Confluences:

A Historic Resource Study of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota and Montana



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By
Mark David Spence, Ph.D.
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Cover Image*: Unidentified First Nations Cartographer,"Two maps of Missouri, Yellowstone, Bighorn and Platte Rivers, and map with Indian place names"* (1825). Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

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Introduction:

Ancient Peoples, the North American Fur Trade, and Borderlands

> "[I]n point of position, we have no hesitation in declaring … it's being one of the most eligible and necessary, that can be chosen on the Missouri, as well in a governmental point of view, as that of affording to our citizens the benefit of a most lucrative fur trade. [T]his establishment might be made to hold in check the views of the British … on the fur-trade of the upper part of the Missouri, which we believe it is their intention to panopolize …."[1]
>
> Meriwether Lewis on the commercial, geographic, and geopolitical significance of the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence area and the eventual site of Fort Union.

> "There are origin stories associated with all of these places; the breaks all around this area have spiritual significance. Origin stories say that the rocks are the male Creator and the earth the female Creator. These rocks are very powerful and our people came to pray to the Creator and to leave offerings here. These rocks often have petroglyphs and pictographs on them. A petroglyph on a rock adds a new life to it, a new spirit. The spirits live all around here, and that is why there are so many cairns, medicine wheels, rock rings and all kinds of archaeological sites in this area."[2]
>
> Nakoda (Assiniboine) Elder on the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Area

Situated near the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, and some 1,760 river miles from St. Louis, Fort Union was the keystone of the American Fur Company's (AFC) and successor companies' operations in the Upper Missouri River Basin.[3] From the late 1820s to the mid 1860s, the various enterprises associated with Fort Union included direct trade with Native peoples, the acquisition, storage, and shipment of furs, skins, hides, bison tongue and meat from posts along the Upper and Middle Missouri rivers and the Yellowstone River to St. Louis, and the provisioning of these

[1] Meriwether Lewis [undated, winter 1804-05], in Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Definitive Journals of Lewis and Clark: Up the Missouri to Fort Mandan* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 364.
[2] Quoted in M. N. Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study for Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, and Theodore Roosevelt national Park: Final Report—December 8, 2006* (Task Agreement No. J606804112, DSCESU Cooperative Agreement CA-1248-00-002), 227.
[3] While there is no official consensus on the stretches of the Missouri River that are identified as "Upper, "Middle," and "Lower," this study follows the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of South Dakota's designation of the Fort Randall Dam near the South Dakota-Nebraska border as the beginning of the Upper Missouri River Basin. The Middle Missouri River Basin encompasses the stretch of the Missouri River and its tributaries from Fort Randall Dam to Kansas City Missouri. See U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District Fact Sheet entitled, "The District's First Decade: Navigation and Flood Control in the 1930's" (March 16, 2015). The Upper Missouri Outfit (UMO) was a subsidiary of the American Fur Company (AFC), which acquired the smaller Columbia Fur Company in 1827. Historical records variously identify Fort Union with the UMO and the AFC, but the latter association was more common.

same posts along with their affiliated traders. Over time the business of the fur trade was supplemented with contracts for the supply of U.S. Army posts and Office of Indian Affairs agencies, the transport of U.S. Mail, and the delivery of annuities (i.e., annual provisions for Native groups that had entered into treaties with the United States). Most of this varied commerce coincided with the advent of the steamboat era on the Upper Missouri, which commenced in the spring of 1832 when the AFC's *Yellow Stone* successfully navigated the winding, shallow, and often treacherous river from St. Louis to Fort Union. While steamboats did not completely replace the keelboats, flatboats, mackinaws, and pirogues that previously handled all of the waterborne cargo on the river, the application of industrial technology allowed the AFC to dominate the Upper Missouri River trade. This remained the case after Pratte, Chouteau and Company acquired the AFC's holdings on the Missouri River in 1834, subsequently reorganized as Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company in 1838, and continued to be the region's preeminent trade and transportation company until it dissolved in 1864.[4]

At present, the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site encompasses 290.6 acres on both sides of the Montana-North Dakota border. When it was first made a unit of the National Park Service in 1966, the National Historic Site (NHS) was a weedy, mixed-grass prairie with a few low mounds at the location of the original fort. From the late 1970s through the 1980s, Fort Union Trading Post NHS underwent one of the largest and most extensive archeological investigations ever conducted by the National Park Service. Along with extensive use of historical documents, drawings, and paintings, these investigations of in situ archeological resources provided the basis for a partial reconstruction of the fort that includes the Bourgeois House, Indians' and artisans' (aka Trade) house, two stone bastions, and the palisade walls. The lands within the boundaries of the National Historic Site have been managed with an eye toward retaining "integrity of setting, location, association, and feeling."[5] This has been achieved through environmental management programs that include prairie restoration, removal of invasive plants, and efforts to sustain forested riparian areas. The placement and screening of non-contributing features such as the main visitor parking area, access roads, the maintenance and staff residence area, and other elements of park infrastructure, have also maintained a

[4] On the various shipping and administrative contracts held by the AFC and successor companies, see Steven S. Walske and Richard C. Frajola, *Mails of the Westward Expansion, 1803-1861* ([Davis, CA]: Western Cover Society, 2015), 237, 240; Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 29, 30; John E. Sunder, *The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri, 1840-1855* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 3-25, 201, 241, 259; Michael M. Casler, *Steamboats of the Fort Union Fur Trade: An Illustrated Listing of Steamboats on the Upper Missouri River, 1831-1867* (Williston, ND: Fort Union Association, 1999), 1-8. Historic river miles come from Missouri River Commission, *Map of the Missouri River from its mouth to Three Forks, Montana* ([Washington]: Government Printing Office, 1895).

[5] Quotation comes from a list of attributes that are described in Barbara Little et al., *National Register Bulletin: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Archeological Properties* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2000), 35-42.

sense of timelessness—or even time travel—for visitors. Much of this has been accomplished through careful attention to viewsheds, which seek to mimic if not re-create mid-19th century vantages. The Bodmer Overlook, which encompasses the site where the artist Karl Bodmer sketched and painted vistas of Fort Union and the confluence area in 1833, is situated in the upland prairies to the north of the main visitor area. The site provides sweeping views of the reconstructed fort, surrounding lowland prairies, riparian forests along the north bank of the river, a Scenic Protection Zone on the south shore, and the distant river bluffs to the south.[6]

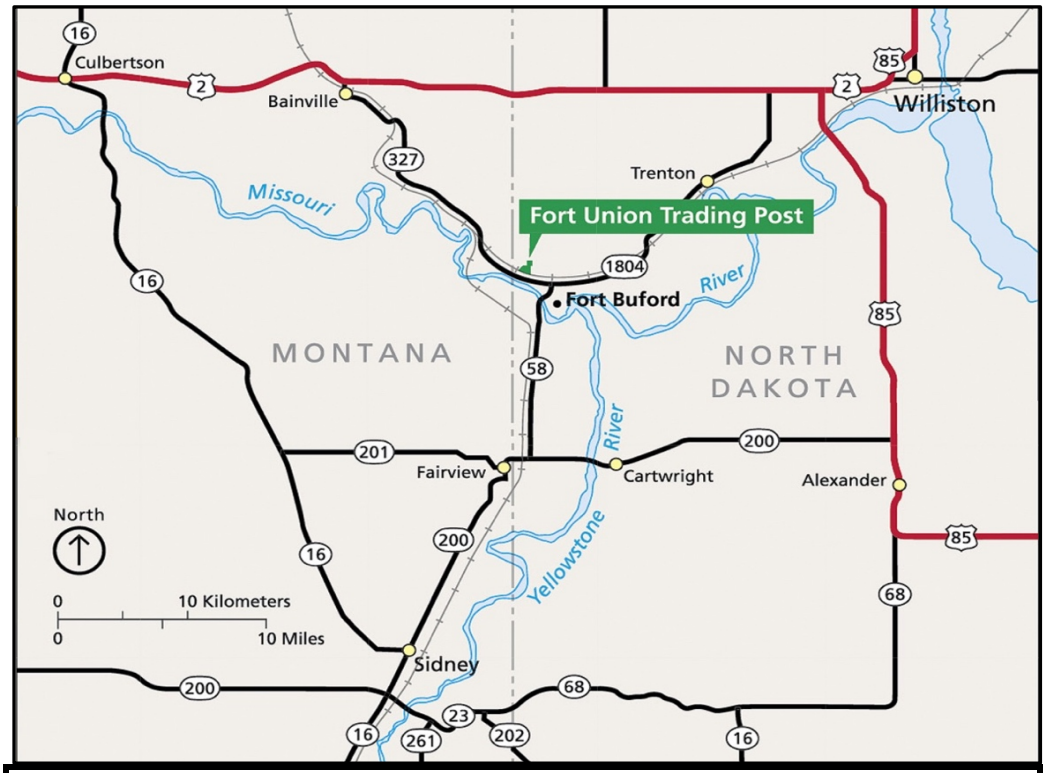


Image I.1: Area Map of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. Source: National Park Service.

Although the reconstruction of Fort Union Trading Post is the focal point of the National Historic Site (NHS), the park unit's primary historical resources are archeological. Systematic research within the boundaries of the NHS, coupled with archeological investigations of previously identified Fort Union sites and features began in 1968. For the next two decades, the principal focus of park management and development revolved around extensive archeological investigations. Under the direction of the NPS Midwest Archeological Center (MWAC), excavations focused on gleaning

[6] M. R. Komp et al., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Natural Resource Condition Assessment. Natural Resource Report. NPS/FOUS/NRR—2014/774* (Fort Collins, Colorado: National Park Service, 2014); National Park Service, *Natural Resource Technical Report: Plant Community Composition and Structure Monitoring for Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, 2012 Annual Report* (2013), passim.

sufficient architectural information about the fort complex in order to guide the partial reconstruction of the fort on its original site. Along with architectural information and a wealth of materials related to life, labor, and trad at Fort Union, the site also yielded a great quantity of information about the trade with visiting American Indian groups. Assessments of recovered materials provided "functional and formal data regarding 19th-century fur trade artifacts, activities, and manufacturing technologies utilized during that area, as well as trade networks which existed at the time." Subsequent archeological investigations found evidence for structures and work areas that were not identified in the written record or the sketches and paintings of visiting artists. These non-fort related materials also shed light on a variety of other undertakings that occurred outside the fort area over the 40-year existence of the fort, and thus further contribute to an understanding of the evolution and use of the confluence area.[7]

Along with archeological resources, viewsheds, riparian zones, and prairies, the reconstructed fort complex is also a primary contributor to the landscape of the NHS. Built on the foundation lines of the original structures, the reconstruction of Fort Union "re-established the original design intent and spatial character of the fort."[8] In doing so, the reconstructed fort also restored a historical—and intentionally dramatic—feature from the site's period of significance (1828-1867). In situ reconstruction of the fort proved highly controversial within the National Park Service (NPS) and raised fundamental questions about preservation vs. reconstruction as well as interpretation vs. historical staging. While those subjects might be more appropriate to an administrative history, they will be taken up in the concluding chapter because the reconstruction's 2015 designation as a National Historic Landmark make it nationally and historically significant.

As the present condition of the NHS clearly reveals, the debate was settled in favor of a partial reconstruction that includes the Bourgeois House, Trade Room, two stone bastions, and palisade walls. The interpretive device of outlining other buildings with timber beams assured the retention of the remaining in-situ archeological resources of several buildings and fort-related features. The outlines provide visitors with the opportunity to visualize the location of and relationships between reconstructed and known but unexcavated buildings and structures. One "ghost structure", the three-dimensional outline of the kitchen, was built on the north side of the Bourgeois House. The palisaded fort complex does not have a singular architectural style beyond what might be described as a kind of French colonial vernacular that utilized *poteaux-en-terre* (posts-in-ground)

[7] Steven LeRoy De Vore and William J. Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part VIII: Artifacts Associated with Transportation, Commerce and Industry, and of Unidentified Function* (Lincoln, Nebraska: National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, 1996), 3-6; Devore and Hunt Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part IX: Personal, Domestic, and Architectural Artifacts* (Lincoln, Nebraska: National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, 1993), 1-5; Hunt, Jr., "The Fort Union Reconstruction Archeology Project," *CRM Bulletin* 12, no. 1 (1989), 2-5.
[8] NPS, "Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site" (2018), 7.

and *poteaux-sur-solle* (posts-on-sill) construction methods. The two-story Bourgeois House, which is the largest and most ornate structure in the fort complex, embodies an eclectic blend of French colonial vernacular and Greek Revival elements that include a two-story porch and a widow's walk. In harmony with the rest of the fort complex, including the whitewashed stone bastions and palisades, the Bourgeois House is painted white and topped with the same red-painted shingles on the roofs of bastions. While these details protect against weathering, they also correspond with the integrated aesthetic of the historic Fort Union.[9]



Image I.2: Reconstructed Fort Union Trading Post and the Missouri River. Source: National Park Service.

