be those for whom a contract signed in Lower Canada was found by the St. Boniface Historical Society. As Figure 6 shows, over two thirds of the HBC employees in the area in 1804-05 were from Orkney, while most of the NWC employees were Canadien.

This population includes all those named who could possibly have attended Mr. Chaboillez's ball in May of 1805. It does not pretend to approach a comprehensive accounting of the whole population of the area.

The Brandon journal for 1804-05 typically names only those individuals who led a group or performed some significant task. Some entries contain no names at all. Earlier Brandon journals begin with a comprehensive list of everyone coming into the country for that season. The one for this year does not. In reading the journal, one experiences a sensation similar to that of beginning a novel in the middle, as John McKay writes so familiarly of men who had served with him for years. These include the aforementioned James Inkster, the cooper, boatbuilder James Short, and James Anderson the tailor, who sewed coats for the native trading captains,⁴⁷ as well as Humphrey Favell, McKay's brother-in-law.⁴⁸

While Masson's list for 1804 includes those employed by the North West Company after its amalgamation with the XY Company, the Brandon journals reveal the presence of XY men at Souris that year, for example, in McKay's account of a running fight between Inkster and the XY men over the placement of a fishing weir.⁴⁹ John Pritchard, reported lost in the HBC journal,⁵⁰ was an XY employee. Harmon's account named two others: John McDonald (a cousin of John McDonnell)⁵¹ and Thomas McMurray.⁵² His account suggests that not only the Souris employees of the three companies could have been present, but also because the crews were coming out,

⁴⁷ Rupert Leslie Taylor, *The Native Link. Tracing One's Roots to the Fur Trade* (Victoria: Pencrest Publications, 1984), pp. 16, 29; HBCA, B.22/a/14, fo. 4d.

⁴⁸ T.R. McCloy, the annotated DCB biography of John McKay, personal collection; the will of John Favell, Jr. Glenbow Archives, Calgary.

⁴⁹ HBCA, B.22.a/12, f.4d, August 31, 1804.

⁵⁰ HBCA, B.22.a/12, July 4 (missing), 18th (still missing), 21st (brought in).

⁵¹ This detail is revealed in the *Reminiscences of George Nelson*, I, p. 57. 1825 ff. unpublished, Geo. Nelson Papers, Toronto Metropolitan Library. from a copy in Jennifer Brown's files.

⁵² Harmon, p. 88.

employees from Alexandria and Qu'Appelle may have been at the ball. His entry for 19 February [actually 24] 1805, reveals news of the amalgamation, and that for 18 April reveals the general response: "We are packing up our furs to be sent to the General Rendezvous and the X.Y. People have already abandoned their Fort to go to Riviere qui Appelle."⁵³ It seems that, as usual, many of the fur trade employees were headed downriver to rendezvous, including this season the XY men who were being affected by the amalgamation. Since everyone travelled on the river, and went out soon after breakup, the men of the different companies frequently met one another on the journey and, it seemed, at times formed themselves into larger companies. Harmon's account and the Brandon journals give numerous accounts of men waiting for colleagues and sharing overnight camping spots with rivals.⁵⁴

Of course, these records offer few familial data. To find the wives, mothers and children of this population, it is necessary to turn to the demographic sources, such as birth and marriage records, census records and scrip affidavits. Most of the marriages found for the employees of this period are of the type referred to earlier as marriages *a la façon du pays*.

A database of 105 familial relationships has been compiled for employees of the fur trade in the Assiniboine. Thirty-one of these can be proved to have existed prior to

⁵³ Harmon, pp. 88, 89.

⁵⁴ For instance, in 1801, John McKay recorded repeated interactions with the competition on his trip into Brandon House. Among those he named were Mr Henry and Mr. Larocque for the NWC. Mr McDonald and Mr. Pritchard for the XY. HBCA, B.22/a/8. August 23 - September 20. He even recorded on September 8. that he "fell in with Mr. McDonald. he slept with me. his canoes are behind."

1806. Figure 7 tabulates those fur trade relationships in existence in or before 1805, and serves as the source table for the other tables in this chapter.

Figure 7: Families in the Assiniboine Basin, 1805

| Full Name | Position | Ethnicity | Birth Cohort* | Spouse Name | Spouse Ethnicity | Children born before 1806 | Children total |
|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Allary, Michel | clerk/ Dauphin | mixed | 1 | Francois Amerindian | Indian | 2 | 2 |
| Anderson, James | tailor | Orcadian | 1 | Marie Saulteaux | Ojibwa | 1 | 12 |
| Azure, Joseph | guide | Canadien ? | 1 | Lizette inconnue | Indian? | 1 | 1 |
| Bercier, Alexis | voyageur | Canadien | 2 | Josette Saulteuse | Ojibwa | 2 | 3 |
| Bonneau, Jean Baptiste | voyageur | mixed | 1 | Louise inconnue | Indian? | 5 | 8 |
| Caplette, Joseph | | Canadien | 1 | Angelique Guilleau | ? | 2 | 5 |
| Chalifoux, Michel | | Canadien | 1 | Elizabeth Collin | mixed | 1 | 3 |
| Chaurette, Jean Baptiste | voyageur | Canadien | 2 | Charlotte Sansregret | mixed | 1 | 1 |
| Collin (Colin), Joseph | | Canadien | 1 | Saulteuse Josephte | Ojibwa | 1 | 2 |
| Desmarais, Francois | interpreter | mixed | 2 | Marie Saulteuse | Ojibwa | 1 | 5 |
| Ducharme, Pierre | | Canadien | 1 | Catherine Saulteaux | Ojibwa | 1 | 2 |
| Falcon, Pierre Sr. | commis | Canadien | 1 | Pas au Traverse' daughter | Cree? | 1 | 1 |
| Favell, Humphrey | | mixed | 1 | Jenny | Cree? | 1 | 2 |
| Favell, Thomas | Interpreter | mixed | 1 | Sarah Trout/ Sally | possibly Cree | 1 | 11 |
| Goodwin, Robert | Master | English | 1 | Jane | Cree? | 1 | 5 |
| Kipling, John | | English | 1 | Hannah | Indian | 1 | 2 |
| Lariviere, Francois | | Canadien | 2 | Louise Lambert | mixed? | 1 | 1 |
| Lyons, John | | mixed | 2 | Margaret Kipling | mixed | 2 | 10 |

Figure 7. Continued

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|---|---|
| Marcellais [Mariolet], Jean Baptiste | voyageur contre-maitre | Canadien | 1 | Angelique Assiniboine | Assin. | 2 | 4 |
| McDonell, John Jr. | clerk/1799 | mixed? | 2 | Susanne Assiniboine | Assin. | 1 | 1 |
| McGillis, Angus | Commis/ Dauphin | Scottish Canadian | 1 | Marguerite [vent de bout] | Ojibway | 1 | 6 |
| McGillivray, Duncan | Bourgeois | Scottish | 1 | | | 1 | 2 |
| McKay, John | Master | Scot Canadian? | 1 | Mary Favell | mixed | 6 | 8 |
| McLend, A.N. | Bourgeois | Scottish? or Amer. | 1 | | a Rapid indian | 1 | 1 |
| Mini [sic], J.B. | voyageur | | 1 | Marguerite Pelletier | Mixed? | 1 | 1 |
| Moreau, Joseph | voyageur | Canadien | 1 | Indienne | Indian | 1 | 1 |
| Pas au Traverse | | Cree | 1 | Cree woman | Cree | 3 | 3 |
| Pierre the Mohawk | | Iroquois | | Iroquois [Her brother was Iroquois] | Iroquois | | |
| Pritchard, John | clerk | English Canadian | 1 | Marie indian | Indian | 1 | 1 |
| Short, James | labourer | Orcadian | 1 | Elizabeth Saulteaux | Ojibwa | 2 | 8 |
| St. Denis, Francois | voyageur contre-maitre | | 1 | Lisette Crise | Cree | 1 | 1 |

* Cohorts were assigned based on date of birth where known. Alternately, the cohort was assigned based on the birthdate of the oldest child minus 20. Cohort 1 was born before 1780. Cohort 2 was born 1781-1800. Cohort 3 was born 1801-1820. For a brief discussion on the use of cohorts, see John Moge, "Families: Intergenerational and Generational Connections — Conceptual Approaches to Kinship and Culture." *Marriage & Family Review*, Volume 16, Number 1, 1991, p. 48.

The information in Figures 8 -10 that follow are all extracted from this sample. Figure 8 indicates a relationship between membership in the first cohort and marriage to an Amerindian. It also may suggest a correlation between membership in the second cohort and mixed ethnicity, both for the employee and for his choice of spouse. Figure 9 examines the relationship between ethnicity and marriage.

Figure 8: Marriages by Ethnicity of Men. Assiniboine basin, as of 1805

| Ethnicity of men | Wife Mixed | Wife Unknown | Wife Indian |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Orcadian | | | 1 |
| Scottish | | 1 | 1 |
| English | | | 3 |
| Scottish/ Canadian | 1 | | 1 |
| English/ Canadian | | | |
| Canadien | 4 | | 9 |
| Mixed | 2 | | 6 |
| Indian | | | 2 |
| Total: 31 | 7 | 1 | 23 |

Although this sample is limited, being comprised, to too great an extent, of bourgeois, traders, and clerks (who are most visible in written records, and thus most likely to be captured on the first round of research), the number of both British and

Canadien unions with native women suggests that this is the genesis generation for this community.⁵⁵

Cross-Company Relationships

Events such as Harmon's "ball" were a fairly normal part of the fur trade yearly cycle. Harmon reported a similar event at Grand Portage on 4 July 1800:

July 4 [Friday] In the Day time the Indians were allowed to dance in the Fort, and to whom the Coy. made a present of thirty six Gallons of Shrub etc. and this evening the gentlemen of the place dressed and we had a famous Ball in the Dining Room and for musick we had the Bag-Pipe the Violin, the Flute and the Fife, which enabled us to spend the evening agreeably. At the Ball there were a number of this Countries "Ladies" whom I was surprised to find could behave themselves so well, and who danced not amiss.⁵⁶

The difference, of course, between that event and the one he described in 1805 is the presence of the competition. However, for the period and place, visiting between rivals was not so uncommon. On 26 November 1800, A.N. McLeod described visiting his HBC rival John Sutherland at the Elbow to try to learn some news of Indians he had not heard from. He was hospitably received:

I slept at Mr. Sutherland's & had the 'Honor' of playing 'Cribbage' with Jeanny, (his wife). he poor Devil complains bitterly of Mr. Goodwin's usage of him, in sending him no 'Goodys', but what he had he made me very wellcome to, I am pretty well convinced he has seen none of the Indians I was uneasy about. . . .⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Compare Peterson, Jacqueline, "The People in Between: Indian/White Marriage and the Genesis of a Metis Society and Culture in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1830." Ph.D. 1981. University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, p. 158.

⁵⁶ Lamb, p. 22.

⁵⁷ McLeod, A.N. "Diary of Archibald N. McLeod." Gates, Charles M., ed., *Five Fur Traders of the Northwest*, p. 133.

December 9 found Sutherland visiting McLeod who made him drunk and then wrote, "of all the stupid Puppies I ever sett eyes on he is the most nonsenseicall & dull."⁵⁸ The next day he recorded "Mr. 'Sugar Royall' did not think proper to leave me & I was tormented with his Super Stupid conversation all day." Sutherland's behavior may have reflected his being starved for social intercourse with an equal, or a fellow Scot. Sutherland returned home the next day.⁵⁹ During the rest of the winter, they communicated and visited regularly.⁶⁰

The Brandon journals recorded similar incidents of visiting. On 18-20 July 1805, John McKay, HBC master at Brandon visited the North West Company post at Mountain a la Bosse, and taken ill, returned home in the chaise which belonged to the North West Company partner, Charles Chaboillez. At the end of the summer, he sent two men and four horses off to hunt with Pierre Falcon's NWCo men "as my men cannot hunt. the Canadians is to give them half the meat."⁶¹

Later in the year, he reported buffalo hunting with Pierre Falcon. "April 8. self and Mr. Falcon run the Buffalo. the latter shot three, self none,"⁶² and wrote of his illness earlier that winter when he was nursed by Pritchard, Falcon and Chaboillez. That entry for 1 February 1805 is quite extraordinary and worth including in full:

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ See McLeod, Dec. 28, 29, Jan. 12, Feb. 17, etc for other visits.

⁶¹ HBCA, B.22.a/12, f.4d. Aug. 30, 1805.

⁶² *Ibid.*, April 8, 1805.

Feb. 1th I have been very bad since the 27th. I am [illegible] and am not well yet. the men have been as usual running after Indians and hauling meat. I remember very little of what happened since I fell sick but as I am told by the people Mr. Chaboillez, Mr. Pritchard & Mr. Falcon sat up with me several nights. I had three convulsive fits.⁶³ in one of them trying to open my mouth with a large key they broke all my front teeth. I can eat nothing but broth My tongue is bit in several places. Hump [Favell] and three men who were 5 days off with the Indians came in for men to fetch the meat of three cows. I cannot stop that fellow from killing cattle. We learn by a packet from Montreal that the N.W. and X.Y. are joyned, I though this wast of goods would not last for ever. . . .⁶⁴

This incident is tersely reported by F.A. Larocque on 15 February 1805. "Commis & two men arrived from River la Souris fort, they report that John Mckay of the HB had entirely lost his senses."⁶⁵ The commis from Souris would have been Pierre Falcon.

Nor did the relationships confine themselves to the elite. The journals reveal trading between posts, across company lines. For instance, on 19 March, McLeod wrote "I got ten iron hoops from Mr. Sutherland which is very opportune, as I am at a loss for old Iron sufficient for the nails necessary for the Batteau."⁶⁶ The next day he reported that he had "sent some men with loads to the Elbow." He was sending grease and pemmican to Sutherland apparently in payment for a debt.

I sent Collin down there this morning with Hamickonitt's debt account, as he has been Mr Sutherland's Hunter & is about to be paid, to endeavor to get him to acknowledge his debt as in that case Mr. Sutherland promised me to pay 30 skins value of the 71 that he still owes me.

⁶³ There is a record in the servants accounts of John McKay ordering something called "Analeptic Pills". This sounds like an early epileptic medication. See HBCA, A.16/111. 1801.

⁶⁴ HBCA, B.22.a/12 f.8d, Feb. 1, 1805.

⁶⁵ Francois-Antoine Larocque, "Missouri Journal," in Wood and Thiessen's *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders Among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1985), p. 154.

⁶⁶ McLeod, p. 166

The next day he reported, "Mr. Sutherland wrote me he should pay me the thirty skin's value on his hunter's account."⁶⁷ This bit of narrative reveals not only economic activity between companies, but company officers cooperating in the collecting of debts.

Peter Fidler recorded similar cooperation between Fort George and Buckingham House in May of 1797.⁶⁸

HBC officer John McKay in the 1804/05 Brandon journal recorded a number of transactions with Nor'Wester Chaboillez involving iron and nails.

Feb 24 Yester Mr. Chaboillez arived from the summer Berry River, he sent me 5 [gls?] onions, early this morning he went off for Mountain a la Bos, now called Fort Assiniboil. I sent G Henderson with him with old gun barrels and some old iron to get nails to build a small boat to cros [unclear] the indians and my boy in the summer, the boat built by Mr. Goodwin is entirely rotten.

March 15 . . . I sent J Short and Jn Easter to Fort Assiniboil to help the N.W. Blacksmith to make Nails for the Boat. The Cooper has begun her [the boat] some time ago.

March 22 . . . Jn Easter returned with these men, brought a few nails. James Short went to River que Appelle to get a few nails from Mr. McDonald.

28th. Late last night James Short returned from QuiAppelle with 460 nails . . .⁶⁹

Marriages

An analysis of marriages by company affiliation revealed no cross-company intermarriages among those delineated in Figure 6. The men of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company were forming relationships with native and

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Babcock, p. 69.

⁶⁹ HBCA, B.22.a/12, f. 9d, 10d, 11.

mixed-ethnicity fur trade daughters in approximately the same proportions, but research on this genesis generation has yielded no instances of intermarriage between individuals with different company affiliation. However, without more research on native bands and affiliations, it is impossible to tell whether native daughters were forming relationships across company lines. That is, it is impossible to tell if, for instance, the daughter of the native hunter employed by the HBC married an HBC employee or a NWC one. The earlier marriages of Andre Poitras Sr. and Pierre Falcon Sr. certainly seem to reflect the expected form of marriage to the daughter of an Amerindian affiliated with the company and post.

Naming patterns document a fairly clear distinction between Amerindian women and women who had European or Canadien fathers. The former were designated by an English or French first name followed by a tribal affiliation as last name, for instance, Lizette Crise [Cree], spouse of Francois St. Denis.⁷⁰ The names were drawn from a fairly limited pool, with Marguerite, Susanne and Marie being other favorites. Women with European or Canadien fathers, in contrast, were designated by their father's last name and their records, unlike those of Amerindians, sometimes gives linking detail on the father. Figure 9 charts the marriages known as of 1805 and compares their inter-ethnic categories, while Figure 10 adds the company affiliation.

⁷⁰ St. Boniface Historical Society database.

Figure 9: Marriages by Gender and Ethnicity in the Assiniboine Basin, 1805

| Ethnicity | “Indian” ♠ | Cree ♠ | Assiniboine ♠ | Saulteaux ♠ | Rapid [?] ♠ |
|------------------------|---------------|-----------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Orcadian* | | | | 1 | |
| Scottish * | 1 | | | | 1 |
| English* | 2 | 1 | | | |
| Scot- Canadian* | | | | 1 | |
| English / Canadian* | | | | | |
| Canadien* | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | |
| Mixed* | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| Total | 9 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 1 |

* Husband's Ethnicity ; ♠ Wife's Ethnicity

Figure 10: Marriages by Ethnicity and Company in the Assiniboine Basin, 1805

| Ethnicity* | “Indian” | Cree | Assiniboine | Saulteaux | Rapid [?] |
|-------------------|----------|----------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| HBC* | 3 | 1 | | 1 | |
| NWC** | 4 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| XY*** | 1 | | | | |
| Total = 14 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 1 |

* Hudson's Bay Company Employees ** North West Company Employees

*** XY Company Employees ♠ Wife's Ethnicity

These two charts, using the tribal designations as given in the records, suggest the predominance of one native ethnicity. By 1805, there were six relationships recorded with Saulteaux (Ojibwa) women out of 19 relationships with native women. This is only exceeded by the number of relationships for which an ethnic designation is not given, other than “Indian”. A similar analysis of all 105 relationships found for the whole period of this study, from 1793 to 1812 finds some correlation between tribal designation of wives and the ethnicity of the husbands, with Ojibwa linked to Canadiens, while the

sample is dispersed among all the possible ethnic and company cross-marriages, including one each for Sioux, Gros Ventre, and Mandan. However, sampling problems preclude a more definitive statement.

A possible distortion in this type of analysis, based on marriage records, is caused by the dearth of definitive records of the wife's name, family and ethnicity. As noted before, very little information was given in records of marriages to Amerindian women. The poorest records list a wife as simply "inconnue" (unknown) in the recording of a child's baptism, as with the daughter of Antoine Lafreniere.⁷¹

When it comes to who was actually present at the ball, the picture is less clear. Some cases are definitive. We know, for instance, that Mary Favell McKay and the children of the family were there, except for the eldest son, John Richards, who was still in Britain where he had been sent to school.⁷² Cuthbert Grant, Jr. was likewise out of the country, as was Pierre Falcon Jr. who was at school in Quebec.⁷³ Forty-five children, born before 1805, can be shown for the previous 30 marriages, which were all apparently in place before the ball.

This chapter has developed the concept of "stayers" as employees with long residence at one post. Patterns of intermarriage with the surrounding native groups were explored and shown to be associated with the "stayers". The increasing sense of community was illustrated by the examples of the "ball", the trade in iron, increased

⁷¹ St. Boniface Historical Society database.

⁷² T.R. McCloy, "John Richards McKay," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol 10, p. 475.

⁷³ Gail Morin, Metis family researcher, quotes Mary Madeleine Lee, *The New Nation - Christ's Chosen People*, ca 1987, p. 219, 220 and Louis Riel, *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*, Vol. 5, Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985, p. 254, as documenting Pierre Falcon Jr.'s education at La Prairie, P.Q. from 1799 to his return as a clerk for the NWC in 1808.

socialization between master and partner, and the nursing of John McKay by his fur trade rivals. The next chapter moves to an examination of how the community responded to the stress of new management in 1810-1811.

Chapter Four : Trouble at Brandon House

McKay's Fiefdom, 1805-1810

During his last years, John McKay continued his established pattern of management. As before, the men followed their assigned routines which included fetching furs, cutting firewood and hunting and fishing for food.

After his serious illness in 1805, McKay continued to direct the deployment of men but seemed to give more of the clerking tasks to others. For instance, the journal for the next year, 1805-06, begins with his return to the post on 20 May 1805 after finding himself too weak to go out in the spring¹ and closes with "NB the most part of this Journal is copied by Mr. Heney who is now here."² Hugh Heney, former Nor'Wester, had changed companies within the previous year, but was not on official HBC rolls until 1807.³ Employed by the North West Company as of 1804, he had been serving as commis, or clerk, one of eight in the Upper Red River District.⁴ Evidence such as McKay's comment about Heney's countrymen at Red River,⁵ suggests that he was Canadian, although the HBCA prepared biography gives his parish as England.⁶ His history with the North West Company included time at Rocky Mountain House.⁷

¹ HBCA, B.22/a/13, f. 1.

² *Ibid.*, May 26.

³ HBCA, A.16/7, f. 65, Albany Servants Accounts lists his debits and credits from 1807 to 1810.

⁴ L. R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest*, Vol. 1, p. 402.

⁵ HBCA, B.22/a/15, f. 3, quoted later. Other evidence includes his origin listed as "Canada" in Servants Accounts, HBCA, A.16/7, f. 65.

⁶ HBCA. "Hugh Heney. Prepared Biography." JHB/ek. April. 1987.

⁷ HBCA, A.10/1, f. 111c, Letter from George Sutherland.

The “stayers” remained an important part of the outfits between 1805 and 1810.

James Anderson, for example, continued as tailor.⁸ John McKay wrote of him on 12

May 1809:

I persuaded James Anderson Taylor to send for Wages, he being a very useful man at this place not only as Taylor but at all kinds of work. he says that he does not know what Wages he is at for these last 3 years that he is now serving [perhaps an indication that he had not been out] he wrote to the Chief concerning it, but received no Answer, he now sends to your Honours for Ninty Pounds for three years, I must say he is a very deserving Man. he is honest Sober and industrious.⁹

James Inkster the cooper served throughout the period.¹⁰ James Short¹¹ was mentioned every year from 1797 to 1810 except for 1799 - 1800. John Easter was mentioned every year except 1808 and Louis Jollycouer every year except 1802-1804. A comparison of employment lists at the beginning of each outfit with the lists of outgoing and summering employees, and with references to employees in the journals indicates that, at times, stayers were missed in the enumerations. For instance, the 1806 list¹² does not include James Anderson or John Easter, both of whom are mentioned in the journals.¹³ Their continued presence was only noted when they were involved in some incident at the post. In the same period, the lists of employees and records of events at the post also become

⁸ HBCA, B.22/a/1-18a, Brandon Journals, compiled employment lists until 1811. Journals after that date are sporadic and much less precise. His biography as prepared by the HBCA records him as present at Brandon until 1820.

⁹ HBCA, B.22/a/15, f. 13.

¹⁰ HBCA, B.22/a/1-18a, see note 1 above. His biography as prepared by the HBCA records him as present at Brandon until 1823.

¹¹ As cook. HBCA, B.22/a/10, f. 4d gives the first explicit verification of this role. but John McKay repeatedly recorded. “Short domestically employed.” B.22/a/8 Dec. 5, 7, 1800.

¹² HBCA, B.22/a/14, f. 1.

¹³ Ibid., f. 4d.

fewer, possibly reflecting John McKay's increasing ill health. For instance, the last journal that he kept (1808/09) has only 11 folios.

The presence of these long-term employees would have strengthened, as James Sutherland put it earlier, "how these men are bound together in a knot, to study only their own interest and to oppose command . . ." ¹⁴ Likewise, John McKay's work practice of sending the men out to trade en derouine would have strengthened their independence and self-reliant spirit, accustoming them to infrequent contact with authority, and fostering their ties with Native people in the area.