Outside the palisade walls, landscape features include restored short-grass prairie on the bench land above the river, remnants of native northern mixed-grass prairie in the uplands to the north, and riparian forest along the Missouri River and the lower reaches of Garden Coulee to the east of the fort. To the west, the surviving original Fort Union–Fort Benton road trace (which is visible in a George Catlin painting from 1832) exists only from west side of the park's main entrance road to the park's west boundary fence. Located on the same site as the historic Fort Union, the reconstructed fort can be viewed from spots along the river's north bank as well as from the south bank, within the river channel,

[9] John Matzko, *Reconstructing Fort Union* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 119-122; Harvey H. Kaiser, *The National Park Architecture Sourcebook* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 230-232; Charles Van *Ravensway,* "*The Creole Arts and Crafts of Upper Louisiana*," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, 12 (April 1956), 213-248. It is worth noting that Fort Union's color scheme mimicked that of York Factory, Norway House, and other large Hudson's Bay Company posts. The locations of non-reconstructed features within the fort complex have been outlined with timbers set on limestone footings recovered at the site. These mark the dwelling and store ranges, the blacksmith shop, powder magazine, and ice house. A "ghost" open-air kitchen is also identified by an original hearth and an approximate reconstruction of its historical roof supported by four narrow steel posts.

surrounding prairie, and Bodmer Overlook. The bastions and palisade catwalks also provide dramatic vantages on the surrounding landscape and offer visual experiences that closely approximate the scenes depicted in sketches, paintings and photographs from the mid 19th century.[10]

Context and Significance

Fort Union had its genesis in the British-*Canadien* fur trade of the early 19th century, when—after years of destructive and often violent competition—the North West Company (NWC) was forced to merge with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in 1821 by order of Parliament. In the fallout, a number of former employees of the NWC endeavored to create small private companies of their own around the western end of Lake Superior and the prairies between the Upper Mississippi and the Upper Missouri rivers. One of these small companies, the Columbia Fur Company (1821-1827), was a partnership of former "Nor'Westers" (i.e., employees of the North West Company) headed by Kenneth McKenzie. Working on tight margins in a very competitive arena, and unable to compete with the capital and resources of John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company (AFC), the partners of the Columbia Fur Company agreed to rename and reconstitute their company as the Upper Missouri Outfit (UMO) of the AFC. In 1828, McKenzie tasked a group of men with building a post at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers to facilitate trade with Nakoda (Assiniboine) who lived and hunted in the region. Construction continued over the next year, and the first iteration of Fort Union was complete by the time McKenzie moved the headquarters of the Upper Missouri Outfit of the American Fur Company to the confluence in 1829.[11]

Along with a direct trade relationship with the Nakoda, Fort Union also provided a strategic gateway to the Northern Plains trade as far north and west as present-day Saskatchewan and Alberta. Prior to the construction of Fort Union, the peoples who lived in these areas traded almost exclusively at HBC posts. These included the Piikáni (Blackfeet) and other nations within the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), as well as the Néhinaw (Plains Cree) and Nahkawininiwak (aka Plains Ojibwe) who had been central

[10] NPS, "Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site" (2018), 54. The Fort Benton road is represented as a faint and intermittent line in Catlin's painting *Fort Union, Mouth of the Yellowstone River, 2000 Miles above St. Louis.* The road is very clearly delineated in a later "Indian cartoon" rendering of the same scene, which Catlin used with other "cartoons" to illustrate his published works and public lectures. Given the date of the original painting, which precedes the construction of Fort Benton by 14 years, it is likely that the road was originally directed to Fort Piegan, which was established near the confluence of the Marias and Missouri rivers. Fort Piegan was subsequently replaced by Fort McKenzie in 1833, which was located about six miles further up the river from the former site of Fort Piegan.

[11] Michael M. Casler and W. Raymond Wood, "The Rise and Fall of the Columbia Fur Company: Rethinking the Fur Trade on the Northern Great Plains," unpublished essay, presented at the 2018 National Fur Trade Symposium *"Old Forts Never Die": The Middle Missouri Fur Trade, 1738-1850,* Bismarck, North Dakota September 26-29, 2018. This is the most comprehensive study of the relationship between McKenzie, the Columbia Fur Company, and the establishment of Fort Union.

players in the French and British fur trades since the first half of the 17th century. The same was roughly true of the Nakoda (Assiniboine) and A'aninin (Atsina, aka Gros Ventre) who did not begin trading with the HBC until the mid 18th century, but brought their social and material trade connections to Fort Union in the late 1820s and early 1830s. The histories that lay behind these connections were quite unique to Fort Union, and also central to the business plan of the Upper Missouri Outfit. The former Nor'westers were keen to tap the Canadian fur trade and undermine the HBC, but they also knew that the location of Fort Union would put them at a tremendous advantage over their American competitors. Located at a key intersection on the Northern Plains and not too far from the Nueta, Hiraacá, and Sahnish trade center to the southeast, Fort Union could be accessed by Native groups from most points on the compass. Moreover, the connection to the two great rivers of the Northern Plains put Fort Union at the critical junction of the region's trade.

Location and success were certainly reflected in the dramatic scale, and the gleaming white-washed visage that the fort presented to visitors—both Native and non-Native. As the historian Barton Barbour notes, "its owners meant it to be a magnet for customers and a grand stage on which to perform the trade ritual."[12] As early as 1832, American Fur Company executives also used the fort to cultivate goodwill among scientists, artists, European nobles, and a slew of cultural elites who could serve as ambassadors of the Company and burnish its reputation within a business that was otherwise known for unsavory characters and a penchant for using alcohol to lubricate trade with Native peoples. These visitors were usually awestruck when they first caught sight of the fort, which gleamed like a white citadel in the midst of "pristine wildness and beauty!"[13] Along with the artist George Catlin, who authored the previous quotation, Fort Union played host to artists such as Karl Bodmer, Isaac Sprague, John James Audubon, John Mix Stanley, Carl Ferdinand Wimar, and Rudolph Kurz. Leading scientists, naturalists, military leaders, and gentlemen explorers also utilized Fort Union as a base for pursuing their various endeavors. Along with the journals and correspondence of various Chief Factors, these visitors are the primary source for the historic details that are represented in the reconstructed Fort Union.

While the present study covers the issues and personalities noted above, it does so within the historiographical traditions that began to take form at about the same time Fort Union Trading Post NHS was in the midst of its dramatic reconstruction in the late 1980s. This new approach deemphasized the idea of the American frontier as both a racial divide and an inexorable process of nation building. In its stead, scholarship over the past 30 years has turned to a broader array of cultural and cross-cultural understandings that

[12] Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 60.
[13] Catlin quoted in Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10.

present historical actors within the circumstances that define their lives –as opposed to macro-level theories like the frontier. In perhaps a more old-fashioned vein, this study also privileges demography and antiquity; which is to say, the narrative focuses on the peoples who constitute the largest populations in the narrative as well as the array of environmental, social, cultural, and material contexts that have informed their understanding of the world across countless generations. Put simply, the narrative emphasizes the contexts that have shaped the lives, social arrangements, and world views of Indigenous communities in North America. Conversely, the narrative situates the history and significance of Fort Union within the global contexts of commerce and capital, as well as the environmental and geographical contexts of North America—and especially the Northern Great Plains borderland region that encompasses large stretches of Canada and the United States.

In terms of cultural history and national development, Fort Union also functioned as vortex for the impacts of settler colonialism and resource extraction upon Indigenous cultures, alliances and economies, as well as the concomitant changes in the relationships between competing and affiliated Native groups. The fort also served as a locus for American Indian responses to non-Native incursions, as a site for the remote exercise of United States economic and political hegemony that was initially expressed through commerce and ultimately exercised through coercive diplomacy and military force. Given the ancient and historical significance of the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence, and the area's central importance to the American Fur Company's operations, the Fort Union Trading Post NHS also illustrates the central role that geography, geomorphology, and topography play in the articulation of historical process—and the degree to which U.S. national interests were able to alter the significance and use of the locale for Native peoples.

In ways that meant different things to Native peoples, fur trade employees, visitors, investors, and government officials, Fort Union was a nodal point for life on the Northern Plains. For more than three decades, the fort complex and the confluence area were a center of commercial exchange, cultural interaction (among and between different groups), physical sustenance, and adaptation. This period of sustained encounter and interaction is central to how the National Park Service (NPS) defines and interprets the significance of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. As noted in the park unit's *Foundation Document*, the NPS lists the following "Statements of Significance":

- Fort Union epitomizes the mutually advantageous interaction of American Indian and European American cultures associated with the fur-trading empire on the Upper Missouri River region of the American frontier.
- Fort Union's rural landscape provides a sense of place for visualizing the past, recognizing the isolation of the area, and appreciating the wide-open spaces of the

confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers to both American Indians and European Americans.

- Fort Union is significant for its impact on the history, exploration, transportation, economics, and culture of the American frontier on the Upper Missouri River from 1828 to 1867.
- Fort Union is the best representation of the establishment and maintenance of a permanent fur trading post on the Upper Missouri River that capitalized on a long-established American Indian trade network.[14]

While these statements seem fairly straightforward, they define the significance of Fort Union within the older and generally discredited historiography of American Frontier studies. Even at the time of Fort Union's reconstruction, "frontier" pedagogy was already giving way to a broader array of historical approaches to the economic, cultural, political, and environmental history of North America and the western United States.[15] While the seemingly innocuous term "American frontier" still has popular currency, it carries a host of meanings that were not operative in the mid 19th century. During the period when the AFC dominated the Upper Missouri fur trade, the words "frontier" (in U.S., British, and Canadian English), "*frontière"* (French), and "*frontera"* (Spanish) were all roughly equivalent to what we might call a "borderland." In every case, the frontier/borderland of the Upper Missouri was a liminal or in between space where central authority was weak and all historical actors occupied "a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold." In short, it was a world somewhat unto itself, where the terms of engagement were largely defined by local contexts, personal histories, and cross-cultural relations.[16]

Less than 30 years after the closing of the historical Fort Union, the term "American frontier" was redefined as an inexorable historical process that—as the historian Frederick Jackson Turner wrote in 1893—served as a "crucible [by which] … immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a [distinct national] race." Invariably located at the "outer edge of the wave— the meeting point between savagery and civilizations," the frontier was synonymous with the process of "westward expansion" whereby European-Americans fomented "the disintegration of savagery,"

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[14] National Park Service, *Foundation Document Overview: Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota* (September 2013), 1.

[15] In the early 1990s, when the view of the frontier as a historical determinant was undergoing a great deal of review and criticism, a number of established scholars began to offer well-reasoned *mea culpas* of their earlier works. See, for example, David Wishart's new "Preface" to second edition of *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807-1840: A Geographical Synthesis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 9-10.

[16] See, for instance, the essays in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), and Daniel P. Barr, ed. *The Boundaries between Us: Natives and Newcomers Along the Frontiers of the Old Northwest Territory, 1750-1850* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006). Quotation is from the definition of "liminal" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* <oed.com> (accessed 20 March 2019).

shed their European pretensions, and acquired the roughhewn virility that distinguished "American character" from the effete concerns of Europe. The fur trade was central to Turner's "American frontier" scenario because it represented the beginning of a historical parade in which trappers led the way for a cavalcade of miners, overland migrants, farmers, stage coaches, and railroads that ultimately drove Native peoples from the expanding territorial claims of the United States.[17]

Older ideas about the "American frontier" have lost some of their racialized tinges, and the view of the frontier as a historical determinant was already undergoing a great deal of review and criticism at the time of Fort Union's reconstruction in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Leading historians of the fur trade even began offering well-reasoned *mea culpas* in the prefaces to new editions of their earlier works. David Wishart, in a 1993 reissue of *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807-1840: A Geographical Synthesis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), noted that the field was experiencing "a metamorphosis.

> Gone, for the most part, are the romanticized and often ethnocentric accounts of trappers and their exploits, and in their place there are now studies of the fur trade as an economic system, as a stage of environmental destruction, as a meeting point between markedly different cultures, and as a society in its own right, populated by Euro-Americans, Indians, and mixed-bloods. These fresh perspectives, reflections of changing concerns in contemporary North American society in general, have revitalized what was beginning to seem like a moribund topic. After all, you can only describe the trappers' antics at a rendezvous so many times.[18]

As Wishart and many of his peers understood, the "frontier" presented a unique blend of the amorphous and the inflexible. As such, it had too long served as an uninterrogated term that suggested whatever the user had in mind at the moment.

The NPS Statements of Significance for Fort Union reflect this changed perspective through a combination of references to "mutually advantageous interaction," "appreciating the wide-open spaces of the confluence [area by] … American Indians and European Americans," and a "long-established American Indian trade network." These phrases further suggest the sort of shared, liminal space that otherwise defines a borderland. Yet such statements are undercut by the statement that Fort Union both

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[17] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1894), quotations from pp. 17, 27, 29, 49. For a fairly recent critique of the "Turner thesis," see Erik Altenbernd and Alex Trimble Young, "Introduction: The Significance of the Frontier in an Age of Transnational History," *Settler Colonial Studies* 4 (January 2014): 127-150.

[18] David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807-1840: A Geographical Synthesis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1993), 1. For similar views from another fur trade historian, see Also see James P. Ronda, "Beyond the Beaver: Fur and the American West," *Montana: The Magazine of Western* History, 43 (Winter 1993), 2-3. Patricia Nelson Limerick offered a concise critique of Turner's "frontier thesis" in "What on Earth is the New Western History?," *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991). 81-88.

defined, and was defined by, a unique historical process of "exploration, transportation, economics, and culture" that was specific to "the American frontier." While such words are easy to gloss over, and fussing about their meaning can seem overly pedantic, they miss the larger historical and geographical contexts in which Fort Union and the American Fur Company operated. Moreover, they reduce the human history of the area into two broad racial categories of people (American Indian and European American) within a frontier tale of westward expansion, and thus remove Fort Union from the specific geographical and cultural contexts that shaped its history.

Borderland

The history of Fort Union is best understood within the dynamics of a specific region; namely, the Northern Great Plains between the Upper Missouri River and the southernmost rivers of the Hudson Bay drainage basin. With the much larger HBC concentrated around the northern edge of this region and the AFC along the southern perimeter, both enterprises competed for the same resources, for access to the resident peoples who acquired and processed those resources, and for many of the same individuals and families who variously took seasonal employment at the posts of both companies. This mutually competitive dynamic had been intrinsic to the North American fur trade since the early 17th century, when two and sometimes three imperial powers pursued common but opposing interests in the same general region. Such competition also came with certain opportunities for Indigenous communities. Situated within their own homelands, among resources that outside powers coveted, Native leaders often used formal and informal diplomatic settings to exploit the fears and desires of competing imperial interests. In councils with representatives of one or another empire, they often hinted at the possibility of withdrawing from an established trade relationship while noting the prospects of engaging with a rival empire. In this manner, Native peoples "played-off" their would-be suitors to gain better trading terms and stronger alliances.[19]

By the time Fort Union closed and became scrap for the U.S. Army in 1867, the old fort had become a forgotten relic. The fur trade resources that first brought it into being had been largely destroyed over the four decades the fort was in operation. In that

[19] See Binnema, "The Case for Cross-National and Comparative History: The Northwestern Plains as Bioregion," in *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 17-41; Peter S. Morris, "Regional Ideas and the Montana-Alberta Borderlands," *Geographical Review* 89 (October 1999): 469-90; Randy William Widdis, "Borderland Interaction in the International Region of The Great Plains: An Historic-Geographical Perspective," *Great Plains Research* 7 (Spring 1997): 105-111. On imperial borderlands and the various relations that occurred within them, see White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Bradley J. Parker, "Toward an Understanding of Borderland Processes," *American Antiquity* 71 (January 2006): 77-100; Gilbert C. Din, "Empires Too Far: The Demographic Limitations of Three Imperial Powers in the Eighteenth-Century Mississippi Valley," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 50, no. 3 (2009): 261-92.

interim, however, Fort Union stripped undermined the ecological bases of Native cultures, cultures, alliances and economies, brought concomitant changes in the relationships between competing and affiliated Native groups, and served as a nodal point for the transmission of disease. The fort also served as a locus for American Indian responses to non-Native incursions, as a site for the remote exercise of United States economic and political hegemony that was initially expressed through commerce and ultimately exercised through coercive diplomacy and military force. Given the ancient and historical significance of the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence, and the area's central importance to the American Fur Company's operations, Fort Union also illustrates the central role that geography, geomorphology, and topography play in the articulation of historical process—and the degree to which U.S. national interests were able to alter the meaning and use of the locale for Native peoples.

While all of the issues noted above certainly inform this study, the analysis and interpretation of the subject matter steals a page from the *Annales* school, a twentieth-century French approach to history that focuses on the *Longue durée* (i.e., a perspective on history that extends deep into the past). Put another way, this study takes seriously the common phrases that Native peoples use when speaking of their homelands and their presence on the continent: "we have always been here" and "we know who we are." For non-Indigenous peoples, whether 19th-century fur traders or twenty-first century tourists, personal and collective histories generally allude to migrations from distant lands and family trees that never reach their roots. Because the history of the Confluence area, at least since the end of the Holocene, has always involved Native peoples, they are the starting point for this history and remain a central focus of this study. The *Longue durée* approach also applies to the nearly 400-year history of the fur trade in North America, which informs the histories of Native peoples and fur traders on the Northern Plains in the 19th century.

Because many of the people who worked or traded at Fort Union had a multi-generational history that stretched across several fur trade arenas, some of the early chapters in this study explore the places and colonial processes that established the fundamental dynamics of the fur trade in North America and ultimately pushed toward the borderlands of the North Plains in the 19th century. In short, the following study embraces three related conceits: this history is primarily populated by American Indian, First Nations and Métis peoples, it invariably occurs within their homelands and involved the resources that sustained them, and it is best understood in the context of the *Longue durée* rather than the ephemeral processes of the "frontier." Lastly, it is important to note that this Historic Resource Study applies a similar approach to Fort Union which, in many ways, marks the *denouement* or final chapter of the fur trade, and thus inherits and encapsulates a long history that came to an end at the place that had once been one of the great ecological and cultural confluences in North America.

The primary purpose of a Historic Resource Study is to provide an historical overview of a specific National Park Service unit, and to identify and evaluate a park's cultural resources within historic contexts. Consequently, it synthesizes all available cultural resource information form relevant disciplines in a narrative that will serve managers, planners, interpreters, cultural resource specialists, and an interested public as a reference for the history of the region and the resources within a park. In the case of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Park, much of this study is focused on recontextualizing the history of Fort Union and presenting its significance in a much larger cultural, environmental, historical, and geopolitical context than the subject has usually garnered over the past century. There are a number of excellent studies of the fur trade on the Northern Plains, and Fort Union in particular, but these are often guided by many of the same sources: namely letter books, invoices and ledgers, shipping manifests, diaries and journals, and a few memoirs. As a result, histories of the fur trade and Fort Union tend to track a similar timeline and sequence of subjects that generally occur within the confines of the fort and its commerce.

In recent years, scholars of the Great Lakes fur trade have incorporated cultural and ethnological approaches to their studies that have greatly enriched the field of fur trade history. The same is true of scholars in Canada who have crafted deep explorations of subjects related to borderlands studies, dependency and the fur trade, and the histories of Métis peoples and First Nations/American Indian groups on both sides of the international border. The present study borrows from all of the scholarship noted above and delves into some of the same primary sources from steamboat manifests to Métis scrip. However, it is founded on a particular thesis that the history of Fort Union is both an environmental and cultural history that needs to take it cues from the physical landscape of the Confluence Area, the antiquity and ongoing persistence of Native peoples in the region (many of whom are distantly related to people who traded at Fort Union), and the multi-century history of the fur trade that culminated at the Confluence.

Home Turf

Long before the development of the imperial and commercial borderlands that encompassed the fur trade on the Upper Missouri, the Confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers was both a place unto itself as well as a nodal point in a vast array of ecological and cultural networks. Consequently, most of the Native peoples who traded at Fort Union also had close associations with the Confluence area that dated back across countless generations. The Nueta (Mandan), Hiraacá (Hidatsa), and Apsáalooke (Crow), knew the area intimately and prized the Confluence for its ecological richness, hunting and gathering opportunities, and the access it provided to vast swaths of the Northern Plains by way of the two great rivers and an ancient network of trails that radiated out to in every direction. The same was true for the many peoples who came by way of these paths and rivers to trade and socialize at the village trade centers. Among these would

have been trading parties of Piikáni (Blackfeet) from the Upper Missouri, who came to the Nueta villages to trade and, if opportunity arose, to raid the Apsáalooke on the lower Yellowstone River. Anne Bauermeister's study of lithic use and modification at the Confluence also indicates that materials ranging from 1400-1800 CE may be affiliated with Siouan speakers, possibly related to Nakoda or Hiraacá. Whether or not these cultural associations can ever be confirmed, the Nakoda had already undertaken a southward migration from the vicinity of Lake Winnipeg to the Qu'Appelle, Souris, and Missouri river basins in the early 18th century. Consequently, it is not clear if these movements represented a return to the area or a new migration. In either case, the Nakoda certainly knew where they were going.[20]

Before they began using the Confluence area on a regular basis, the Nakoda formed part of the Nehiyaw-Pwat (Iron Confederacy), an alliance of bands from the Nakoda, Néhinaw (Plains Cree), and Nahkawininiwak (Plains Ojibwe) as well as some Métis and Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) communities from the eastern fur trade. Collectively, the Confederacy functioned as a powerful alliance for collective decision making, hunting, and defense against common enemies. The Nehiyaw-Pwat thrived in the midst of the fur trade on the Northern Plains of the United States and southern Canada, often serving as fur trade "middlemen" between other Native groups, the HBC and the North West Company (NWC) trading posts to the northwest of the Great Lakes. The Nehiyaw-Pwat were also central players in the bison trade, especially in the production and trade of robes, tongues, and pemmican. Following the establishment of Fort Union in 1828, individuals and families from the constituent elements of the Confederacy frequently worked and traded at Fort Union through most of the post's history.[21]

While the Confluence became a key locale within the joint territory of the Nehiyaw-Pwat, it was especially significant to the Nakoda and formed the eastern boundary of their territory. The ecological richness of the Confluence and the two rivers were central to how they lived, and attracted large herds of bison through the 18th and early 19th centuries. Bison hunting was central to the Nakoda since it provided most of their protein, a variety of animal parts that could be processed into a variety of tools, accessories, robes, leather, and more, and served as their main resource for trade. In short, bison and bison hunting were central to the spiritual and material well-being of the Nakoda. To aid their hunts and appeal to the bison, the Nakoda built rock cairns to mark

[20] Ibid.; also Rebecca Toupal and Kacy Hollenback, "Fort Union Trading Post Native American Oral Traditions: Draft Report," Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, University of Arizona, Tucson, 2008 (Copy on file at Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service), 55-56.
[21] Neal McLeod, "Plains Cree Identity: Borderlands, Ambiguous Genealogies and Narrative Irony," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies,* 20 (2000), 437-454; Nicholas P. Vrooman, "Cree, Assiniboine, Ojibwa, & Michif: the *Nehiya Pwat* Confederacy/Iron Alliance in Montana," paper presented at the 41st Annual Montana History Conference (September 19, 2014).

hunting drives and to ritually attract the bison to these hunting site.[22] Prince Maximilian zu Wied described one such rock cairn near Fort Union in 1833:

> About 1 mile behind the fort, the hill chain, which here is low, runs parallel to the course of the Missouri. Here and there on their domes there are individual odd rock formations or single stones…On the most outstanding one, the Nakodas have erected a kind of sign or medicine device. Large rocks with an oblong shape stand upright; at their base there are other, rounder ones; and on top there is a bison skull. Mr. Bodmer sketched one of these.[23]

In a fairly recent interview, a Nakoda consultant explained that the cairns were used by pežúda wįcášta (medicine men) "to interpret where the bison would be, and they would leave offerings at these spots." He also noted that there are "trails along the rivers of the Confluence which mark hunting routes, and a trail along the north bank of the Missouri River" where war parties headed west to attack the Piikáni (Blackfeet). Cairns and indications of historically significant travel routes mark the landscape with memory and culture, which is sustained through visitation and recounting stories.[24]

The Confluence was also located near the center of the Nahkawininiwak (Plains Ojibwe) hunting territory, which extended from the Red River in the East to the plains of present-day Montana and Saskatchewan. When moving toward the plains to hunt, the Confluence served as an important "stop-off place" where they could rest, hold councils on how and where they would conduct their hunts. It also provided an opportunity to hunt antelope and deer, as well as gather turnips, artichokes, service berries, chokecherries, red plums, rose buds, bull berries, gooseberries, currants, sour grapes, rhubarb, and other plants, as well as minerals for making particular paints. On their return from hunting on the plains, it is very likely that the Confluence served as a "stop-off," before heading downriver to trade at the Nueta (Mandan) villages.[25]

In the early 19th century, when the Confluence area was regularly used by various Native communities, the Lewis and Clark expedition conducted a brief reconnaissance of the area in the spring of 1805, and made particular note of the "immence quantities of game in every direction …; consisting of herds of Buffaloe, Elk, and Antelopes with some deer and Wolves." While they did not recognize it as such, the abundance of

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[22] Maria Nieves Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study for Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, and Theodore Roosevelt national Park: Final Report—December 8, 2006* (Task Agreement No. J606804112, DSCESU Cooperative Agreement CA-1248-00-002), 225, 227.
[23] Prince Alexander Philipp Maximilian of Wied, *The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied, Vol. 2: April - September 1833*, ed. Stephen S. Witte and Marsha V. Gallagher (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 2010), 231.
[24] Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement*, 33, 226-27; Edwin T. Denig, *The Assiniboine*, ed. J. N. B. Hewitt (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2000), 150.
[25] Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement*, 46-48.

animals was both a natural and cultural phenomenon. The biological productivity of the Confluence area was extraordinary, in large part because it served as a key intersection for a variety of plant and animal species, that included the fruits and plants noted above, as well as migratory waterfowl, bison, beaver, elk and more. As such, the Confluence also served as a key intersection between various groups that, like the host of trails that led to the and through the Confluence area, radiated out from the area in almost every direction.