¹⁴ HBCA, B.22.a/4, f. 9.. 21 August 1796. James Sutherland commented on early evidence of insubordination from Orcadian men going in to Brandon that year when they opposed the actions of his 'man': see Chapter Two.

Figure 11: The men of Brandon House - 1804 to 1810

| Name | Ethnicity | Highest Rank Listed | Total Years In Brandon as of 1810 | Age in 1810/11* | Spouse | Children by 1810 |
|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------|------------------|
| Anderson, Isaac | | | 5 | | | |
| Anderson, James | Orcadian | Tailor | 12+ | 36 | yes | 5 |
| Anderson, Tom | Orcadian | Bowsman | 5 | 25+ | | |
| Bowes, William | Orcadian | Smith | 4 | | | |
| Budge, George | Orcadian | Labourer | 8 | 27 | | |
| Easter, John | Inuit | Steersman | 17 | 34 | yes | |
| Favell, Humphrey | mixed | Labourer | 6 | 26+ | yes | 1 |
| Favell, Thomas | mixed | interpreter | 9 | 26+ | yes | 1 |
| Groundwater, George | Orcadian | Labourer | 5 | 55 | | |
| Henderson, George | Orcadian | Labourer | 10 | 29+ | yes† | |
| Heney, Hugh | Canadian | Master | 3 | 22+‡ | yes | |
| Inkster, George | | | 5 | | | |
| Inkster, James | Orcadian | Cooper | 10+ | 36 | yes | 2 |
| Jollycouer, Louis | Canadien (Montreal) | Labourer | 14 | 29+ | yes | 1 |
| Kipling, John Ram | mixed | Labourer | 5 | 35 | yes | 1 |
| Linklater, Hugh | mixed | Labourer | 7 | 31 | | |
| Lyons, John | mixed Jewish/ | Labourer | 13 | 31 | yes | 2● |
| Mason, Tom | Orcadian | Labourer | 4 | 25 | | |
| McKay, John | Scots- Canadian | Master | 9 | 40+ | yes | 8 |
| McKay, John R. | mixed | clerk | 3 | 20 | | |
| Millar, Thomas | Orcadian | in charge | 5 | | | |
| Millar, William | Orcadian | in charge | 8 | | | |
| Norn, Thomas | Orcadian | Steersman | 9 | 38+ | | |
| Scarth, John | Orcadian | Steersman | 8 | 38 | yes×† | |

| Name | Ethnicity | Highest Rank Listed | Total Years In Brandon as of 1810 | Age in 1810/11* | Spouse | Children by 1810 |
|------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------|------------------|
| Short, James | Orcadian | Cook | 13 | 38 | yes | 3 n.d.✕ |
| Slatter, James | Orcadian | Labourer | 11 | 31 | yes | 2 |
| Yorston, William | Orcadian | in charge, summer | 11 | 37 | yes | 2 |

* In many cases the data for stipulating the age of men was extracted directly from HBCA, A.30/9, 11, Lists of Servants for Albany. Where the data was not available there, a minimum age has been calculated based on the minimum age at first employment (14/15 years) and the known length of employment.

♦ Evidence of a native marriage in the journal. HBCA B.22/a/18, f.6d. The entry for October 26, Friday, notes the arrival of Captain Grant, a trading chief, with "Henderson's Bro in law."

❖ "Heny, Hugh", W. S. Wallace, "A Biographical Dictionary of the Nor'Westers", Vol. XXII, Champlain Society, pg. 455, 456, gives his birthdate as September 9, 1789. That would make him sixteen years old in 1805, and 22 in 1811. For the author's reservations on accepting this biography of Heny, see footnote 132, on p. 114.

● Evidence in the journal of another child who died 13 February, 1811. HBCA. B.22/a/18, f.10d.

✕ Married by John West, 18 June 1822 at Red River Settlement, to Nelly, a Cree woman, BC Archives, transcribed from an undated transcription in the Red River Collection at the British Columbia Provincial Archives, Victoria, British Columbia by Joanne J. Hughes 1977. MSS 345, Vol. 1, No. 137. Unknown how long the relationship predated the marriage.

✕ No birthdates available

Other evidence of these families exists in the baptismal records of a trip to Brandon House made by Church of England clergyman John West in January of 1821. Among baptisms he performed were those of two sons of John Richards McKay; Mary the wife of James Anderson and seven of their children; Margaret the wife of Andrew Spence and three of their children; the three children of James Inkster and a Cree woman; Margaret the wife of Andrew Setter and their four children; Peggy, wife of Michael Lambert, and her father Thomas Favell, his wife Sally and their other six children; Jane, the daughter of James Short, five of her siblings, and her mother Betsy, all between 21 January and 5 February.¹⁵

Others employed at Brandon House or in the local region included two masters who spent most of their years of service in other areas; Thomas Millar who served for years at the Red River,¹⁶ and Thomas Vincent who spent much of his service in the Little North except for 1806/07 in Brandon.¹⁷ As well, eight men served three years apiece in Brandon before 1810, including John Richards McKay who returned from school in 1807, and his brother William, whose name began appearing in work crews in the same year.¹⁸ Another nine men put in one or two years. Some of these short termers were in

¹⁵ Red River Anglican Baptismal Registers, 1814-1831, transcribed from the originals in St. John's Cathedral, Winnipeg by Jennifer S.H. Brown, now in P.A.M.

¹⁶ References in the Brandon Journals place him in Red River territory, but do not situate him more specifically: for instance, HBCA, B.22/a/8, September 5, when John McKay recorded "At 8 AM arrived at the fork. found Mr. Millar with a tent of Ind. the men were out hunting here. I made Millar's outfit for Red River."

¹⁷ Victor. P. Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North. Indians, Pedlars and Englishmen East of Lake Winnipeg. 1760-1821* (Winnipeg: Rupert's Land Research Centre).

¹⁸ References to William include this gem. "(1809) March 11. Saturday. People as yesterday. Mr. Bocily [Beioley]. Wm McKay and John Lyons killed 38 Rabbits today. They have been out several times generally good luck. Wm McKay

the crew that went inland with Thomas Vincent in 1806. No early families have been found for any of the short term servants.

Families

By 1810, most of the HBC men with long service in the Assiniboine basin had native families (Figure 11). John McKay enumerated the population of Brandon House in May of 1809 as follows: “the number of Souls at Brandon House when all together is 69, Dogs 69, Horses 17, besides [those] comming and going.”¹⁹ Given that the usual complement of men for the House was between twenty and twenty-three, this was roughly three times as many people as were officially residents. This accords fairly well with the enumeration of wives and children given in Figure 11, a total of 43 women and children.

That many of the employees between 1805 and 1810 had native families would have given them divided loyalties. Although they desired success and security in their careers, they did not want to be moved out of the area.²⁰ The needs of their families also motivated them to push for higher wages and lower expenses.²¹ These tactics have been identified among the Orcadians as a group, but characterized by some observers as being motivated by the desire to return to Orkney with sufficient resources to set themselves up

has shot 4 Buffaloe: Mr. Boiely [Bcioley] has been at the death of some but has yet killed none, . . .” HBCA, B.22/a/15, f. 8.

¹⁹ HBCA, B.22/a/15, f. 13.

²⁰ Edith Burley, p. 309 quotes George Henderson as telling Kennedy after the mutiny that the men would go out to York to answer charges on the condition that they “would return to Brandon House,” perhaps reflecting a concern with losing contact with extended kin ties. George Henderson himself for instance had native in-laws in the area.

²¹ For a discussion of the demands of family, see John Mogeý. “Families: Intergenerational and Generational Connections — Conceptual Approaches to Kinship and Culture.” *Families: Intergenerational and Generational Connections*. Marriage & Family Review. Volume 16, Number 1, 1991, pp. 47-66.

as landowners.²² The presence of extensive native families suggests multiple interpretations.

Hugh Heney

The working relationship between John McKay and the newly arrived Hugh Heney is discernable in the Brandon journal of 1805-06 which contains references to Heney being outfitted by McKay to go to the Mandans 12 October 1805,²³ and sent with James Anderson to Turtle Mountain to collect debt 10 February 1806.²⁴ Yet Heney was not yet contracted to HBC employment. In July 1806, he travelled with John McKay to Martin's Falls and on to meet with John Hodgson, Chief at Albany Fort. On 26 July 1806, Jacob Corrigan at Martin's Falls revealed, "Mr. McKay goes to the Factory in this Boat [a boat sent from Osnaburgh House] accompanied by Mr. Heney who comes down from inland with intentions of engaging in the Hon^{ble} Company's Service."²⁵

Heney did not appear in Brandon the next year; it appears, rather, that he was stationed at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers.²⁶ On 5 September 1807, John McKay recorded meeting him there:

²² Among others, John Nicks, "Orkneymen in the HBC 1780-1821," in *Old Trails and New Directions*, p. 122; Isaac Cowie. *The Company of Adventurers* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913) p. 62, 63.

²³ HBCA, B.22/a/13, f. 10.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ HBCA, B.22/a/15, f. 1d.

stopped a little while with Heney at the Forks [of the Red and Assiniboine rivers], this place is swarming with free men, all wanting to engage in our service. [These were apparently former employees of the XY Company which amalgamated with the N.W. Company in 1804/05.] I would have nothing to do with them, I have enough of their witchcraft already. I sent them all to their Country man Heney. he may settle with them as he pleases. Camped at first plain.²⁷

The next spring, going out, McKay recorded that on 23 May at the Forks, there was “no sign of Mr. Heney. . .” Two days later, at the mouth of the Red River, however, “there is 16 of Haney’s men Camped nigh us. They are intended for Athabasca . . .” And on 29 May 1808, “We camped below Canadian House [possibly Fort Bas de la Riviere] 3 of Haney’s Canadians passed us on their way to the Summerberry [Pembina] River”.²⁸

John McKay’s entry for 5 November 1808 gives more insight into the activities of Hugh Heney: “Uskinneegues came in with 2 moose parcht. he tells me that Mr Heney gave a big Keg of Brandy to my Indians to engage them to trade with him and not come to Brandon House.”²⁹ Apparently Heney, even as a fellow HBC trader, was trying to bribe natives who had taken debt at Brandon House into trading with him instead, to his benefit and McKay’s loss. McKay would not have learned of this, had not the Indian been loyal. Notwithstanding this treachery, John McKay waited for Heney at the Forks going out the next spring, and recorded, “May 24th [1809] Thursday. Started early, and encamped at the Sandy Bar. Mr. Heney in company.”³⁰

²⁷ HBCA, B.22/a/15, f. 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 13d.

²⁹ HBCA, B.22/a/16, f. 5.

³⁰ HBCA, B.22/a/16, f. 10d.

John McKay and Hugh Heney had similar life paths as men who changed companies, and both their backgrounds suggest Montreal connections. When McKay signed up in 1791, he stated that he was most recently from Montreal³¹ where he had been employed by Shaw and partners.³² In 1796, he assigned a French speaker to lead a group of English speaking HBC men, a mistake a bilingual person might make.³³ On one occasion, when he gave a Church of England funeral service, he recorded of his own performance, "not so bad for a man brought up in the woods."³⁴ There are no references to him ever writing home or sending money to anyone in Great Britain or elsewhere.

Heney, as already stated, came into the area with the NWC. McKay speaks of him hiring his Canadian countrymen.³⁵ W. S. Wallace's biography firmly situates him in Montreal. In his dictionary of Nor'Westers, he recorded that Heney was born in 1789 and educated in Montreal. Heney, according to Wallace, accompanied F.A. Larocque to the Mandan country in 1805³⁶ and into the Snake territory, at the foot of the Rockies.³⁷ After he reportedly had a falling out with the NWC at Souris,³⁸ McKay outfitted him to go to

³¹ His annotated DCB by T.R. McCloy cites HBCA, A.32/4, f. 84 (his contract with the HBC dated 7 May 1791); B.3/b/28, f. 9, which tells of his arrival at Albany with a letter of introduction from Duncan Cameron.

³² B.3/b/28, f. 13.

³³ Edith Burley, citing HBCA B.22/a/4, 19, 20 Nov. 1796, ff. 19, 19d; Brandon Journals, HBCA, B.22/a/5, f. 5, 1 Sept 1797 (story of men's refusal to accompany Mr. Racette): ff. 16 -20, 5 Nov 1797 (story of men's trouble with John Richards against Chaboillez); Hickerson, Harold. "Journal of Charles Jean Baptiste Chaboillez, 1797, 1798," *Ethnohistory*, 6(3), 6(4), 1959, p. 285-289 for Chaboillez's version.