Given these conditions, it is clear that no one group was able to dominate the locale and keep others at bay. If such a program was ever attempted, it would soon collapse when other groups banded together to restore their access and drive the offending party away. Similarly, if the Confluence became a war zone between multiple groups, it would have become what Martin and Szuter call a "Game Sink," an overhunted and constantly contested environment that could not sustain any single group. Such "Game Sink" conditions developed through most of the fur trade era, but these were the result of use and damage by fur trade employees, especially in the cases of clearing riparian areas to build and repair the fort as well as fuel steamboats. Frequent, though small-scale hunting by employees, as well as the hunting plant gathering that occurred when large groups of Native peoples came to trade or hold a ceremony in the Confluence Area. Even as the area lost a good deal of its ecological diversity, the Confluence remained a shared, neutral area. The antiquity of this disposition is evident in the archeological record of the Confluence, which shows coeval use of the area by different cultural groupings, and is born out in the oral histories of the Native peoples associated with the area and the trade at Fort Union. As the anthropological archaeologist Kaitlyn Chandler notes, "Native American consultants interviewed for the oral history of Fort Union remarked on the neutrality of the Confluence area," in the historic era and long before, "as a place where even rival groups could come together" within the context of a temporary treaty, "to use and share a common space, trade with each other, and hold large summer gatherings ceremonies." Because the Confluence was utilized by so important to, and utilized by so many different Native peoples, no one group possessed or effectively defended exclusive rights to the area for extended periods of time.[26]

Precis: A Note on Context, Content, and Organization:

While the present work is presented as a scholarly monograph, it also applies the basic principles of what the National Park Service terms a Historical Resource Study. The primary purpose of a Historic Resource Study is to provide an historical overview of the NPS park unit and to identify and evaluate a park's cultural resources within historic contexts. It synthesizes all available cultural resource information from all disciplines in a narrative designed to serve managers, planners, interpreters, cultural resource specialists,

[26] Ibid., 63. Toupal and Hollenback, "Fort Union Trading Post Native American Oral Traditions, 13.

and interested public as a reference for the history of the region and the resources within a park.

The following study is organized into eleven chapters and an epilogue that collectively present a blend of environmental, cultural, commercial, and geopolitical history to examine historical conditions that informed the fur trade in North America and the underlying processes that shaped life and trade on the Northern Plains. Chapter One focuses on the ancient past, and how it established fundamental precepts for how Indigenous communities crafted social and cultural systems that involved a great deal of mobility, intragroup collaboration, interrelationships with other groups that involved exchanges, conflict, and collaboration. Chapter Two carries these fundamental precepts to the protohistoric era, and focuses on the deep ancestry and continuous adaptation, mobility, and cultural exchange that defined the lives of Native communities on the Northern Plains in the 2,000 years that preceded the arrival of Europeans in North America. Because these environmental and cultural dynamics continued into the historic era, the chapter also anticipates early encounters with non-Native peoples and subsequent engagements with the fur trade.

Chapter Three situates Native peoples and Europeans within the geopolitical contexts of imperial commerce and conflict, and the profound violence that accompanied the early fur trade in eastern North America. Chapter Four links the Great Plains with the Great Lakes fur trade of the 17th and 18th centuries, and explores how horses, new trade items, and firearms radically transformed life on the Plains in ways that were both liberating and deadly. Chapter Five represents a new iteration of the dynamics that are presented in Chapter Three, which involve the wedding of older imperial policies and practices with the expansionist goals of the United States in the early 19th century. The rise of the St. Louis-based fur trade is the subject of the Chapter Six, in which the historical legacies of the North American fur trade became concentrated in the borderlands of the Northern Plains, and provided the basis for a powerful new player (i.e. the Upper Missouri Outfit of the American Fur Company) to develop a fur trade enterprise that could challenge the powerful Hudson's Bay Company.

Chapters Seven, Eight, Nine, and Ten focus on the Native communities, traders, and employees that came together at Fort Union from 1828 to 1867, and the historical transformations that shaped their lives as well as undermined the resources that brought them to the region. Chapter Eleven follows the demise of Fort Union and takes up the history of the site from the establishment of nearby Fort Buford, its role in the wars of Native dispossession in the 1870s, the history of an off-reservation Native community in the Confluence area from the early 1870s to 1884. Subsequent transformations of the region, commemorations of the fur trade, and the movement to establish a national park unit are also discussed. The study ends with an Epilogue that provides an overview of the history of the fur trade presaged by the broader transformation of the Confluence area and

the Northern Plains through the rest of the 19th century to the present. The Epilogue closes with a reflection on how borderlands and Indigenous contexts still define the Confluence area, and are central to understanding and interpreting the history of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site.

Chapter One

Worlds in Motion:

Environments and Peoples Since Time Out of Memory

Chapter One encompasses a vast stretch of time, from the early formation of North America through the Late Pleistocene and most of the Holocene to approximately 3,000 years before the present (BP). In describing the formation of the Missouri-Yellowstone confluence, and the development of environmental conditions that begin to correspond with those of the historic era, this chapter also parallels the content of Native origin stories about the creation of the earth and first people. The last sections of the chapter cover the long period of time that many Native peoples describe as "since time out of memory;" the period when ancient lessons were developed on how to live with and within the ongoing process of creation.

> Long ago, all the earth was water. One who made the land was called Lone Man, and the other one was called First Creator. They were walking together above the water. They came to a duck and spoke with it. "What do you eat to exist around here?" they asked.
>
> The duck said, "Under this water there is land down below. I dive and bring back sand. That is what I eat to exist around here."
> Then Lone Man said, "All right, that will do. Go and bring back some earth."
>
> "All right," said the duck. He dove and was gone a long time before he brought back a little. When Lone Man said, "Put it here," the duck put it in his hand. Then Lone Man said, "Go again!" and had the duck go four times. There was not much earth, but only a little. Lone Man gave half to First Creator and kept half himself …. Because they were holy, they made that small amount of earth increase. The [Missouri] river was their boundary, this very river of ours. "From there you make the land to the north, and I will make that to the south," said Lone Man, and First Creator said, "All right." [1]
>
> "Lone Man and First Creator Make the World"
> As told by John Brave (Nakoda, aka Assiniboine)

The making of the world is an ancient and ongoing process that is readily visible around the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence area. The exposed fossils in the badlands of the lower Yellowstone River or the vicinity of Big Muddy Creek along the eastern edge of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, have long illustrated these basic truths to countless

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[1] John Brave, "Lone Man and First Creator Make the World," *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, 2 (Spring 1990): 25-27; excerpted from Douglas Richard Parks, A. Wesley Jones, Robert C. Hollow, *Earth Lodge Tales from the Upper Missouri: Traditional Stories of the Arikara, Hidatsa, and Mandan* (Bismarck: Mary College, 1978), 69-71.

generations of Indigenous peoples. Though less dramatic than an exposed Triceratops skull, the same is true of the soils, shales, clays, and muds of the Fort Union Formation geologic unit that underlies the Confluence area and several surrounding counties. Composed of biotic materials that settled on ancient sea beds, decayed within vast bogs, or became the detritus of once lush landscapes, the soils within and around the Missouri-Yellowstone confluence are the products of living landscapes—and have been foundational to life in the region since long before the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers existed in anything resembling their current form. Even today, and despite the massive reconfiguration of the Upper Missouri River by the Fort Peck Dam (approximately 90 river miles above the Fort Union Trading Post NHS) and the chain of reservoirs created by the six Pick–Sloan Missouri Basin dams on the Upper and Middle Missouri River, the persistent dynamics of creation are still evident in the changing flows and shifting courses of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers. Located just a few miles above the mouth of the Yellowstone, and sited on one of the longest free-flowing stretches of the Missouri, the national park unit is still shaped by the dynamic processes of erosion, deposition, and shifting channels. As National Park Service geologist John P. Graham notes, dams and reservoirs have greatly altered the Missouri, but this free-flowing stretch of the river "continues to meander past Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, as it did in the 1800s, reworking older sediments … and depositing new alluvium … in point bars and floodplains."[2]

Of course, the floodplains of the Confluence area are not as dynamic as they were before the era of large dam projects, nor do riparian environments sustain the level of resource diversity that once made the area a core ecological zone within the Upper Missouri River Basin. A sense of the area's ecological richness, prior to the 19th century fur trade, can still be gleaned from early written accounts. Among these are Meriwether Lewis' journal entries for April 25-26, 1805, which offer dramatic hints about the environmental richness that once enveloped this still familiar landscape.

> I had a most pleasing view of the country, particularly of the wide and fertile vallies formed by the missouri and the yellowstone rivers … in their passage through these delightfull tracts of country…. [T]he whol[e] face of the country was covered with herds of Buffaloe, Elk & Antelopes; deer are also abundant …. [T]here is more timber in the neighbourhood of the junction of these rivers … than there is on any part of the Missouri above the entrance of the Chyenne river to this place. [T]he timber consists

[2] John P. Graham, *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Geologic Resources Inventory Report; Natural Resource Report NPS.NRSS/GRD/NRR—2015/1004* (Denver: National Park Service Geologic Resources Division, August 2015), 30-32 and passim; quotation from p. 36. Also see Adrienne Mayor, *Fossil Legends of the First Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2005), 226-235; and Irving Jerome Witkind, *A Study of the Quaternary Geology of the Smoke Creek-Medicine Lake-Grenora Area, Montana and North Dakota: Geological Survey Bulleting 1073* (Washington, D.C.: United Sates Government Printing Office, 1959), 27-34. Lake Sakakawea, which is controlled by Garrison Dam (the uppermost dam of the Pick-Sloan Program) pools within 30 miles of Fort Union Trading Post NHS.