³⁴ HBCA, B.22/a/15, f. 2d, 21 August 1807.

³⁵ HBCA, B.22/a/15, f. 3, fo. 13d.

³⁶ W. S. Wallace, "Heney, Hugh", *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, "A Biographical Dictionary of the Nor'Westers," Vol. XXII (Champlain Society, 1934), p. 455, 456.

³⁷ "Francois-Antoine Larocque's "Yellowstone Journal,"" in W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen, *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), pp. 156 - 220.

³⁸ Edith Burley, p. 311, citing Wm Yorston's petition (HBCA, A.10/1, ff. 111A-111Dd) where he declares that Heney had left the Canadians because he quarreled with them.

the Mandans and entrusted him with clerking duties.³⁹ He took him to Albany Factory so that Heney could get a contract.⁴⁰ He waited for Heney at the Forks to go out with him when Heney was posted at Pembina.⁴¹ McKay's actions could be interpreted as giving aid to a younger fellow Canadian.

As well, both men showed evidence of being connected to and accepted by Amerindian communities. McKay gained a reputation with natives as someone associated with trading horses. For instance, on 3 August 1804, he recorded:

The Round Hill came in wanting me to lend him my Racer to go to War. I believe these Indians think it is a sin and a shame for a white man to have a good Horse, he said, that, he was never so surprised as at my refusing to lend him my Horse, he only wanted him to keep him out of the hands of the Assiniboil, I told him I was never so much surprised at anything as at him, asking for the only Horse I loved, and as for the Assiniboil taking him was none of his affairs to trouble his head about his own horses. He asked then for another horse, as the hoofs of his Horse were worn out. I gave him a Horse about fourteen years old, and kept his, his nails will grow again.⁴²

³⁹ HBCA, B.22/a/13, f. 10.

³⁹ HBCA, B.22/a/13, f. 10. *ibid.*, f. 13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ HBCA, B.22/a/16, f. 10d.

⁴² HBCA, B.22/a/12, f. 3d. 3 August, 1804.

There were references to Heney going about in a breechcloth⁴³ and to his Assiniboine-speaking wife.⁴⁴

John Tanner also mentioned interest in a horse deal with John McKay⁴⁵ and placed Heney in the Red River basin during this period. Tanner, an American captive, in his collaborative narrative of his life with the Ottawa and Ojibwa west of Lake Superior, gave clues about an ongoing relationship with Heney, and evidently worked for him as hunter during the winter (1812-1813) that the Selkirk settlers spent in Pembina.⁴⁶ This fits with the existence of a Pembina journal and petition in Heney's hand, from the same time.⁴⁷

While John McKay was in charge at Brandon for four of the last five years, the journals are written in several different hands. Examining these different writing styles

⁴³ HBCA, A.10/1, f. 111c Letter from George Sutherland. Also HBC servant William Plowman [second at Pembina] quoting Archibald Mason, [in charge at Pembina, a new man from Scotland, with whom Heney had become acquainted on the trip back from London] who was said to have hurled abuse at Heney, "declaring that he could make him go "in his Indian Coat & Britch Cloath as he had done before at the Rocky Mountains." Heney said, "you Cannot prove that" to which Mason replied, "I can and plenty more." in HBCA B.22/z/1, (document #4), f. 9.

⁴⁴ HBCA, B.22/z/1, (doc. #6), f.12, letter from Archibald Mason to William Plowman (apparently the letter sent with men from Brandon who followed Heney to Pembina) in which Mason declared that Heney, short of cash after his trip to England and failing in his plan to marry the late John McKay's daughter in order to get his hands on the deceased's money (for the purposes of which he had sent off his "Wedded Wife") had gotten drunk to "quicken" his spirits. Dr. Jennifer S.H. Brown's files, quoting Peter Fidler, fl. 1814, PAM, , p. 7, 1 September 1814, "Spoke to Mr. Heney's woman to remain here till fall as an interpreter for the Stone Inds. at Brandon H. as we are very badly off for an interpreter in that language. The Canadians very much want her for that purpose."

⁴⁵ reference in Brandon journals and John Tanner, *The Falcon: a Narrative of the Captivity & Adventures of John Tanner During Thirty Years Residence Among the Indians in the Interior of North America* (reprinted 1994, Penguin Books), p. 120 "... we repaired to the Mouse River trading house to buy horses. Mr. M'Kie had promised to sell me a very large and beautiful horse of his, which I had before seen and I was much dissatisfied when I found the horse had been sold to the North West Company. I told him, since the horse had gone to the north west, the beavers might go there also."

⁴⁶ John Tanner, *The Falcon*, p. 157, Mr. Hanic at Pembina gave them a little rum: p. 173-177, Mr. Hanic gave him 70 mb credit in mid-winter, and had trouble with Mr. Wells, NWC, in consequence: p. 192-193. Mr. Hanic hired him to hunt for the Selkirk settlers, and offered him permanent employment: John Tanner, *The Falcon*, p. 192, 3.

⁴⁷ HBCA, B.160/a/3, 4. "The Memorial of Hugh Heney" and Pembina journal, 1812-13, and Heney's petition, in which he gave details of a dispute between Captain Miles Macdonell and himself.

can give scholars some sense of the literacy and backgrounds of the writers. For instance, John McKay's script is somewhat irregular and his spelling is usually fairly good. He spelled French and native terms usually in the manner accepted in the area: for instance, "Qu' Appelle", "Assiniboil" and "Mandal". Heney's script is also somewhat irregular but his spelling and use of terms even more so. John Easter became "Jack" (Feb. 3), "Assiniboil" became "Assiniboin" (Sept. 7), Hump Favell became Humphre Favelle (Aug. 22) and Thomas Favell became Tom Favelle (Feb. 19), spellings that in some instances suggest a French influence. He misspelled fire (April 25) "Men cross-cutting fier wood."⁴⁸ This suggests that he may have had somewhat less education than was usual for Hudson's Bay Company masters, and that he was unfamiliar with the HBC trade vocabulary of the area. By contrast, Thomas Vincent, in charge for the outfit 1806/07, had clear regular script, good spelling and included more detail than usual on the men's activities.

Changing Hands

For the 1806-07 season, Thomas Vincent replaced John McKay in charge of Brandon House. The records for that season reveal information on the chain of command that linked Brandon with the Bay, as well as some of the problems and repercussions McKay experienced as a family man balancing his obligations.

McKay family matters evidently delayed the Brandon men on their trip to the Bay in May 1806, a matter of concern for everyone on the route as the journey was long

⁴⁸ HBCA. B.22/a/13. ff. 9, 8d, 13, 11 and 16.

enough that a delay at any point compromised the success of the next season. The probable reason for the delay appeared in the entry for 17 May 1806: "M. Jn. McKay brought to bed of a boy."⁴⁹ It appears that John McKay delayed the trip out until his wife delivered, and suffered the consequences. The child, named Alexander, survived.⁵⁰ They evidently left Brandon on 20 May.⁵¹

Meanwhile, the men in Martin's Falls became anxious about the boats from Brandon and Red River. On 12 July 1806, "at 9 A.M. 4 Battauxs start for Osnaburgh with inland cargoes, Soon after, the Chief [John Hodgson] set off for the Factory, as the season is growing late, and no hopes of any more to Arrive of the Inland People, some Accident must have happened to them. ~"⁵²

Two entries and four days later [July 16], Jacob Corrigan entered news of the arrival of the Red River/ Red Lake men in the journal: "16th Wednesday at 11 oClock Mssrs John McKay, Wm Corrigan and Thos Millar with 36 men arrived from Inland in 6 Battaux, which gave me great pleasure to see them all well. Payed Goods out of the ware house this day in the Amount of £13, Annuities to the late Mr [John] Favells Children (Viz) 2 Men and 2 Women."⁵³

By that time, however, John Hodgson had decided to send Thomas Vincent to Red River with a crew and five boats, and give him the charge of Brandon, perhaps

⁴⁹ HBCA, B.22/a/13, f. 16d.

⁵⁰ McCloy, Table A.

⁵¹ HBCA, B.22/a/14, f. 3d.

⁵² HBCA, B.123/a/10, f. 15. Martin's Falls Journal.

⁵³ Ibid.

hoping to salvage the next season. He gave the order before he left on 12 July. Jacob Corrigal reported to Hodgson, Chief at Albany Fort on 26 July 1806, "Mr. Vincent, as you intended, sett off yesterday for Red River with 5 Boats. Mr. McKay was to have returned to that Post again, but some of the men refused to go back with him as their Master, they gave no reason for so doing."⁵⁴ This is the only official record of this refusal, the Brandon journals containing no mention of this. John McKay went on to Albany Factory.⁵⁵ The report is somewhat confusing, containing in that one sentence, two reasons for Thomas Vincent replacing John McKay as master; the first, John Hodgson's decision, and the second, the men's refusal to return with John McKay.

Jacob Corrigal's note on the disbursing of annuities points out the presence of not only Mary McKay (Favell) whose delivery had occasioned the delay, but her two brothers Thomas and Humphrey, and apparently a sister. Evidently John McKay's wife and children (including a newborn infant) traveled with him between the inland and distribution posts, indicating a close familial bond.

In 1807-08, John McKay returned to Brandon House, again in charge. The journal was written in his hand and with his vocabulary. There is no mention of an assistant or of someone holding the position of clerk. It was during the trip inland that he recorded having "stood Parson" for David Spence, one of the men in another crew who had died.⁵⁶ In 1808-09, John McKay, again in charge, had a new assistant clerk, Joseph

⁵⁴ HBCA, B.123/a/10, f. 16. Martin's Falls Journal.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ HBCA, B.22/a/15, f. 2d, 21 August 1807.

Beioley.⁵⁷ It appears that Beioley wrote the journal for that year. He wrote in a very elaborate small hand. The entry for September 1 reveals that Beioley was apparently travelling with the McKay family, rather than with the men.

[1808] Sept. 1 Thursday. About 9a.m. John Ram Kipling came back with the Indians horses and soon after James Anderson, Js. Slater, Geo Groundwater and Peash arrived with 12 Horses. lightened the Boats a little, and they passed on, but Myself, Jos. Boiely, and my family staid where we were, the horses being tired, the Men that came with them making two Osnabine [sic] Sleds.⁵⁸

John Richards McKay, or John McKay Jr. as he was then known, appeared as clerk in Brandon House the next year, in 1809/10. That year's journal also included details on the activities of others prominent in the trade at Brandon House. On a typical day in September, Thomas Norn was taking care of the "shop", John McKay Jr. was writing and James Inkster was working on enlarging the cabins [probably the family homes].⁵⁹ A little later, Joseph Beioley and William Yorston were sent to man the new post at "Little Winnipeg" formerly called Manitoba. This was apparently at the narrows of Lake Manitoba.⁶⁰ William Yorston had spent the previous winter there, in charge of 11 men, while Thomas Norn had taken six men "to go where he was last Winter."⁶¹ Later in the season, "Js Inkster (Cooper) [was] making wooden Sleds. Js Anderson, Taylor, [was] sewing for the Jn McKay family."⁶² The last entry in the next season's

⁵⁷ HBCA, B.22/a/16, f. 2.

⁵⁸ HBCA, B.22/a/16, f. 3.

⁵⁹ HBCA, B.22/a/17, f. 5d.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* f. 6.

⁶¹ HBCA, B.22/a/16, f. 4.

⁶² *Ibid.* f. 7.

journal reveals that John McKay was very unwell: on 19 May 1810, “The Boats started early this morning with 118 packs of furs. on account of my ill state of Health I am not able to accompany them, I therefore remain here this Summer. Wishing prosperity to their Hons Affairs. I Remain Honble Sirs, Your Dutiful Servt Jn McKay.”⁶³

Heney in London

Hugh Heney spent 1809-10 on a trip to London.⁶⁴ On Wednesday 22 November 1809, he was introduced to the HBC London Committee⁶⁵ in the relatively distinguished company of John McNab, Chief Factor at York Factory; William Auld, Chief Factor of Churchill Factory; and Thomas Vincent, trader from Albany Factory. His position as Master at Brandon on his return indicate that the trip, while informational for the Committee, was probably to advance his position in the Company. Further traces of his activities in London suggest that he made other connections while he was there. On Wednesday 7 March 1810, a letter from Heney and Vincent was read to the Committee. Included in the list of those present that day was Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, Lord Selkirk’s brother-in-law, who was planning both a restructuring and retrenching of trade and the founding of the Selkirk colony at Red River. That same day, “the plan submitted to the Board by Andrew Weddaburn [sic] Esqr. for the Improvement of the System of Trade in Hudson’s Bay” was being considered.⁶⁶ It involved careful accounting

⁶³ HBCA, B.22/a/17, f. 24d.