> principally of Cottonwood, with some small elm, ash and boxalder. [T]he under growth on the sandbars and verge of the river is the small leafed willow; the low bottoms, rose bushes which rise to three or four fe[e]t high, the redburry, servicebury, and the redwood; the high bottoms are of two discriptions either timbered or open; the first lies next to the river and it's under brush is the same with that of the low timbered bottoms with the addition of the broad leafed willow, Goosbury, choke cherry, purple currant; and honeysuckle bushis; the open bottoms border on the hills, and are covered in many parts by the wild hyssop which rises to the hight of two feet. I observe that the Antelope, Buffaloe Elk and deer feed on this herb; the willow of the sandbars also furnish a favorite winter food to these anamals as well as the growse, the porcupine, hare, and rabbit.[3]

The environmental abundance that Lewis described had been valued and utilized by Native peoples for countless generations. Enriched by sediments from periodic floods, the Confluence was interlaced with small channels, wetlands, and backwater sloughs that sustained riparian forests, wet prairies, a host of mammals, fish, ground birds, reptiles, amphibians, mollusks and a throbbing array of insects and avian life. Shifts in river levels, new meanders, and flood deposition were the primary drivers of species diversity, since they triggered an ever changing mosaic of old and young forests, river islands, cutbanks, wet and dry prairies, short-grass uplands, and an array of environmental niches that sustained an almost unrivaled concentration of plant and animal life on the Northern Plains.[4]

Connected to and continuously shaped by two great rivers, the Confluence was an oasis on the Northern Plains that powerfully reflected the ongoing process of creation. As one consultant from the Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes noted during a visit to the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site in 2005, the abundance of "origin stories associated with many" of the landscape features around the Confluence attest to this inherent virtue. Another consultant elaborated that, because so many "spirits live all around here, … that is why there are so many cairns, medicine wheels, rock rings, and all kinds of archaeological sites in this area." Another spoke of "vision quest sites on the

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[3] Meriwether Lewis, journal entries for Thursday April 25th, 1805 and Friday April 26th, 1805, in *The Definitive Journals of Lewis and Clark, Volume 4: From Fort Mandan to Three Forks,* ed. Gary E. Moulton (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 67, 69-70. Lewis' use of the term "redwood" might be a reference to red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*). It is possible that from the early-18th century to the early 19th century, these ecological conditions may have been augment by occasional conflict in the Confluence area, which would have limited human utilization of the resources. See Paul S. Martin and Christine R. Szuter, "War Zones and Game Sinks in Lewis and Clark's West," *Conservation Biology* 13.1 (Feb. 1999), pp. 36-45.

[4] Committee on Missouri River Ecosystem Science et al., *The Missouri River Ecosystem: Exploring the Prospects for Recovery* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2002), 57-83; Robert Kelley Schneiders, *Big Sky Rivers: The Yellowstone and Upper Missouri* (University Press of Kansas, 2003), 36-39, 41, 59-63; Ted Goebel et al., "The Late Pleistocene Dispersal of Modern Humans in the Americas," *Science,* 319:1497 (19 March 2008): 1497-1502.

high rises above the river …. The [people] fasted around here before the fort was built …. This whole place here, there is a spirit with each plant, rock, and water in the river. Everything has a spirit."[5] As the Nakoda (Assiniboine) scholar Dennis Smith notes, this association of spirit with elements in a landscape is referred to as "wakan," a term that is

> applied to anything which is sacred, mysterious, and incomprehensible to [people]. All things in the physical world—including plants, animals, waters, rocks, and celestial bodies—are considered living beings, each possessed with spirits, and manifestations of *wakan*. Although not personified, the creator is known as *Wakan Tanga* (sacred, mysterious, incomprehensible, large, big).

The landscape as a whole is also an expression of another Nakoda term for the Creator: dáguwaką ška ška, which can be literally translated as "Great Mystery—To Move." The term and its translation suggest the sense of an entire landscape that is alive and in motion, both in the moment and across a great expanse of time.[6]

World in Motion: Geology and Paleobiology

Whether expressed in the floodwaters that poured across the south bank of the Missouri River in the spring and summer of 2011, or the ephemeral creeks that crease the bluffs to the north and south of the national historic site, the surface landscapes of the Confluence Area reveal the delicate and powerful forces that have shaped the earth for eons. Exposed cutbanks reveal cobbles, gravels and sands that are the remnants of the Late Pleistocene glaciation (26,000-12,000 BP, i.e. "Before Present") that established the course of the Missouri River across present-day northern Montana and western North Dakota, while the finer materials deposited in alluvial terraces include various sediments from shales that were uplifted during the early formation of the Rocky Mountains (70-80 Ma/millions of years ago). This interplay of seasonal fluctuation and the reshaping of ancient landscapes largely defines the geomorphology of the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site and the larger Confluence area. Because the environmental, cultural, and historical contexts of the area are directly connected to the two great rivers that join just a few miles downriver from the reconstructed fur trade post, they cannot be

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[5] Quotations from Maria N. Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study for Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site and Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Final Report, December 8, 2006* (Tucson: Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology at the University of Arizona), 227. The sentiments quoted here were widely shared by consultants from all of the Culturally Affiliated and Traditionally Associated tribal nations with ties to the Confluence area and the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site.

[6] On "Wakan Tanga," (also wakątąga), see Dennis Smith, "Fort Peck Assiniboine to 1800," in David Miller, Joseph R. McGeshick, James Shanley, Caleb Shields, and Smith, *The History of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana, 1800- 2000* (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 2008), 22. The discussion of dáguwaką ška ška is informed by Joshua Ben Horowitz, "Nakona Wasnonya Yuhabi/Assiniboine Knowledge Keepers: Indigenous Archiving from the 19th into the 21st Centuries" (PhD dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2014), 77. Spelling and diacritics correspond to the Assiniboine Dictionary in ASIRI Dictionary Portal of the American Indian Studies Research Institute at Indiana University <http://zia.aisri.indiana.edu/~dictsearch/> (accessed 11 July 2018).

divorced from the geological dynamics that shaped—and continue to shape—the homelands of many peoples, and established a template in the heart of the continent for the commerce and geopolitical contests of the fur trade era.[7]

The Confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers is a distinctive place, but most of its underlying geological structures are common throughout the Northern Great Plains. Like much of the broader region, the composition and contours of the Upper Missouri and Yellowstone river basins reflect four geological processes: the formation and overlay of different rock materials across millions of years, the uplift of deeper sedimentary layers, glaciation, and erosion. The area that would become central North America was repeatedly covered by a vast inland sea, with each inundation bringing significant sediment deposition that ultimately compressed and hardened into rock material. Similar geological processes carried through the Mesozoic Era (250-65 Ma, i.e., "million years ago") and into the beginning of the Cenozoic Eras (circa 65-40 Ma), when the last of the great inland seas retreated and the massive mountain building process known as the Laramide Orogeny established the topography and drainage patterns that were in place toward the end of the Pleistocene (1.8 Ma to 12,000 BP).[8]

At the outset of the Precambrian era (4,600-542 Ma), most of the area that would constitute central North America was part of a larger landmass composed mostly of igneous and metamorphic rock that was surrounded by a vast ocean. Paleogeologists theorize that, during the Precambrian, "Earth's water most likely accreted at the same time as the rock" and thus, as many creation stories suggest, "the planet formed as a wet planet with water on the surface." Through movements of the earth's crust (i.e., plate tectonics), distinct oceans formed and vast land masses (aka "super continents") slowly broke apart and rejoined in different configurations—at times colliding and raising up mountain ranges or separating and forming deep rift valleys and new coastlines.[9]

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[7] John P. Graham, *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Geologic Resources Inventory Report* (Natural Resource Report NPS/NRSS/GRD/NRR—2015/1004), 7-11, 14-17, 30-37. "BP," or "Before Present," is commonly used for referencing periods of time that extend back thousands or many hundreds of years, and is primarily based on radiocarbon dating. The "Present" is specifically defined as 1950, when atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons altered the proportion of the carbon isotopes in the atmosphere and thus makes radiocarbon dating unreliable for periods after that date. Consequently, BP is not equivalent to "years ago," nor does it comport with the more common but not universally recognized abbreviations of BC, "Before Christ" or AD, "Anno Domini." See Andrew R. Millard, "Conventions for Reporting Radiocarbon Determinations," *Radiocarbon* 56:2 (January 2014): 555-59. "Ma" is a widely accepted abbreviation for "millions of years ago" that is used in geology, chemistry, and astrophysics. "Myr" is also used but is becoming less common. On the international consensus around the use of "Ma" see Andrew Alden, "How to Abbreviate Millions of Years Old," *ThoughtCo.* <https://www.thoughtco.com/how-we-talk-about-geologic-time-3974394> (accessed 2 February 2020).

[8] Graham, *Fort Union Trading Post Geologic Resources Inventory*, 30-35.

[9] Andrew Fazekas, "Mystery of Earth's Water Origin Solved," *Nationalgeographic.com*, 30 October 2014 <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/10/141030-starstruck-earth-water-origin-vesta-science/> (accessed 13 February 2020).

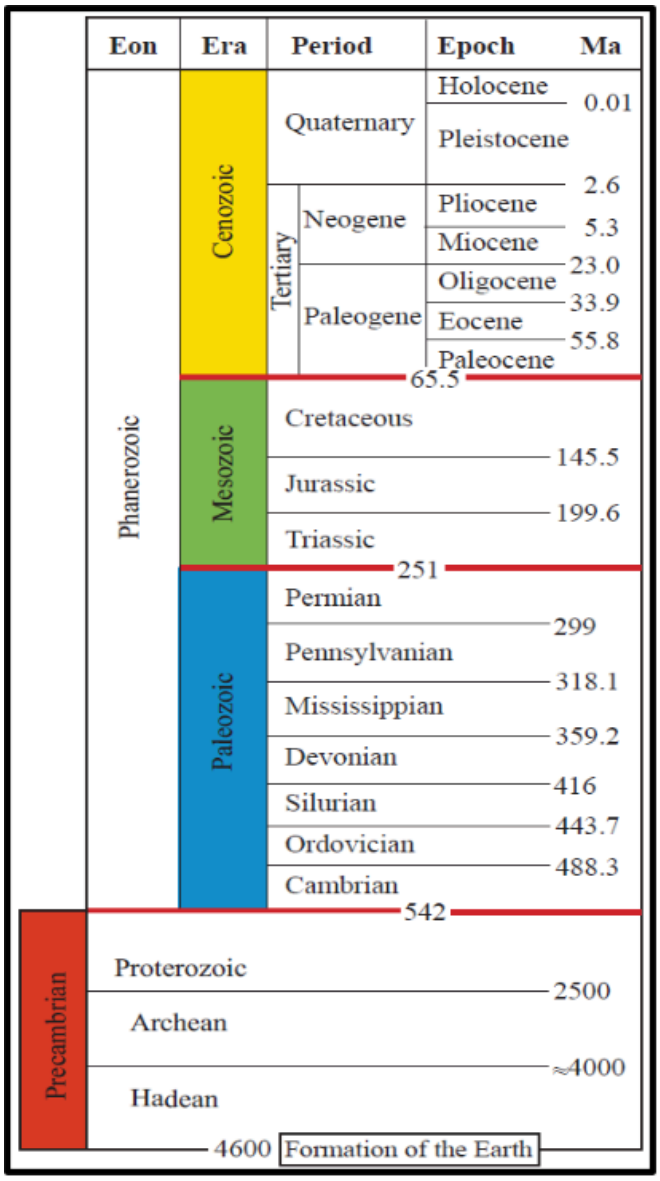


Image 1.1: Stratigraphic Column For Geological Formation of North America. The divisions of the geologic time scale are organized stratigraphically, with the oldest at the bottom and the youngest at the top. Each geologic time division is rendered in Millions of Years Ago. While not specific to the Northern Plains or the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence area, the chart provides a visual reference for the processes and timescales discussed in this section. Major North American life history and tectonic events are included. Source: National Park Service.

The last super continent, known as Pangaea, formed 320 Ma and started to break apart into the precursors of today's continents around 175 Ma. Through the formation and break up of these super continents, and during much of the 145 million-year existence of Pangaea, the center of present-day North America was located near the equator. This near-equatorial region included a low-lying area that would become the Williston Basin, which—along with adjoining regions—experienced repeated flooding by vast inland seas. These warm waters gave rise to earth's earliest life forms, which resembled various strains of bacteria, algae and sponges. Millions of years of life and death led to a vast accumulation of these primitive organisms among the sludges and sediments that had

settled on the sea floor, and ultimately became part of the deepest layers of the shales, sandstones, and limestones that underlie the Northern Plains.[10]

During the Paleozoic Era (541-252 Ma), a process called the Cambrian radiation (541-505 Ma) occurred, giving rise to most of the animal phyla that still inhabit the earth. The tropical seas that periodically covered North America experienced a rapid development of aquatic life forms, including various arthropods, shellfish, snails, and mollusks. While some of these are preserved as fossils, most of the decayed shells and exoskeletons of these animals were compressed over time and formed new layers of limestone above the pre-Cambrian materials. In the Carboniferous Period (359-299 Ma) of the later Paleozoic, a combination of uplift and lowered sea levels transformed much of Pangaea into a vast tropical lowland. The area that became North America was mostly covered with new land-based plants and populated by amphibious and, somewhat later, reptilian animals. Fossilized traces of this world can be found in the Dakotas and Montana, providing tantalizing glimpses of "a world before this world," but most of the biota became the carbon rich material that makes up the Bakken Formation and the vast coal beds of central and eastern North America.[11]

The break-up of Pangaea also involved tectonic collisions between what is now far-western North America and the rest of the continent. This in turn gave rise to the Laramide Orogeny and other mountain building events through the Oligocene Epoch (33.9-23 Ma), which significantly altered the climate and biota of central North America. Western mountain ranges captured most of the moisture coming off of the Pacific Ocean and converted the warm, humid plains in the center of the continent into a cooler and drier savannah environment by the beginning of the Miocene Epoch (23-5.3 Ma). A new period of uplift and volcanism at the end of the Eocene further increased the elevation and gradient of the Northern Plains, causing a build-up of shales and overlying soils near the Rockies and an increase in the downcutting of stream and rivers. The steeper drainages in turn carried their gravels, sands and sediments further to the east and south,

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[10] Graham, *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Geologic Resources Inventory Report*, 29-30. On water at the beginning of the Precambrian, see Adam R. Sarafian et al, "Early accretion of water in the inner solar system from a carbonaceous chondrite–like source," *Science*, 36 (October 31, 2014): 623-626; quotation from Marschall, "New Study Finds Oceans Arrived Early to Earth," *Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute Press Release* <https://www.whoi.edu/news-release/OriginEarthWater> (accessed 30 July 2018). Also see Robert F. Diffendal, Jr., "Plate Tectonics, Space, Geologic Time, and the Great Plains: A Primer for Non-Geologists," *Great Plains Quarterly* 11 (Spring 1991): 84-88; and 10-19.