⁶⁴ HBCA, C.1/772, f. 2, C.1/774, f. 2, ships’ logs, Prince of Wales, 1810.

⁶⁵ HBCA, A.1/49, f. 105.

⁶⁶ HBCA, A.1/49, f. 115, Committee notes for 1809-10, 7 March 1810.

throughout the system and profit-sharing for traders in the field.⁶⁷ Committee records do not reveal what decision was made on Heney's behalf, but do record the dismissal of John McNab⁶⁸ and the promotion of William Auld and Thomas Thomas as Superintendants of the Northern and Southern Departments.⁶⁹ It would appear that Heney received specific orders from the Committee, even if the only confirmation comes from William Auld, commenting on the later insubordination of the men at Brandon House in disobeying "the orders of those appointed by the Hon^{bic} Committee themselves, as Mr. Heney certainly was."⁷⁰ Another hint appears in a letter from the Committee to Auld and Thomas dated 31 May 1813; it reads in part: "We think it quite unnecessary that Mr. Heney should come to England, . . . Mr. Heney will of course find himself fully supported in his command."⁷¹

Hugh Heney in Charge

The journal for 1810/11 has a note at the top of the first page, which reads: "Journal kept at Brandon Hs by Mr. J. McKay until his death. next by Wm. Yorston, then by Mr. Heney & after 24th Feby by the Mutineers."⁷²

As John McKay's condition worsened, he took steps to ensure that he left someone in command. On 24 May 1810, he recorded "Arived William Yorston and Men

⁶⁷ HBCA, A.1/49, f. 115-123d, 7 March 1810, 2 May 1810, a series of thirty resolutions.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 122d.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 126d, 127.

⁷⁰ HBCA, B.22/z/1. #7. f.13.

⁷¹ HBCA, A.6/18, p. 84.

⁷² HBCA B.22/a/18. f.1

with Mr. Joseph Beioley's Remains [probably "returns" from Manitoba post on Lake Manitoba]. Gave him [Yorston] the management of the House as my bad health is increasing worse.⁷³ William Yorston later commented in his Petition that he was aware that McKay was ill of consumption,⁷⁴ and he had earlier, along with James Inkster and John Richards McKay, witnessed McKay's will.⁷⁵ He took over command at McKay's death on 5 July 1810. William Yorston had been in command the previous summers,⁷⁶ while Beioley had evidently gone out with the boats, as he did not appear in the summer lists. He appeared as Master at Moose Lake for 1810-11.⁷⁷

The fall trading season began normally, with no hint of the trouble to come. Yorston retained command until he was replaced by Thomas Norn on 13 September 1810, possibly because Norn had been raised to the rank of officer the previous summer,⁷⁸ while Yorston was apparently still a servant. Norn, however, returned command to Yorston after eight days saying

that from his ignorance of the Trade in that district, and of the humour of the Traders, whom he saw daily leaving the place, he was quite unfit for the Management and begged that the Petitioner [Yorston], to prevent the Total ruin of the Companys Interests in that quarter, would again take the command.⁷⁹

⁷³ HBCA, B.22/a/18, f. 2. Emphasis apparently in original. "Remains" refers to trade goods left at the end of the season.

⁷⁴ HBCA, A.10/1, f. 11Bd.

⁷⁵ John McKay's will, signed 20 March 1810. Copy in Glenbow Archives, BB.12.4446M. T.R. McCloy, in the annotated biography for the DCB gave Somerset House, London, Heathfield 147, will of John McKay as his reference.

⁷⁶ HBCA, b.22/a/15, 16. 1807, 1808. Summers in charge.

⁷⁷ HBCA, B3/d/127.

⁷⁸ HBCA, B.22/a/17, ff. 1, 2. John McKay had commented "Being at present short of 4 Men I solicited to Mr. Corrigal to spare me 3 of his Men as they are extra on his List. which he granted till he arrived at his Place of Destination. from then on I must proceed to B.H. [Brandon House] with 4 men to a Boat. Thos Norn was kind enough to take a vacant place. Notwithstanding the Chiefs raised him to // the rank of an Officer as he generally held a post under me."

⁷⁹ HBCA, A.10/1, f. 11Cd.

The Brandon journal, kept by Yorston, records that Norn arrived back from the annual trip to Albany on 10 September and does not mention any transfer of command. Yorston's journal did record unhappiness with cutbacks in men and supplies from Albany; only two boats and ten men were sent in, instead of the usual four boats of goods with twenty men. As well, the men were all ordered to go out in the spring to accommodate the reorganization of trade, and in order to do this, to build another boat, but they were not sent any iron for it.⁸⁰ After Norn's eight-day regime, Yorston remained in command until Hugh Heney arrived on 4 November 1810.⁸¹

From the journal, it is clear that the men were concerned about these new orders, but previous to the arrival of a letter from Mr. Heney dated 23 October 1810,⁸² they seem to have conducted the business of the post in the accustomed manner. On 1 November, before Heney arrived, James Gaddy and an Indian guide arrived from Alexander Kennedy at Swan River "with Letters to Mr. Heney and also a letter to ourselves wherein he gave us a little information respecting the New adopted plan of Trade in case we should not receive intelligence from Albany Fort."⁸³ This letter became important in the interpretation the men put on Heney's orders as they compared the two sets of new orders, those written by Kennedy and those written by Heney.

In light of the business-like conduct demonstrated in the journal, Mr. Heney's instructions to the men in his letter sound strange in their allusions to their disposing of

⁸⁰ HBCA, B.22/a/18, f. 4d.

⁸¹ HBCA, A.10/1. f. 111Cd.

⁸² HBCA, B.22/a/18, f. 6d.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, f. 7.

Company property and trading for meat. The usual practice was to hunt for provisions, and purchase furs; Heney, in contrast, emphasized building up stores of provisions to the virtual exclusion of furs:

Dear Sir/ [there is no mention in the journal as to whom this is addressed]

This is to inform you that this Company is determined to keep up the Red River, also Brandon House, therefore I hope you'll not dispose of any of the Horses nor of anything belonging to the House till such time as I shall have the pleasure of seeing you. take no Bad Skins such as Rabbits or any Summer Furs but Trade as much of Beat Meat and Fat as you can. You'll be so good as to send as soon as possible to the usual place at the forks Four Carts and also Four Horses. Two with Riding Saddles and two with burden. You'll give the Men a fortnights Provisions to here in wait of our Superintendant Wm Auld who is to be here as soon as possible. -- I am now going to Pembina but will be soon with you. I send by Humphrey Favell the Packet which I hope will reach you safely.

I am
Dear Sir
Yours Sincerely
Hugh Heney.⁸⁴

Heney's comment that both Red River and Brandon House were being maintained, followed by his announcement that he would be arriving there after a visit to Pembina, may indicate that he had been placed in charge of the whole of Red River, both Upper and Lower, as do his continued visits there during the year and his presence there in the years following the mutiny.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ HBCA. B.22/a/18. f. 6d.

⁸⁵ HBCA. prepared biography. and Pembina journal for 1812 . B.160/a/3. 4.

The new emphasis on taking meat and fat⁸⁶ earned him the displeasure, or perhaps more nearly contempt, of some of the natives when he declined to take their skins for payment of their debt. As Yorston told it,

These Savages however did not understand the chicanery of civilization. They told Mr. Heney, by means of their Interpreter, that "he was a Strange sort of a Man" that they had agreed to repay with skins, the advance which was made to them; and that they would fulfill their agreement.⁸⁷

Heney arrived on 4 November,⁸⁸ and problems were apparent almost immediately. It would appear that Heney had been told to trim expenses and responded by refusing to allow the men any country goods for their own use, even if they purchased them.⁸⁹

The men refused to work until the price of "slops" (clothing) was reduced to its former level, at least for those items they had already purchased.⁹⁰ On 6 November, Heney recorded, "Wrote down to the men that whoever refused to do his Duty I could not supply them with Victuals they must take to the plain and shift for themselves till Spring." Heney was clumsily attempting to implement Colvile's retrenchments while building up provisions.⁹¹ He recorded on 7 November, "Self, William Yorston, Thomas Norn and John McKay Weighed the Fat is 5400 # [pounds]."⁹²

⁸⁶ Evidently part of the retrenching plan, as a letter from the Committee to Wm Auld, HBCA, A.6/18, f. 1, 31 May 1810, included orders that the Winnipeg and Saskatchewan factories, as these areas were then designated, were to "supply the others with pemmican & dried meat which they may require."

⁸⁷ HBCA, A.10/1, f. 111Cd.

⁸⁸ HBCA, B.22/a/18, f. 7.

⁸⁹ This also ties in with the Resolutions of the New System. HBCA, A.1/49, f. 115 - 124, Resolutions 24, 25, which address the prices of European goods and the charging of Company servants for any goods received from stores.

⁹⁰ HBCA, B.22/a/18, f. 7d. 6 November, 1810.

⁹¹ HBCA, A.1/49, f. 123. Committee Notes. Resolution 25.

⁹² HBCA, B.22/a/18, f. 7d. Brandon Journal, 6 November, 1810.

Work went on at the post, with men hunting and bringing in meat. Then on, 8 December, Heney left for “the Summer Berry River or Pabinat.”⁹³ According to the journal, everything went on as usual while he was away. He returned on 19 January 1811, bringing Mr. Archibald Mason and seven men with him from Pembina.⁹⁴

As William Yorston reported in his petition, Archibald Mason had evidently

been sent by the company to ascertain the situation of their Trade. Heney had appointed him Master of Babin-nous [Pembina] house, and he came to Brandon house to investigate the cause of the general discontent, which had been excited under that Gentleman’s management. After making every necessary Inquiry, he declared that Mr. Heney himself was the only person in fault.⁹⁵

Problems came to a head in February. One of the first evidence of problems is an “Inventory of the Transactions since my [Heney’s] arrival to the Present date,” dated 18 February 1811, which showed that House expenses almost equalled Trade expenses and that more than ten times the amount of Trade expense had been accumulated as wages owed.⁹⁶ These actions indicate that Heney was again attempting to implement the new orders from Wedderburn’s retrenching resolutions, which included clauses that stipulated inventories be taken at the beginning of an officer’s service at a post.⁹⁷

By late February, Heney had lost command in Brandon. The first indication in the journal of a major break is an erasure of a line and a half of the 22 February entry, followed by:

⁹³ Ibid., f. 8d.

⁹⁴ Ibid., f. 9d.

⁹⁵ HBCA, A.10/1, f. 111Cd.

⁹⁶ HBCA, B.22/a/18, f. 10d. *Brandon Journal*, 18 February 1811.

⁹⁷ HBCA, A.1/49, f. 115, #8; f. 116, #12; f. 16d, # 19, 20.

Sent four men for the Cows returned at Noon, Four hauling home Cord Wood, Taylor and Cooper at Work. Two Cooks and Two attending the Horses cleaning the Stables Etc. [14 men] The rest noways Employed. Sent an Order down to the Men whoever were willing to Remain any longer in the Department to sign their Names. Some consented. ⁹⁸

The next day, Heney ordered some of the men to accompany him to Pembina and they refused, saying that they could not obey orders because they had no parchment to net their snowshoes.⁹⁹ These incidents were followed by two letters, dated 24 February 1811. The first, from Heney to Thomas Norn, placed him in charge, saying Company business called him, Heney, to “Pabanat” and admonishing Norn to “order the men to their work” and not to let them buy anything “without new Orders.”¹⁰⁰ It appears that since Heney had been told to trim expenses, he responded by refusing to allow the men any country goods for their own use, even if they purchased them.¹⁰¹

A letter sent from John Isbister (labourer) to William Plowman, the cooper at Pembina, dated 26 February 1811 illustrates the depth of the men’s distrust of Hugh Heney. He wrote that Heney was coming to Pembina “to try to get you to sine [sign] your hand to stay here” and that once he had that he would “flourish” over them; that he had sent them [the men at Brandon House] a note asking them to sign to declare that they would stay, and if they didn’t sign, he would understand that they were not willing to stay, and further, that they laughed at the note, which made him so angry that he “almost

⁹⁸ HBCA. B.22/a/18, f. 10d, Brandon Journal, 22 February 1811.

⁹⁹ Ibid., Feb. 23.

¹⁰⁰ HBCA. B.22/a/18, f. 111.

¹⁰¹ This appears to be a heavy-handed response to the Resolutions of the New System. HBCA. A.1/49, f. 123, Resolution

broke down the room".¹⁰² The men did not find Heney credible, especially when he was charged with making changes. They evidently did not see the note as an attempt simply to confirm their service with the Company.

The second letter copied into the Brandon House journal is from William Yorston to the London Committee. In it, he briefly told the story of a dispute between Heney and Archibald Mason (that apparently began when Mason defended William Yorston),¹⁰³ which led to the men protecting Mason from Heney in the men's house (where they had put him [Mason] drunk, to bed in the cooper's¹⁰⁴ that is James Inkster's room). Concerning the resulting dispute between the men and Heney, Yorston wrote, they "also said they would no longer be under his Subjection on Orders - and whenever the Honble Company thinks proper to call them home concerning this behaviour they are ready to plead their cause."¹⁰⁵ In his petition, Yorston described Heney as drunk and abusive, citing George Henderson as a witness:

Henny [sic], who, . . . 'Was naturally sulky but more Violent when in liquor' having supped with Mason and some others, on Sunday 24th February, and the company having drunk freely. Mason left the room in an Intoxicated State and was put to bed in the Cooper's Room; that soon after, Henny left the Room and came down Stairs with two loaded Pistols and searched for Mason, and offered to Fight a Duel with him, declaring that he would shoot any Man that opposed him; that the Servants present remonstrated¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² HBCA. B.22/z/1. f. 9.

¹⁰³ Edith Burley, p. 307.

¹⁰⁴ HBCA. A.10/1. f. 111Cd. Yorston's Petition.

¹⁰⁵ HBCA. B.22/a/18, f. 11.

¹⁰⁶ HBCA. A.10/1. f. 111Cd. Yorston's petition.

Yorston reported that Heney then “ran off” to Pembina, and his letter in the journal concluded, “but finding the House in want of a Master I undertook it and manage the Business to the best of my Knowledge.”¹⁰⁷ In the petition, he claimed that he was not present when the men disarmed Heney of his brace of pistols and sent him off.¹⁰⁸ That slight shift in meaning between Heney “running off” to Pembina and being “sent off” illustrates the problems in deciphering the story of the mutiny. The story shifts subtly, depending on the teller’s intent and audience.

Heney’s insistence on purchasing provisions, and Archibald Mason’s presence, which William Auld declared was as an agriculturalist to assist in developing farming in the Red River,¹⁰⁹ suggest that the HBC traders in the area were caught up in a secondary mission that year, to prepare for the arrival of the Selkirk settlers. Mason came to Rupert’s Land on the same ship on which Heney returned from London,¹¹⁰ and later remained in Red River where he worked for the settlement.¹¹¹

Another factor discussed by historians reinforces that conclusion. The problems between William Auld and Hugh Heney, on one hand, and Miles Macdonell and the Selkirk colony on the other hand are a well-known part of the story of Red River. E.E. Rich discussed Auld’s neglect of orders to prepare for the colony, orders which he suggested that Auld received in 1810, and Selkirk’s allegations that Auld neglected his

¹⁰⁷ HBCA, B.22/a/18, f. 11. Brandon journal, 1810-11. 24 February 1811.

¹⁰⁸ HBCA, A.10/1, f. 111D. Yorston’s petition.

¹⁰⁹ HBCA, B.22/z/1, f. 13d. Brandon Mutiny investigation, document #7, July 1811, Letter from William Auld, to Yorston.

¹¹⁰ HBCA, C.1/774, f. 2. Ship’s Logs

¹¹¹ PAM, Selkirk Papers. #33. 581. 1011. 1013.

instructions, and concluded that the Committee “therefore took the colonising project from Auld and placed it under the separate control of himself [Selkirk].”¹¹² A.S. Morton, discussing problems between Heney and Miles Macdonell, revealed a continuing pattern of hostility from Heney against the separation of the colony’s administration from the Hudson’s Bay Company,¹¹³ and the eventual dismissal of Auld for his interference with the colony.¹¹⁴ Giraud commented that “the hostility toward Macdonell harboured by Hugh Heney, the Company’s representative in the Red River sector, proceeded from the same motives as that of Auld, his immediate superior”:¹¹⁵ that is, Auld and Heney felt slighted that the colony was no longer their responsibility and under their control. In sum, Brandon House was caught up in the first efforts to prepare the ground for Selkirk’s agricultural settlement, and its residents were subject to new priorities and conflicting orders some of which, probably without explanation, involved aiding the Selkirk colonization.¹¹⁶

The following table lists those known to be present in Brandon in 1810-11.

¹¹² E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1670-1870*, (London: Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1958), Vol. 2, p. 300.

¹¹³ Arthur S. Morton, *The History of the Canadian West to 1870-71*, second edition edited by Lewis G. Thomas, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 544 - 552.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 555.

¹¹⁵ Giraud, Marcel. *The Métis in the Canadian West*. 2 vols., translated by George Woodcock, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986), p. 374.

¹¹⁶ For further discussion of the Brandon “mutiny” see Edith Burley, “Work, Discipline and Conflict in the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1770 to 1870.” PhD dissertation, University of Manitoba, 1994.

Figure 12: Men in Brandon House in 1810-11

| Men/1810 | total years in area | years under McKay | Family | Highest Position | Summer of 1811* | Mutineer 1811† |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Anderson, Js | 13 | 8 | | tailor | present | |
| Baikie, Andrew | 1 | 0 | | labourer | | yes |
| Ballendine, John | 1 | 0 | | labourer | | |
| Bowes, William | 5 | 5 | | smith | present | |
| Corrigan, John | 1 | 0 | | labourer | | yes |
| Easter, John | 17 | 9 | yes | steersman | present | |
| Favell, Thomas | 10 | 10 | yes | interprcter | | yes |
| Henderson, George | 11 | 9 | yes | labourer | | yes |
| Inkster, James | 12 | 7 | yes | summer/in charge | present | yes |
| Jollycouer, Louis | 15 | 6+ | yes | labourer | | |
| Kipling, Thomas P. | 1 | 0 | | | present | |
| Lyons, John | 14 | 10 | yes | labourer | | yes |
| Mason, Archibald | 1 | 1 | | in charge/ Pembina | | yes |
| Mason, Thomas | 5 | 5 | | labourer | | yes |
| McKay, John Jr | 2 | 1 | | clerk | | |
| Norn, Thomas | 10 | 9 | | in charge | | yes |
| Scarth, Wm | 1 | 0 | | | | |
| Setter, George | 1 | 0 | | | present | |
| Short, James | 13 | 11 | yes | | present | |
| Sinclair, Wm | 1 | 0 | | labourer | present | |
| Wishart, John | 2 | 1 | | steersman | | yes |
| Yorston, William | 11 | 8 | | in charge/ Manito-bah | present | yes |
| Total Years | 148 | 108 | | | | |
| Average | 6.7 | 8.3 | | | | |

* HBCA, B.22/a/18, fo. 11d. List of those remaining inland the summer of 1811, after Alexander Kennedy had left with the boats for York Factory

† Indicates only those who can positively be identified as having taken part in the events of the winter of 1811.

The Orphans

The year 1810 was a very trying time for the families at Brandon House. Mary Favell McKay died in childbirth on 19 March 1810,¹¹⁷ and her husband John's death in July left eight children orphaned, aged from 18 years (John Richards McKay) to only four months (Mary).

The McKay siblings were part of a group of children of stayers who had grown up in Brandon House. There were five Andersons, two Inksters, three Shorts, two Yorstons and two Slaters, in all 14 children. Comparisons of the families present in 1805 with those in 1810 show that most of the children were born between 1805 and 1810. The parents of these families must also have assisted the orphaned McKays. In one instance, one of the girls evidently needed aid. Among Heney's transgressions, Archibald Mason reported that he tried to take Isabella, John McKay's fourteen-year-old daughter.¹¹⁸ She was taken under the protection of Joseph Beioley, the clerk, who later became a chief factor on James Bay, and became his wife.¹¹⁹

The Aftermath of the Trouble

William Yorston retained control at Brandon House until Alexander Kennedy arrived on 13 May 1811. There was apparently considerable trouble organizing the men to go out. The men were accustomed to going out to Martin's Fall, and Albany Factory.

¹¹⁷ HBCA, B.22/a/17, f. 19d.

¹¹⁸ HBCA, B.22/z/1 (doc. #6) f. 12, Letter from Archibald Mason to Mr. William Plowman: Edith Burley, "Work, Discipline and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company." PhD. dissertation. p. 308. Letter from men to Pembina.

¹¹⁹ T.R. McCloy, Table A. Notes on the John McKay family, private collection: HBCA, prepared biography (JHB, June 1991) which cites the Moose Factory Register, Ontario Archives.

New orders sent the previous summer, however, included Brandon House in the new Northern Department that was under York Factory.¹²⁰ Further, the question of who would go to York to answer to Heney's charges and who would go to Albany to support Mason were critical concerns. Twelve men went out with Kennedy to York, and seven went to Albany.¹²¹ By the time everyone was sorted out, and ready to depart, it was 23 June 1811. The officers on the Bay determined that Archibald Mason was the ringleader, and he was dismissed from his command of Pembina,

and fined the full amount of his wages. . . . William Yorston, "who was only the Second, could not be punished according to the 'unanimous resolutions' of the officers, who had recommended sending Yorston home in irons". . . . He and all the mutineers who renewed their engagements returned to Brandon House.¹²²

The following year, Yorston found himself again in conflict with a new master at Brandon, this time Alexander Kennedy. The dispute with Kennedy was evidently over a proposed expedition to the Mandans, which Yorston felt was dangerous at that time and for which they did not have suitable trade goods. As Yorston was the only man present who knew the way and the language, having made the trip numerous times before,¹²³ and therefore the only one qualified to lead such an expedition, a less authoritarian master might have deferred to his advice, but Kennedy declared that Yorston was trying to "throw obstacles" in the way of the expedition. The two men scuffled and came to

¹²⁰ HBCA, A.6/18, f. 1, letter to Mssrs Auld & Thomas from the Committee, 31 May, 1810.

¹²¹ HBCA, B.22/z/1, f. 3.

¹²² Edith Burley, "Work, Discipline and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770 to 1870." PhD dissertation, 1994 p.312.

¹²³ See Wood and Thiessen's *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders Among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818*. Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1985. Appendix .

blows. Thomas Favell stepped in and disarmed them when they began to fight over a pair of tongs which Kennedy had seized as a weapon. Yorston got the best of Kennedy and pounded him, then relented and fled to the nearby NWC post for refuge when Kennedy left to arm himself. The Canadian master went over but refused to help Kennedy arrest Yorston. Yorston finally sent word that he would go on the expedition, which turned out as he had predicted. On his return, he again spent some time as master because the natives disliked Kennedy, possibly because of a lack of connections with the local bands, his wife being a Cree from the north, or because of the continuing friction over changing priorities.

When Yorston decided to return to Britain to seek redress for his injuries, he faced further repercussions for his actions from the officers at the Bay. When he left Brandon House, Kennedy would not let him take his belongings. When he arrived at York Factory in July, "William Auld informed him that he and all the other officers 'had resolved to make him an example.'"¹²⁴

He was banished to the woods for fifteen days before taking the *King George* to England. He arrived in Stromness on 15 October 1812.¹²⁵ The Committee "judged him 'most unruly and mutinous, and rather deserving of Punishment than of any remuneration.'"¹²⁶ He apparently never returned to Rupert's Land.

¹²⁴ Edith Burley, pp. 313, 314.