[11] This and the following two paragraphs are informed by Ronald B. Zelt, "Geology," in Zelt et al., *Environmental Setting of the Yellowstone River Basin, Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming: Water-Resources Investigations Report 98-4269* (Cheyenne, WY: U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Geological Survey, 1999), 8-18; Diffendal, Jr., "Plate Tectonics, Space, Geologic Time, and the Great Plains," 89-100; and Ann G. Harris, Esther Tuttle, and Sherwood D. Tuttle, Geology of National Parks, Sixth ed. (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2003), 115-138. Reference to "a world before this world" comes from a Sičháŋğu Lakȟóta (aka Brulé or Rosebud Sioux) creation story told by Leonard Crow Dog on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in 1974; in Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, eds., *American Indian Myths and Legends* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 496-497.

and eventually laid down the material of the Ogallala and Arikaree Formations that underlie the entire Great Plains. River systems became further entrenched toward the end of the Miocene when tectonic movements lifted the entire western half of North America and created a more pronounced eastward tilt to the Plains. The streams that originated in mountain ranges carved deep canyons into underlying sedimentary rocks, while on the Plains the rivers cut into plateaus or scoured broad floodplains.

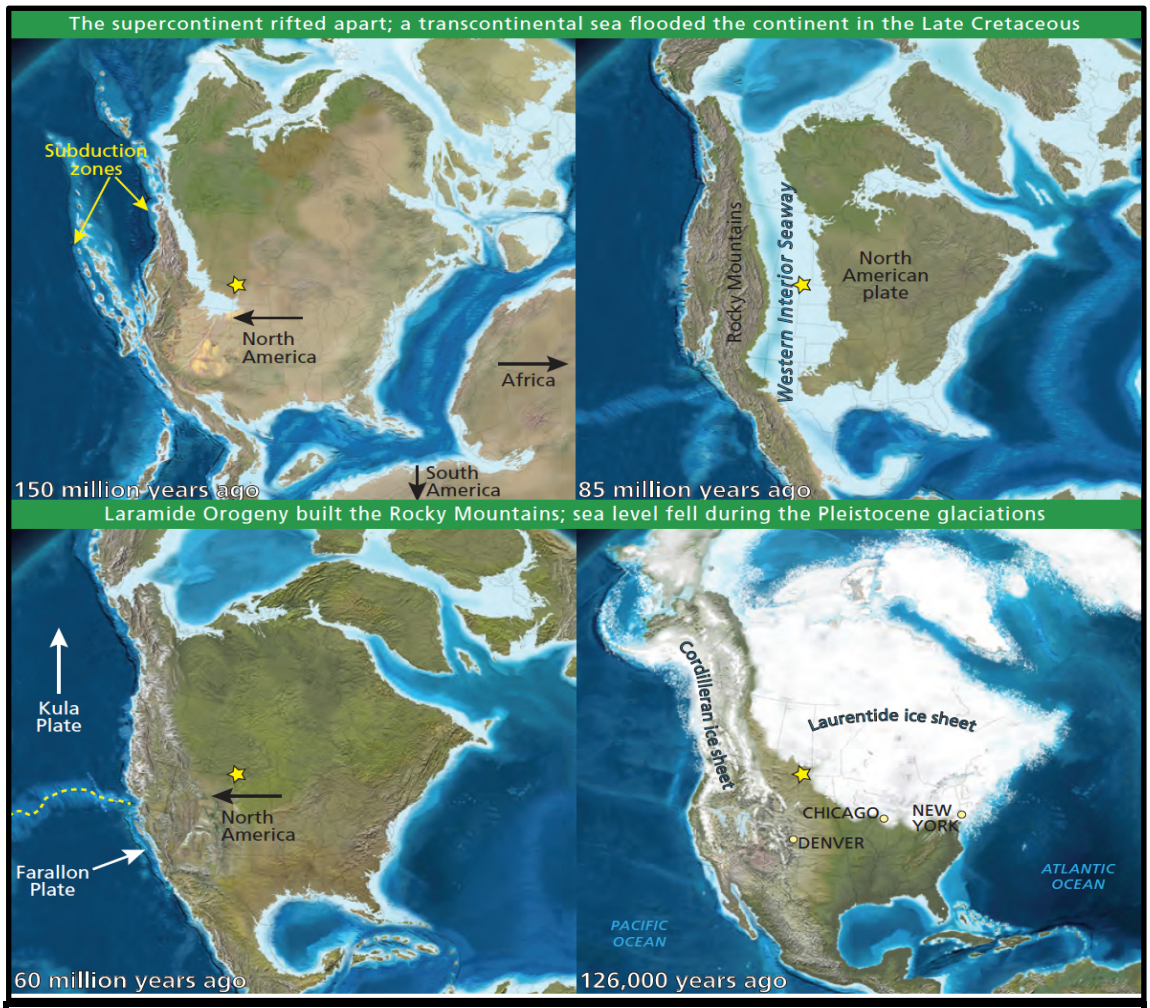


Image 1.2: Mesozoic and Cenozoic North America. 150 Ma (upper left), an inland sea had spread into present-day North Dakota. 85 Ma (upper right), the extensive Western Interior Seaway connected the Arctic Ocean with the Gulf of Mexico; deltas formed in western North Dakota, depositing sediments that would become the Hell Creek Formation. Approximately 60 Ma (lower left), the Tongue River and Sentinel Butte formations formed in the region that encompasses the Confluence area. Approximately 126,000 BP (lower right), Laurentide ice sheet flowed into North Dakota. This was one of several episodes of glacial advance. The star represents the approximate location of present-day Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. Source: Graham, *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Geologic Resources Inventory Report*, 30.

Through most of the Eocene, Oligocene, and Miocene, the largest river system in North American was a vast drainage basin with headwaters as far south as the Great

Basin of present-day Nevada, and as far north as present-day Yukon Territory. Identified by geologists as the Paleo-Bell River, it flowed northeastward through lands that are now submerged by Hudson Bay, through the Hudson Strait, and into the Labrador Sea. The eastward tilt of the continent that occurred at the end of the Miocene established the more easterly trending channels that would become the Yellowstone and Upper Missouri rivers above (west of) the Confluence area. These new river channels and their major tributaries (precursors of the Tongue, Powder, Big Horn, and Musselshell rivers) eroded and washed away much of the material that overlay the vast coal deposits that formed from the expanse of wetlands and tropical forests that once flourished on the alluvial soils of the Paleocene (65.5-55.8 Ma) plains.

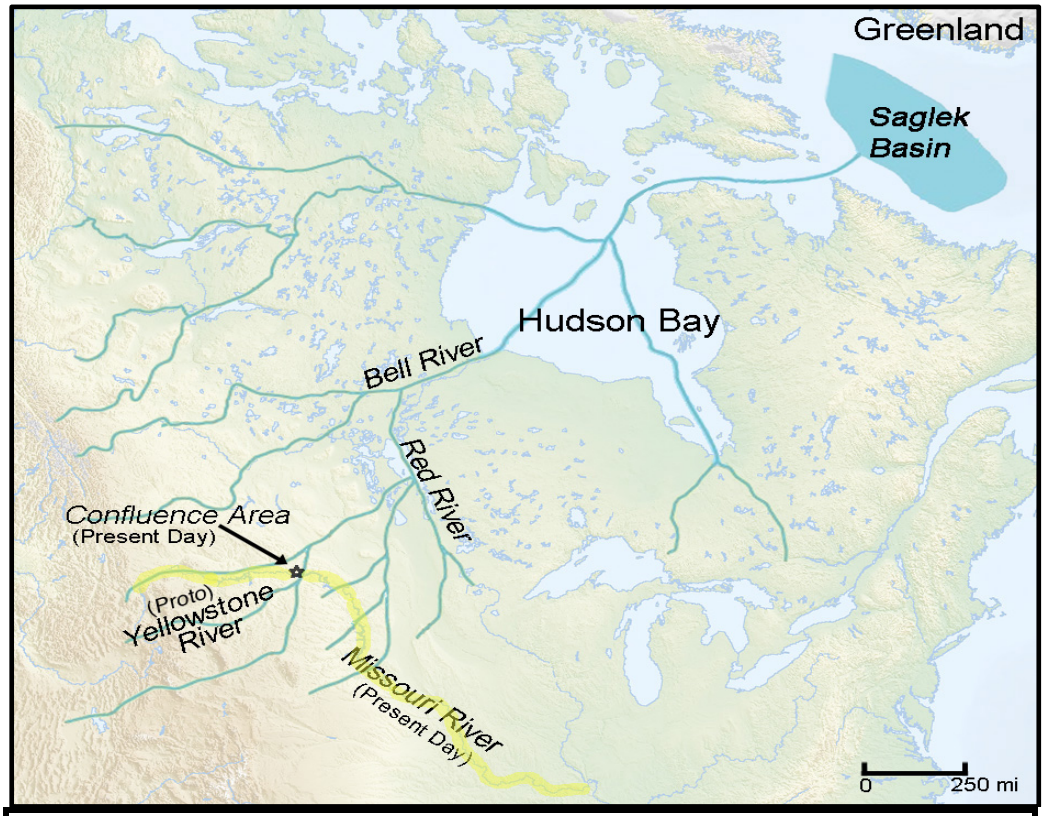


Image 1.3: Bell River and some associated drainages during the Early to Middle Pliocene Epoch (5.6-3.3 Ma). Repeated glaciation during the Pleistocene (2.6 Ma—12,000 BP) erased or greatly altered drainage patterns to the north and northeast of what is now the Missouri River (present-day course highlighted on the map, but the convergence of rivers around the present-day Yellowstone—Missouri Confluence has remained in roughly the same locale for millions of years.