¹²⁵ HBCA, William Yorston Search File.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

The first documentary evidence that William Yorston had a family at Brandon occurs in a letter from Thomas Vincent to him dated 8 July 1808, which Yorston included in his Petition. It begins, "William, I received yours and was happy to hear you was well, I have sent you a small present for your Wife as likewise a Pair of Trousers for yourself."¹²⁷ No mention was found of his family in the various descriptions of events after the mutiny.¹²⁸ As with other families however, church records from Red River reveal its existence and something of its later history. Charlotte, his Cree wife, married Peter Henderson in Red River on 2 March 1829,¹²⁹ and two children, Charlotte and John, for whom the record named William Yorston as father, and Charlotte a Cree as mother, were baptised on 26 October 1824,¹³⁰ along with three children of Peter Henderson and Charlotte: Jane, Anne and Peter, Jr.

The Aftermath: Hugh Heney

Hugh Heney boarded the Prince of Wales I at Albany Factory on 30 September 1813 to return to England.¹³¹ According to W. S. Wallace, he returned to Montreal sometime before 1818, when he was involved in the translating of both Halkett's *Statement respecting the Earl of Selkirk's settlement at Kildonan* (London, 1817) and Wilcocke's *A narrative of occurrences in the Indian countries of North America*

¹²⁷ HBCA, A.10/1, f. 111B.

¹²⁸ HBCA, B.22/a/18; B.22/z/1; A.10/1, ff. 111B-D. William Yorston's Petition.

¹²⁹ P.A.M., St. John's Marriages, 1820 - 1835, #174.

¹³⁰ P.A.M., St. John's Baptisms, 1813 - 1828, # 426, 425.

¹³¹ HBCA, A11/52, fo.3.

(London, 1817), (both strongly approving of the actions of Lord Selkirk) into French and having them published in Montreal. After a career as a member of Parliament, he died in Three Rivers, Lower Canada, on 15 January 1844.¹³²

Native Trade Relations

Circumstantial evidence suggests that relations with native traders may have played a part in the troubles at Brandon House. If Thomas Norn's trading problems mentioned earlier, concerned native traders (leading him, after eight days, to return control of the post to Yorston in 1810¹³³) then his experience was similar to that which Kennedy recorded in 1812,¹³⁴ and the solution the same; let Yorston take charge. Native traders preferred trading with people connected to their community, one factor that drew many Europeans into country marriages in the first place. Heney's marriage to an Assiniboine would have allied him with that group, but (although the Cree and Assiniboine were friends) it did not necessarily gain him any favours from the Cree, who were allied more closely with the older HBC traders such as Yorston.

¹³² According to W. S. Wallace, "Heney, Hugh", *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, "A Biographical Dictionary of the Nor'Westers," Vol. XXII, Champlain Society, p. 455, 456. However, the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* article by Jacques L'Heureux gives a more complete life history for a Hugues Heney (sic) with that birth and death date. According to L'Heureux, that Heney was articling with a Montreal firm when this Heney was serving with the HBC in the Assiniboine basin. See *DCB*, Vol. VII, pp. 393, 394. As well, the French version of Halkett in the U of A library (Halkett, John, 1768-1852: *Précis touchant la colonie du Lord Selkirk, sur la Rivière Rouge. sa destruction en 1815 et 1816, et la massacre du gouverneur Semple et du son parti, avec des observations sur un ouvrage publié récemment et intitulé "A narrative of occurrences in the Indian countries."* &c. / traduit de l'ouvrage anglois [sic] publié à Londres en 1817. Montréal : Impr. de J. Lane, 1818) claimed that it was translated in London, not Montreal.

¹³³ HBCA. A.10/I, f. 11Cd.

¹³⁴ Edith Burley, "Work, discipline and conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770 to 1870." PhD dissertation, 1994 pp. 312-314.

The men's accounts of the trouble in Brandon collected by Alexander Kennedy reflect another reason that local native leaders may have been discontented with Heney. Both John Isbister and John Corrigan reported that the "Fur" natives refused to return after they had seen how Mr. Heney preferred those natives who were bringing provisions. John Corrigan quoted Thomas Favell as saying that Mr. Heney "gave instructions to the Indians not to kill furs but Provisions. Says that after Mr. H. went to Pabina more of the Indians came in with furs than had come in while he was there."¹³⁵ William Yorston and most of the men evidently had a genuine concern to preserve good trade relations both for their own wellbeing and for the Hudson's Bay Company in the area, and did not find Heney's orders for a radical change credible or sensible, nor may the grounds for it have been explained.

In summary, the Assinboine basin fur trade community was growing but under stress, resisting change of management, of rules, of trading practices. During the mutiny, the solidarity of the men stood out, as they endeavoured to protect each other and their way of life. What also stands out is the attitude of ownership the men exhibited in their defense of their life-style and trading practices. Ironically, one of the charges brought against them was that they were planning to move the post upriver without orders.¹³⁶ The

¹³⁵ HBCA, B.22/z/1, ff. 6d, 7, 1811. "Men's Statements: John Corrigan."

¹³⁶ HBCA, B.22/z/1, #7, fo. 13.

development of native families, draw out in this chapter, is expanded in the next chapter, with a discussion of the children of those marriages, and their own marriages.

Chapter Five : The Second Generation : Children of the Country

By the time of the mutiny in 1810, employment records and events in Brandon House reveal that the children of the “stayers” were beginning to be employed, some formally and others informally. Among those formally employed was John Richards McKay, son of John McKay, whose posting as clerk has been previously noted. His brother William was also beginning to accompany John Lyons in various simple chores, in what may be seen as an informal apprenticeship.¹ In another instance, John Favell, a young son of Thomas and his Cree wife Sally, was accompanying James Inkster in caring for the horses.²

Although the early traders of the period 1793 to 1800 did not appear to marry across company lines (partly because few traders’ daughters were available), the situation changed in the next generation. Even the most cursory examination finds increasing company exogamy among descendants of the first generation.

Some of the marriages of the second cohort/ second generation descendants of the genesis generation were cross-cultural but not cross-company, as when Magdeleine, daughter of Canadien Andre Poitras married Nor’Wester John McDonell,³ her father’s

¹ HBCA, B.22/a/17, ff. 5, 5d, 7d, 8: .

² HBCA, B.22/a/17, f. 7d: Denney Papers. St. Johns’ Baptisms 28 [29] Jan 1821.

³ Gates, p. 64.

superior who had emigrated from Scotland to New York in 1773 when he was five years old.⁴

Similarly, Marie, daughter of Cuthbert Grant, Sr, North West Company bourgeois at Fort Tremblante (not far downriver from Alexandria) married Pierre Falcon, Jr. from Fort Souris,⁵ while her sister Josephite married John Wills, later master at Fort Gibraltar down at the Forks but listed by Masson as an X.Y Co. bourgeois in the signing of the agreement in 1804.⁶ Margaret MacLeod wrote of Wills that he had been an XY Company partner and one of the six wintering partners when the two firms united in 1804. He became a prominent Nor'Wester, and member of the Beaver Club in Montreal.⁷ The birthdates of their children suggest that their relationship began shortly after the amalgamation.⁸

Their brother, Cuthbert Grant, Jr, consolidated his first relationship with Elizabeth McKay, John's daughter,⁹ in 1814, a cross-company relationship but not truly cross-cultural at the time. He later formed two successive marriages with French-speaking Catholic daughters of former North West Company employees.¹⁰ Bethsy McKay ran off to be with him in 1815, but by 1820, when he returned from trial at

⁴ A.G. Morice, "A Canadian Pioneer: Spanish John," *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. X, No. 3, September 1929, pp. 222, 226.

⁵ MacLeod and Morton, p. 3

⁶ Masson, Vol 1, p. 89, n1.

⁷ MacLeod and Morton, p. 10. They cite W.S. Wallace (ed.) *Documents Relating to the North West Company* (Champlain Society, 1934), p. 505.

⁸ Son Edward Wills, born 1806 at St. Francois Xavier, married Isabella McGillis, Scrip Application 1900, Lewiston, USA; Daughter Emelie Wills, born 1810, married Alexandre Breland, S.F.X 1876 Scrip, both from Denney Papers. Glenbow Archives.

⁹ MacLeod, p. 12.

¹⁰ MacLeod and Morton, pp. 73, 85.

Montreal, she had vanished, along with his first child, James. His second relationship was with a Madeline Desmarais. Again, the relationship seemed to be short-term. After it ended, Grant took the child of this union (Maria), and his sister Josephite, by this time the widow of John Wills, raised her.¹¹

Thomas Favell's daughter Harriet married Charles Desmarais, son of Francois Desmarais and Mary Amerindienne.¹² Her sister Margaret (Peggy) married Michel Lambert.¹³

The database of some 456 individuals employed in the Assiniboine basin generated by this study, found records of 201 of their children. For these 201 children born in the country, 124 marriages were found (Figure 13). Of these, 19 were marriages between children, both of whom had a background in the Assiniboine basin. Of those 19, nine are both cross-company and from the Assiniboine basin (Figure 14).

¹¹ MacLeod and Morton, p. 73.

¹² St. Boniface Historical Society database; St. Johns. The Denney Papers note their marriage on 7 February, 1833 by Rev. William Cockran. (St. Johns' Marriages)

¹³ Her birth is listed by St. Boniface Historical Society database as 1803. The Denney Papers agree and give the 1870 St. Andrews Census and a 1876 Scrip application as sources. The Denney Papers list her marriage to Michel on 28 January, 1821 at Beaver Creek by Rev. John West (St. Johns' Marriages).

Figure 13: Marriages of Children from the Assiniboine Basin

| Types of Marriage | Total | HBC women | N. W. Co women | New Immigrants | Indian women |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| North West men | 82 | 10 | 66 | 3 | 3 |
| HBC men | 40 | 30 | 7 | 3 | |
| New Immigrants | 2 | 2 | | | |
| Totals | N=124 | 42 | 73 | 6 | 3 |

Many early marriage entries recorded no parentage for the wife. The two marriages to Indian women in this sample are of that category. By the time the second generation were formalizing their marriages, the missionaries were present in Red River, having brought with them their ethnocentric assumptions about marriages,¹⁴ which included an unwillingness to name those whom they considered illegitimates unless they were properly baptised and/or married. Their records, however, provide essential data. Many more of the relationships for this cohort were formally documented at the time of or shortly after their unions.

The cross-marriages found are interesting in themselves.

¹⁴ See Pannekoek's *Snug Little Flock*, and Nicole St. Onge, "Métis and Merchant Capital in Red River: The Decline of Pointe a Grouette" (1984). Master's thesis. University of Manitoba.

Figure 14: Second generation cross-marriages among children of the Assiniboine Basin, 1814-1843

| Cross Marriages | Company Affiliation | Parental Background Father/Mother | Spouse's Name | Spouse's Company | Parental Background of Spouse Father/Mother |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|---|
| Charles Desmarais ^a | NWC | French mixed blood/ Saulteaux | Harriet Favell ^b | HBC | English mixed blood/ Cree |
| Mary Desmarais | NWC | French mixed blood/ Saulteaux | John Anderson ^c | HBC | Orcadian/Saulteaux |
| Thomas Anderson ^f | HBC | Orcadian/ Saulteaux | Catherine Landrie | NWC | French/ French mixed blood |
| Mary Favell | HBC | English mixed blood/ Cree | Francois Bonneau ^g | NWC | French mixed blood / native |
| Margaret Favell | HBC | English mixed blood/ Cree | Michel Lambert ^h | NWC | French / |
| William McKay | NWC/HBC | Scots / Cree | Julie Chalifoux ⁱ | NWC | French / mixed (French/Saulteaux) |
| Elizabeth McKay | HBC | Scots / English mixed blood | Cuthbert Grant ^j | NWC | Scots / French mixed or Cree |
| Marie Short | HBC | Orcadian / Saulteaux | Pierre Pangman ^k | NWC | French mixed blood / Saulteaux |
| Sophie Lyons | HBC | mixed/mixed | Francois St. Denis ⁿ | NWC | French/ Cree |

a Born 1808, St. Boniface database, record of son Michael Desmarais born 14 Sept. 1846, Scrip affidavit, 1876.

b Born 1812, St. Boniface database: Married at Red River, 7 Feb. 1833, by Rev. William Cockran, Charles D. Denney Papers, Glenbow Archives, Calgary.

c Married by David T. Jones, Chaplain, Red River, 31 Jan. 1826, Marriages solemnized in the Hon. H.B.C. Territories, 1820-1830, from undated transcription in the Red River Collection, British Columbia Provincial Archives, Victoria, MSS 345, Vol. 1, File No. 137. Hereafter BC Archives.

f Married by Wm Cockran, Red River, 5 October, 1828, from BC Archives.

g Daughter Louise, b. summer of 1820, married Francois Desjarlais 15 June 1846, Saint Francois Xavier Register, Denney Papers, Glenbow Archives, Calgary.

h Married by John West, Chaplain, at Beaver Creek, 25 January 1821, from B.C. Archives.

i Spry, 1985, p.101.

j MacLeod and Morton, p. 12.

k Son of Pierre Pangman and Sautcuse Margarine, married Marie Short 28 Nov. 1843, Saint Francois Xavier, St. Boniface Historical Society database.

n b. 1787, Swan R. (affidavit), m. 1829 St. Boniface, St. Boniface Historical Society database: daughter Suzette b. May 1836, Baie St. Paul, 1876 Scrip, Denney Papers, Glenbow Archives, Calgary.

The table suggests a couple of factors which may be predictive of these type of cross-marriages. From the table it is obvious that the presence of a Saulteaux [Ojibwa] mother, or of a mixed-blood parent of either gender would seem to improve the likelihood of a child entering into a mixed relationship, especially if the other has the same background. The presence of a Cree mother may also improve the likelihood of a marriage to someone who also has a mixed Cree background, but this cannot be derived from the table. As the Cree were the dominant native trading group in the area, most natives unless otherwise identified may be seen to be Cree.

This brings up the important question of definition of a mixed marriage. If both members of a couple had common ethnicity, except for the European portion, perhaps it was only in European eyes that this was an exogamous relationship. For instance, Marie Short (English father) and Pierre Pangman (German father), married on 28 Nov. 1843, both had Saulteaux mothers, as did Mary Desmarais (French father) and John Anderson (English father), married on 7 Feb. 1833.

Other historians have also mentioned concerns about artificial ethnic barriers in the study of Metis history. J.R. Miller, commenting on the need for "Metis scholarship to become more diffused", contended that "the artificial barrier between Metis and Indian should be obliterated, and Canadian Metis should be examined within a comparative international framework"¹⁵ while Nicole St. Onge discussing "the need to be sensitive to the diverse experiences of the peoples of dual ancestry" referred back to her own

¹⁵ J.R. Miller, "From Riel to the Metis," *Canadian Historical Review* LXIX, no. 1 (1988):16.

research¹⁶ and commented that “one wonders whether the distinction made between the White and Metis historical experience is a non-distinction imposed by (mainly “White”) historians.”¹⁷ While these two historians are discussing ‘historical experience,’ it does not seem remiss to similarly suggest that viewing Métis as an ethnicity unconnected to its antecedents is a problem. This is not to suggest that Metis ethnicity be discarded, but that it be examined more fully in historical context.

For some of the people in that second generation cohort, the question of what is a cross-marriage is a real consideration. For instance, Cuthbert Grant and Elizabeth McKay shared very similar backgrounds. Research has shown that the similarities are even more striking between him and her brother John Richards McKay. Both were well educated sons of Scotsmen in charge of posts in the area. In *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown*, Margaret MacLeod, developing the narrative of Grant's early life, discussed the friendship that he formed with John Richards McKay. Further research confirmed the friendship expressed in the bequests the two men made to each other in their wills, written years after their activities on opposite sides during Red River's Pemmican War, 1814-16.¹⁸

The children of the Assiniboine basin who entered mixed marriages can also be shown to be from families that were heavily exposed to relations with Native groups by

¹⁶ N. St. Onge, “Race, Class and Marginality: A Metis Settlement in the Manitoba Inter-lake, 1850-1914” (Phd. diss., University of Manitoba, 1990).

¹⁷ Nicole J.M. St. Onge, “Variations in Red River: The Traders and Freemen Metis of Saint-Laurent, Manitoba,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, 1992, p. 2.

¹⁸ Margaret MacLeod, *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown: Warden of the Plains of Red River* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963) p. 81; John Richard McKay's will, 22 January 1842, M539 #18, Glenbow Museum Archives, Calgary.

virtue of the father's occupation: for example, the sons of James Anderson, the tailor and maker of trading captains coats,¹⁹ Tom Favell the interpreter,²⁰ and Francois Desmarais also interpreter.²¹ These relationships were the results of years spent in association in that welter of ethnicities found in the "mixed-group camps" discussed by Laura Peers. As she explained it:

Unlike Ojibwa-Sioux relations, the complex web of kinship ties between Ojibwa, Cree, freemen and Metis conflict between groups and allowed groups to combine their strengths. As one trader [Alexander Henry the Younger] remarked of inter-group marriages during this period, "These unions consolidate the interests of the tribes and are foundation of much social harmony and good fellowship."²²

While she made these comments about mixed native groups and camps, they apply equally well during that period to fur trade posts and communities.

Further examination of the cross-marriages reveals another common factor. Children whose fathers, whether of European or mixed background, had a long history of employment in the Assiniboine river basin, and who therefore spent their childhood years in the basin, was as likely to cross-marry as were children whose parents were both of mixed background, or one of whose parents was of Saulteaux ethnicity. However, none of these categories were mutually exclusive. As was previously noted, because the traders tended to use the generic "native" or "Indian" for Cree people, it is not possible to determine the strength of the Cree ethnicity factor.

¹⁹ Taylor, Rupert Leslie, *The Native Link. Tracing One's Roots to the Fur Trade* (Victoria: Pencrest Publications, 1984), pp. 16, 29.

²⁰ HBCA. B.22/z/1, fo. 7.

²¹ L. R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest*, Vol. 1, p. 402.

²² Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 69.

This chapter has analyzed evidence of cross-company marriages among the children of employees and drawn conclusions that highlight the importance of residence and maternal culture. Other conclusions may also be drawn from this study and are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Six : Conclusions

Examination of the fur trade population of the Assiniboine basin, centering on the 1805 ball reported by Daniel Harmon, has revealed a number of patterns and trends. There was certainly a series of neighbourly, cooperative relationships between men of the three rival fur trade companies, such as those between John McKay and Pierre Falcon and A.N. McLeod and John Sutherland. It is apparent that these relationships were formed out of a sense of commonality, of Europeans living in isolation, which subsumes such commonalities as native families and issues of identity. The sharing of iron can be seen to stand for all the commodities and services that they were accustomed to, and to which access was limited inland. The stories of nursing care reveal a similar dynamic.

Marriages and Families

Tentative conclusions may be drawn concerning marriage formation for that first cohort. A significant portion of relationships before 1805 seem to be between European males and Amerindian women (60% for this sample). There appears to be no intermarriage across company lines by 1805, perhaps because few of the women were daughters of fur trade employees. However, in the next generation, the marriages of the children of the Assiniboine basin revealed numerous unions across company lines.

Although the known cases of intermarriage between groups are fewer than would be wished for statistical significance, those that were found were significant historically, in that they reflected relationships among “stayers” from both companies, and marriages between people who had had familial work relationships, either participating in joint

endeavors or working in close opposition for years. Thus, a portion of the hypothesis was proved, in that cross marriages were found between children of the two different fur trade companies who had spent their childhood in the Assiniboine basin.

A deeper analysis and reconstitution of this population may reveal other trends. It is suggestive that a significant proportion (87.5%, 14 out of 16) of the marriages found so far for the first generation Hudson's Bay Company men employed in the Assiniboine basin (as detailed in Figure 7: Families in the Assiniboine Basin, 1805) involved what Philip Curtin designated as "stayers," men whose role in the fur trade diaspora was to make a life in cultural enclaves in the host population's territory. The growth of a population of stayers laid the foundation for the formation of stable cross-cultural relationships in the interior. The longer a man was employed at the same location, the more likely he was to form a stable native marriage. While many marriages were found for North West Company employees (90 for the first generation in the database), the same analysis cannot be done for them, because their length of residence cannot be traced by time series analysis of employment.

Examining fur trade populations and families in terms of geographical location and career foci appears, at least for the Brandon area, to have greater explanatory power than the current focus on ethnicity and Red River habitation. For Hudson's Bay Company personnel, such examination using post journal records reveals details of the seasonal round of activities as well as employment patterns. For some of these personnel, the servants' records placed them in the Albany district, while the Brandon

journals placed them more specifically in the Assiniboine basin and give detail on their work assignments.

The cross marriages in the second generation demonstrate that important relationships are explicable by early kin connections formed in fur trade posts. The nine second-generation mixed / cross marriages discovered in this study were between children of “stayers.” As well, it seems that people with a common family background, whether aboriginal mothers from the same ethnic group or a parent of either gender with a mixed-blood background, were more likely to form a relationship that was exogamous only if viewed in terms of paternal ancestry. That is, because they found a commonality in some aspect of their maternal background, they seemed to be able to accept great differences in some other part of their ancestry.

For instance, a couple with Saulteaux mothers, such as Mary Desmarais and John Anderson, or Marie Short and Pierre Pangman could accept that their fathers did not speak the same mother tongue. In those families, the mother’s language was likely the household language. As well, the family would have been viewed as part of the mother’s extended kin group or band. It is impossible to tell from the records used in this study, but the children may well have been marrying within their extended kin group. In a similar way, children with common mixed-blood parentage may, at this early stage, have been reflecting common ethnicity in maternal grandparents. Mary Desmarais’ brother Charles’ marriage to Harriet Favell may have reflected a common Cree ethnicity in their paternal grandmothers.

The Brandon Mutiny

Examination of the “mutiny” at Brandon House during the season of 1810-11 in the context of the developing community of “stayers” and their families helps to explain that series of events. While one cannot talk about finding the “truth” about such a complicated episode (especially when the traces of it come from such a variety of sources and are filtered through layers of authority in the Hudson’s Bay Company), it is possible to make more enlightened speculation about what happened. Brandon House from the 1790s to 1810 saw the development of a tightly-knit community of men who were accustomed to working together cooperatively and interacting in often collegial ways with their rivals under the light hand of a congenial master (John McKay).

The insurrection arose after the replacement of the master by Hugh Heney, a much younger and less experienced master of difficult temperament. It is immediately apparent how the difficulties arose. Add to that the strong possibility that both Auld and Heney were operating under a second set of orders from Wedderburn and/or Selkirk to prepare for the Selkirk colony. Many of Heney’s orders which the men found so inexplicable were sensible if he was in fact attempting to prepare for the setup of the colony, but the orders were not made intelligible. The Brandon men, however, building on their long experience in the plains fur trade, assessed their orders in view of their potential impact on the Company’s trade, and on their own prior interconnections in the area. It was, in effect, the first intrusion of colonial settlement values into the fur trade life of the Hudson’s Bay Company employees in the prairie regions of Rupert’s Land.

Problems

A study such as this constantly confronts problems of missing data. Sometimes this reflects shifts in ethnicity, wherein a fur trade family vanished into a native group, or of a change in or loss of occupation. A case such as William Yorston's enforced return to Orkney and his resulting separation from his native family, taken care of in typical fur trade fashion by the marriage of his wife to Peter Henderson illustrates how data can get lost. If Yorston's children had not been recorded as with his last name, but rather with their step-father's name at their baptisms on 26 October 1824,¹ we would not know of their existence as his progeny.

The compilations of fur trade family genealogies were very useful. The amount of data behind this study could not have been compiled by one researcher in any timely fashion. However, all the compilations have biases which have influenced the kinds of what information collected. Some also suffer from the too-frequent genealogists' tendency not to report sources in data offered to the public, increasing the need to recheck primary records often. Most of them center upon a family or cluster of families, sometimes with a strongly patrilineal slant, and usually reflect priorities from a later historical period.

The compilations do have a strength that is not self-evident. Much of the family information comes from multiple sources, and when these are all assembled in one place, it is much easier to compare and evaluate them for accuracy, and then, to discard those

¹ P.A.M.. St. John's Baptisms. 1813 - 1828. # 426. 425.

records that have become attached to the wrong individual or are based on inaccurate information.

Future work in this area should include the assembling of more nominal data, checking systemic inaccuracies (e.g. Red River Census problems), and doing similar geographically specific, time series analyses. It should be possible to do similar analyses of other early fur trade communities. Any community included in Masson's list or for which other similar North West Company records exist, which also had Hudson's Bay Company posts close at hand could be examined and then compared with the findings for the Assiniboine basin. More in-depth study of fur trade cross-marriages and of their origins and ramifications would benefit the fields of fur trade and Metis history as the ethnic category of "Metis" continues to expand.

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