Further west, a somewhat different process of erosion and deposition occurred in what is now the lower Yellowstone River Basin as well as the portions of the Missouri River Basin above (west of) the Confluence area. The main channels of these two rivers and their smaller tributaries cut through soft clays and silts that had formed during the Pliocene Epoch (5.3-2.6 Ma). Over time, they carved through the lower strata of more

ancient geological formations and created an ever-changing landscape of gullies, spires, creased buttes, color-banded knolls, and exposed fossils of plants and animals from millions of years ago. These "badlands," so named because they could be difficult or "bad" for travel, offered direct glimpses into "a world before this world" –where a landscape of imaginative shapes and the fossilized remains of giant creatures revealed the ancient and sometimes wildly variant processes of creation.[12]

As the surface geology of the Upper Missouri and Yellowstone river basins came to resemble current conditions, a changing climate also fostered the development of a recognizable version of present-day conditions. During the early Pliocene, global cooling and the northward drift of the North American continent fostered a transition from savannah to grassland, with herds of large and small grazing animals that included types of horses, rhinoceros, and camels. While these animals would eventually become extinct, riverine environments supported types of mollusks, fish, amphibians, birds and mammals that are directly ancestral to native species of the present era. These conditions largely continued through the rest of the Pliocene and Pleistocene Epoch (2.6 Ma – 12,000 BP), when the global climate underwent a pronounced cooling trend often referred to as the "Ice Ages." In North America massive glaciers covered half of the continent, advancing and retreating intermittently during periodic climate fluctuations. The southernmost extent of glaciation occurred around 26,000 BP, when the terminus of the Laurentide Ice Sheet traced a vast arc that would eventually define the course of the Upper Missouri River and divide the Northern Plains into the Glaciated and the Unglaciated Missouri Plateau. The latter, which the Nakoda Creation story clearly describes, is a broad tableland that spreads south and west of the Upper Missouri River and is more topographically varied than the plains and prairies to the north and east.[13]

Glacial Divide

When the Laurentide Ice Sheet reached its maximum extent and began a slow 8,000-year retreat, it did not leave an ice-free wasteland in its wake. The process was both too slow and too dynamic for such a result. Whenever the climate cooled for a few centuries, the glacial retreat would halt, advance southward, then retreat again as a warming trend returned. Each new advance and retreat resulted in a series of terminal moraines where the glaciers deposited the huge amounts of sands, gravels, rocks and soils they had carried down from the north. When glaciers retreated, shallow bodies of water formed that contained a rich mixture of aeolian (wind borne) and glacial materials that

[12] The Nakoda term for "badlands" is makóškiška, which means "rough terrain."
[13] Diffendal, Jr., *Great Plains Geology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 28-29, 38-39; Robert Scott Bell and Lionel Jackson, "The Paleo-Bell River: North America's Vanished Amazon," *EARTH Magazine*, 63 (August 2018): 30-37; Donald E. Trimble, *The Geologic Story of the Great Plains*, *Geological Survey Bulletin 1493* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1980), 36-38*;* Ann G. Harris, Esther Tuttle, and Sherwood D. Tuttle, *Geology of National Parks*, Sixth ed. (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2003), 134-138; Zelt, "Geology," 8-18.

would later support a lush growth of prairie grasses. The resulting plains were interspersed with low-lying hills that had formed out of moraines or where harder materials resisted the full force of a glacial advance. Thousands of prairie potholes formed in the wake of retreating glaciers to become seasonal wetlands and stopovers for vast flocks of migratory waterfowl. The resulting landscape is both ancient and familiar, and corresponds with the two-part process of First Creator's and Lone Man's making of the world.[14]



Image 1.4: Laurentide Ice Sheet (2.6 Ma—11,700 BP) and Last Glacial Maximum (ca. 20,000 BP). Repeated Glaciation during the Pleistocene altered drainage patterns to the north and northeast of the Missouri River, but did not substantially alter the location of the Yellowstone—Missouri River Confluence.

Following the Last Glacial Maximum (26,500 BP), intermittent floods and heavy storms further shaped the topographic contrasts in the Confluence area and adjoining regions.[15] For the most part, however, glaciated and unglaciated landscapes both developed into cold-steppe grasslands interspersed with small stands of spruce, birch, juniper, and oak. Over several more millennia, as glaciers made a slow northward retreat that was punctuated by occasional southward advances, spruce and mixed deciduous forests predominated near glacial moraines, while the grassland areas that predominated to the south were intermixed with stands of birch and spruce, and punctuated by wet meadows as well groves of juniper and oak. In general, however, most what is now the Northern Great Plains was characterized by open pine-parkland with spruce dominating streamside environments. While all of these environments included many of the same grassland species that persist today, the Missouri Plateau and much of the Great Plains

[14] Graham, *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Geologic Resources Inventory Report*, 13-14; Catherine H. Yansa, "Lake Records of Northern Plains Paleoindian and Early Archaic Environments: The 'Park Oasis' Hypothesis," *Plains Anthropologist*, 52 (May 2012): 109-144.

[15] The Last Glacial Maximum refers to the period between 26,500 BP and 20,000 BP, when the northern Ice Sheets had reached their southernmost extent.

supported an array of spectacular fauna that included Late Pleistocene megafauna like mammoth, mastodon, giant bison, shrub-ox, peccary, smaller grazers such as llamas, camels, horses, caribou, and precursor species of pronghorn, as well as large predators like the dire wolf, giant short-faced bear, and a species of lion.[16]

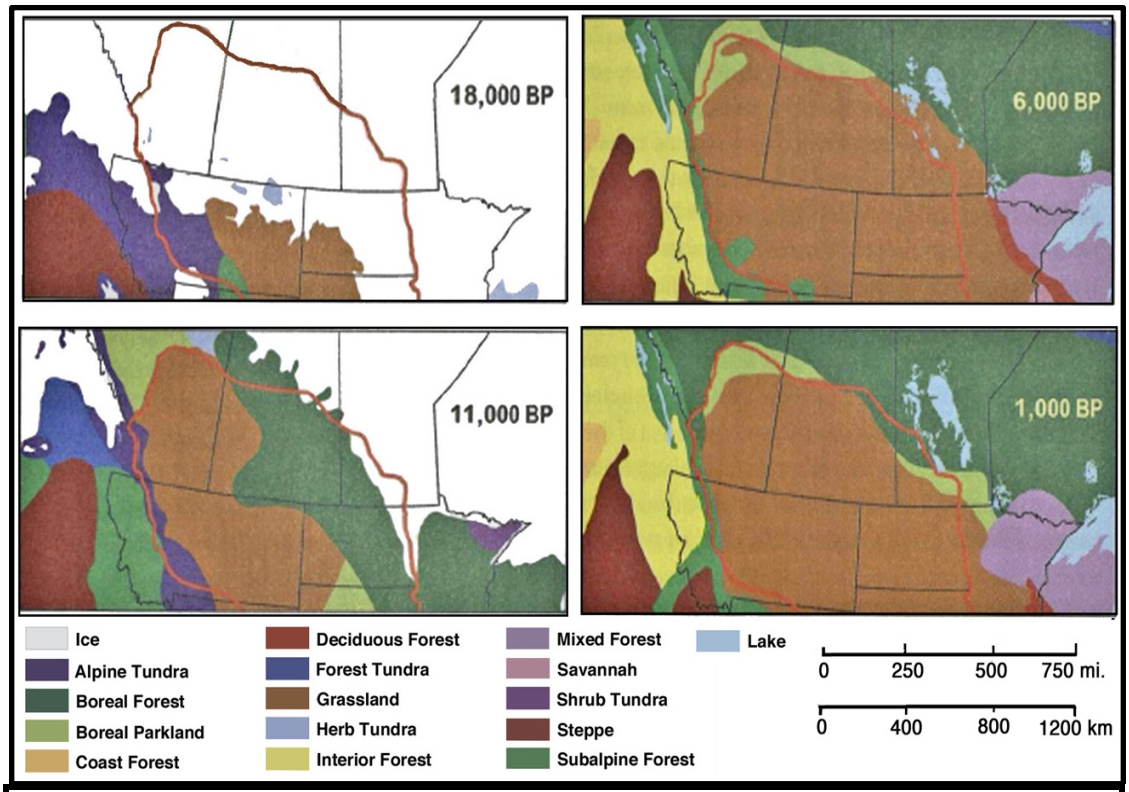


Image 1.5: Northern Plains Paleo biomes, 18,000 BP to 1,000 BP. Source: Adapted from Arthur S. Dyke, "Late Quaternary Vegetation History of Northern North America Based on Pollen, Macro-fossil, and Faunal Remains," *Geographie Physique et Quaternaire*, 59 (December 2004), 211-262.

First Peoples

In the past two decades, a growing consensus on the antiquity of the human presence in North America has been greatly extended to at least 14,500 to perhaps more than 20,000 years ago, but there is little to no physical evidence about when people first came to live on the Northern Plains. Recent archeological studies suggest that humans were within the present-day boundaries of the United States by 16,000 BP. On the Central Plains, mammoth bones that date back 21,000 years have been found in present-day eastern Nebraska that show signs they may have been broken open and scraped by

[16] Björn Kurtén, *Before the Indians* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 85-101; Rolfe D. Mandel, "Buried Paleoindian-age Landscapes in Stream Valleys of the Central Plains, USA," *Geomorphology* 101 (2008): 342-361; Cathy W. Barnosky, "Postglacial Vegetation and Climate in the Northwestern Great Plains of Montana," *Quaternary Research*, 31 (January 1989): 57-73; and Yansa, op. cit.

human-made tools (in order to extract marrow). While no clearly discernable human markers of similar antiquity have been found in the Northern Plains, it is unlikely that the unglaciated regions to the south and southwest of the Missouri-Yellowstone confluence were unknown to Late Pleistocene mammoth hunters. [17]

While these recent findings extend the archeological time frame of North America, there is still no particular term for identifying peoples who lived in North America during the Late Pleistocene. The closest is "Paleoindian," which was coined in the mid twentieth century when archeologists theorized that the first people in the America's came from Asia across the Bering Land Bridge around the end of the Pleistocene epoch (ca. 11,700 BP). While the term is broadly used to reference any human presence during the Pleistocene, "Paleoindian" is now more commonly used as an informal category for three distinct but widespread cultural expressions that were identified in the first half of the twentieth century. Known as Clovis (13,000-11,000 BP), Folsom (11,000-10,000 BP), and Plano (10,500-9,000 BP). While these dates are not precise, and there is considerable temporal overlap between these paleo-cultural groupings, they do correspond to distinctive material cultures that reflect the environmental conditions in which they were utilized. Because there are so few sites of greater antiquity, and little consensus on whether they have or can be accurately dated, Pre-Clovis has become the stand-in for any sites older than 13,000 years.[18]

There are no identified Pre-Clovis or Clovis period archeological sites in the immediate vicinity of the Confluence area, but some distinctive Clovis lithic tools and points have been found at sites in North Dakota and Manitoba within the Souris River Basin, as well as sites to the southeast along the southern shore of Lake Sakakawea, and due south near Beach, North Dakota—a small town about 20 miles due west of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park and the Little Missouri River. Folsom and Plano sites are more common throughout the region and have been identified near Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site as well as a few miles to the south.[19]

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[17] Anthony Taylor et al, "Dietary items in Early to Late Holocene Human Coprolites from Paisley Caves, Oregon, USA," *Palynology*, 44 (2020), 12-23; Loren G. Davis et al, "Late Upper Paleolithic occupation at Cooper's Ferry, Idaho, USA, ~16,000 years ago," *Science*, 365 (30 August 2019), 891-897 (accessed 4 April 2020); Steven R. Holen, "The Age and Taphonomy of Mammoths at Lovewell Reservoir, Jewell County, Kansas, USA," *Quaternary International*, 170 (July 2007): 51–63; Gary Haynes, *The Early Settlement of North America: The Clovis Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 30-35; and "The First Americans," *Scientific American Special Editions*, 22 (December 2012): 68-75; Mandel, Geomorphology, Quaternary Stratigraphy, and Geoarcheology of Fox Creek Valley, Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, Northeastern Kansas (Kansas Geological Survey Open-File Report 2006-29, Prepared for National Park Service, 2006) 19-21, 28-29.

[18] For a scholarly text of readily accessible essays that cover various topics and controversies within North American paleoarcheology, see David J. Meltzer, *First Peoples in a New World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

[19] Dennis L. Toom, "Archeology of the Middle Missouri," in *Archeological and Bioarcheological Resources of the Northern Plains: A Volume in the Central and Northern Plains Archeological Overview*,

Projectile points and the sites where they are found do help identify and locate potential cultural affiliations, but it is important to note that stone points and other lithic tools do not define cultures. By the same token, they are not prima facie evidence that Paleoindians were primarily hunters—or that widespread use of a particular technology represented cultural commonality across vast areas. Such assumptions about the past were once readily accepted, but new archeological evidence suggests that Paleoindians, instead of being "classic big game hunters," were broad spectrum foragers that utilized a wide array of plant, animal and mineral resources. Living in small, highly mobile groups that came together for large communal hunts (where their distinctive projectile points were sometimes lost amidst the remains of their prey), those who lived in and around the Great Plains apparently operated across fairly large territories.[20]



Image 1.6: Beacon Island site in western North Dakota, ca. 12,000 BP. Artist's depiction a mobile community processing the spoils of a successful hunt that netted at least 29 *Bison antiquus*. Source: North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum.

Folsom Complex: Early Holocene Variability and Human Transitions,11,700-10,000 BP

As glaciers retreated northward in the waning centuries of the Pleistocene, boreal forests gave way to the early Holocene prairies and deciduous woodlands that took hold

ed. George C. Frison and Robert C. Mainfort (Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series No. 47, Arkansas Archeological Survey, Fayetteville), 150-160; Toom and Michael L. Gregg, *The Archaeology of the Mondrian Tree Site (32MZ58), McKenzie County, North Dakota* (Grand Forks: Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, Vol. 193, 1983), 3.9-17, 4.2-9; Gregg et al., "Archeology of the Northeastern Plains," in *Archeological and Bioarcheological Resources of the Northern Plains*, 77-90; Steven L. De Vore, "Geophysical Investigations and Monitoring of Selected Areas Associated with the Dry Prairie Rural Water System Tie-In Construction Project at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Roosevelt County, Montana, and Williams County, North Dakota" *Technical Report No. 116* (Lincoln: Midwest Archeological Center, 2009), 7-9; Fred Schneider, "The Pelland and Moe Site Blades: Paleo-Indian Culture History in the Upper Midwest," *Plains Anthropologist*, 27 (May 1982): 125-135. On the Beach site, see David Kilby, "A Beach's Buried Treasure: The Beach Clovis Cache, North Dakota," *Mammoth Trumpet, Center for the Study of the First Americans,* 27 (April 2012), 30-34.

[20] David A. Byers and Andrew Ugan, "Should We Expect Large Game Specialization in the Late Pleistocene? An Optimal Foraging Perspective on Early Paleoindian Prey Choice," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 32 (November 2005): 1624-40; Marcel Kornfeld and Mary L. Larson, "Bonebeds and Other Myths: Paleoindian to Archaic Transition on North American Great Plains and Rocky Mountains," *Quaternary International* 191 (November 2008): 18-33.

across the heart of the Northern Plains. To the west, the landscape transitioned to treeless expanses of mixed-grass and short grass prairies in the cooler and more arid conditions of the High Plains, while mesic conditions to the east sustained a wider array of shrubs, trees, and grasses. Where the water table remained near the surface, oases developed within the wooded "parklands" of the northern plains—which attracted people and sustained various game animals that grazed in the surrounding grasslands and browsed in the wooded thickets near the small lakes. In these changed conditions some ancestral species of caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) and bison (*Bison antiquus*) migrated northward while the large herbivorous megafauna became extinct because they could not efficiently digest the grasses that now thrived on the plains. Animal predators of these large herbivores also became extinct, including the Saber-toothed Cat and the American Cheetah. Conversely, animals we recognize today, deer, elk, pronghorn, and bison (*Bison bison*), thrived in the new conditions. Moreover, the grazing habits of these smaller ungulates tended to foster the growth of the grasses they favored, which further refined the composition of the short and mixed grass prairies across the middle of the continent.[21]

Archeologists refer to the human communities that lived within these environmental transitions as part of the Folsom complex. The variability of the early Holocene is most clearly expressed in human adaptations, ecological changes, and greater species diversity. Paleosols (layers of soil or rock that formed in a previous era) provide firm evidence of the floral changes that occurred in the Late Pleistocene, while archeological evidence from kill sites—as well as identified habitation and seasonal use areas—reveals the kinds of faunal populations that thrived in the new environmental conditions. Based on this evidence, and the distribution of temporary encampment and use areas, archeologists surmise that food storage became an abiding concern for Late Pleistocene communities in a more variable climate. Seasonal extremes led to regular periods of abundance and scarcity in plant materials and foods as well as in the proximity or distance of migratory animals. To reap temporary bounties for immediate and later use required planning and preparation, and fostered short-term concentrations of associated communities to obtain, process, and store an abundant resource in a fairly short period of time.[22]

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[21] Yansa, "Lake Records of Northern Plains Paleoindian and Early Archaic Environments," 109-144; Frison, "Paleoindian large mammal hunters on the plains of North America," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 95 (November 1998): 14576-14583. It should be noted that there is no consensus on the extinction of the Pleistocene mammals.

[22] Mandel et al., "Geoarchaeology and Paleoenvironmental Context of the Beacon Island Site, an Agate Basin (Paleoindian) Bison Kill in Northwestern North Dakota," *Quaternary International*, 342 (August 2014): 91-113; Alwynne B. Beaudoin, "A Bison's View of Landscape and the Paleoenvironment" in *Bison and People on the North American Great Plains*, ed. Geoff Cunfer and Bill Waiser (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2016), 51-89; Daniel S. Amick, "Raw Material Variation in Folsom Stone Tool Assemblages and the Division of Labor in Hunter-Gatherer Societies," in *Folsom Lithic Technology: Explorations in Structure and Variation*, ed. Amick (Ann Arbor: International Monographs in Prehistory, 1999), 169-87.

The Paleoarchaic: Transitions in Material Culture

Between 10,500 and 9,000 years ago, the North American climate was generally stable. Seasonality persisted but became less extreme and more predictable in the eastern Prairies and the southern half of the Great Plains. On the plains, cultural complexes broadly referred to as Plano (8,500-5,500 BP) carried on the practices of earlier societies. Generally regarded as late-Paleoindians, and possible descendants or successors of Folsom peoples, Plano communities are similarly identified in the archeological record by the tools they made and used. Plano points tend to be longer but thinner than Folsom points, with a smaller "flute" at the base. This allows the point to extend further from the haft, and thus provides more area for cutting and stabbing. The Plano points also have bases and hafting styles that are more similar to variations seen throughout the rest of the Holocene.[23] The material culture of identified Plano sites is fairly consistent across broad regions and, like the Clovis and Folsom complexes, is often identified by particular suites of lithic tools, points, and blades. Around the Northeastern, Northern, and Northwestern Plains, however, it geographically and chronologically overlaps with a cultural tradition that archeologists refer to as Early Archaic (8,000-6,000 BP). Because Plano and Early Archaic complexes on the Great Plains had comparable economic strategies in similar locales for at least part of their annual cycles, archeologists also refer to both cultural expressions as "Paleoarchaic," which emphasizes commonalities and suggests interaction and exchange rather than isolation.[24]

The Altithermal and Early-Middle Archaic Communities

Beginning about 9,000 years ago, the global climate underwent a general warming trend known as the Holocene Climate Optimum, or the Altithermal. The rise in temperatures was not universal, and different regions were affected at different times. In central North America, for instance, the Altithermal lasted from 8,000 BP until 5,000 BP. Among other things, the warmer and drier climate extended the geographic range of the short grasses of the High Plains toward the east. The Tallgrass Prairie region also shifted eastward, as the eastern plains transitioned to the kinds of mixed grass prairie that are still common in areas without extensive agriculture. While these changes extended the range of bison, which thrived on the short and mixed grasses, the herds tended to prefer the

[23] "North American Prehistory: An Outline," *Archaeology of Prehistoric Native America: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Guy E. Gibbon and Kenneth M. Ames (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xvi-xix; C. Britt Bousman and Bradley J. Vierra, "Chronology, Environmental Setting, and Views of the Terminal Pleistocene and Early Holocene Cultural Transitions in North America," in *From the Pleistocene to the Holocene: Human Organization and Cultural Transformations in Prehistoric North America*, ed. Bousman and Vierra (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 1-16; Walker, "An Overview of Prehistoric Communal Bison Hunting on the Great Plains," 148-149.

[24] John Albanese, "Resumé of Geoarchaeological Research on the Northwestern Plains," in *Geoarchaeology in the Great Plains*, ed. Mandel (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 230; Walter E. Dean and Antje Schwalb, "Holocene Environmental and Climatic Change in the Northern Great Plains as Recorded in the Geochemistry of Sediments in Pickerel Lake, South Dakota," *Quaternary International* 67 (May 2000): 5-20.

northern plains where conditions were more temperate. Because the Altithermal was punctuated by frequent droughts, Middle Archaic (6,500-5,300 BP) peoples migrated toward the western and eastern margins of the expanding grasslands. Closer to the foothills of the Rockies, or the riverine areas to the east, consistent water sources ensured that a greater diversity of foods and materials could be utilized. Archaeological sites indicate an increased reliance on mollusks, fish, waterfowl, amphibians, and turtles. The hunting of smaller game also became a more central part of peoples' diets, as did the edible parts of various grasses, plants, shrubs and trees that grew in riparian forests or near streams and ephemeral wetlands. [25]

Based on fairly abundant archeological evidence and the work of paleoecologists, life during the Altithermal is better understood than for the Late Pleistocene and early Holocene—when conditions were less xeric and more temperate. A common Archaic site is the household encampment, which may include small middens with animal remains, lost or abandoned tools, lithic debitage from the making or modification of tools, and small stone hearths. Repeated usage of these sites suggests they were inhabited on a seasonal basis when particular animal or plant resources were most abundant. By the same token, apparent village areas—which resemble extensive versions of identified encampments— were probably located in proximity to resources that required significant numbers of people to acquire and process. In either case, the locations and material commonalities of various sites suggest a type of community that was shaped more by motion through a landscape than residence (however permanent or temporary) at a particular site.[26]

Late Holocene Transition and Late Archaic Populations (3,500-2,500 BP)

The end of the Altithermal period (ca. 3,500 BP) marks the shift from the Middle to the late Holocene. The transition was gradual, but the cooler and seasonally wetter climatic conditions of the modern era were firmly in place by 3,000 BP. Within the broader expanse of the Northern Great Plains, short and mixed grass prairies shifted westward while tall grasses became established along the eastern margins of the plains. As a result of these changes, people who lived in the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence area became situated in a diverse expanse of mixed grass prairie that provided ready

[25] Walker, "An Overview of Prehistoric Communal Bison Hunting on the Great Plains," 153-157; James A. Brown and Robert K. Vierra, "What Happened in the Middle Archaic? Introduction to an Ecological Approach to Koster Site Archaeology," in *Archaic Hunters and Gatherers in the American Midwest*, ed. James L. Phillips and Brown (New York: Academic Press, New York, 1983), 165-195; Chris Widga, "Bison, Bogs, and Big Bluestem: The Subsistence Ecology of Middle Holocene Hunter-Gatherers in the Eastern Great Plains," (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2006), 172-183; Frison, "The Northwestern and Northern Plains Archaic," in *Archaeology on the Great Plains*, ed. W. Raymond Wood (University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, 1998), 140-172.

[26] Bonnie W. Styles and R. Bruce McMillan, "Archaic Exploitation in the Prairie Peninsula and Surrounding Regions of the Midcontinent," *Archaic Societies: Diversity and Complexity across the Midcontinent*, ed. in Thomas Emerson et al (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 39-41, 44-47, 49-50, 64-67.

access to the bison-rich short grass prairies to the south and west as well as the tallgrass areas along the Middle Missouri River to the south. These environmental conditions in turn affected new phases of resource use and cultural expression that likely derived from antecedent populations as well as from exchanges with contemporary peoples who made seasonal migrations to the region from areas to the east.[27]

By 2000 BP (which marks the beginning of the Late Archaic period), expanding grasslands and commensrate increases in the number of bison on the northern and northwestern plains created conditions of population growth with more people moving into the region. Among these were various communities from two broadly distinguishable cultural traditions that either derived from, or closely engaged with groups in different areas of the Yonkee and the Pelican Lake cultures. Evidence of both cultural expressions is most commonly found at Late Archaic sites on the Northwestern Plains. The Yonkee tradition may have developed in the foothill areas of the Central Rockies, and perhaps had connections with Great Basin cultural traditions further west. The Pelican Lake culture seems to have developed in the Late Archaic period on the Northern Plains in what is now southeastern Alberta and southern Manitoba. Distinguished by their lithic technologies, both of these cultural traditions are associated with large communal bison hunting sites, either through the use of bison drives that directed herds over cliffs or steep bluffs (aka buffalo jumps) or into arroyo traps or hidden corrals where the animals were killed and butchered.[28]



Image 1.7: After a Bison Hunt: Image depicts a community processing and storing the returns of a large bison hunt at their fall encampment, ca. 1,000 CE. Source: Canadian Museum of History.

Signs of Ancient Residence and Use Around the Confluence

Within five or six miles of the Confluence, there are a number of multicomponent archeological sites associated with the various cultural expressions noted in this chapter. Given the ecological richness of the locale, and its oasis-like setting, this is hardly surprising. The two great rivers that form the Confluence also served as conduits of travel

[27] David Meltzer, "Human Responses to Middle Holocene (Altithermal) Climates on the North American Great Plains," *Quaternary Research*, 52 (February 1999): 404–416; Dean and Schwalb, op. cit.; Frison, "The Northwestern and Northern Plains Archaic," 140-172.

[28] Frison, *Prehistoric Hunters of the High Plains*, 111-122; Ian Dyck and Richard E. Morlan, "Hunting and Gathering Tradition: Canadian Plains," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, vol. 13, pt. 1, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 115-130. Also note that CE is an abbreviation for "Common Era," which is the general equivalent of Anno Domini or AD. In comments on this study, NPS archeologist Jay Sturdevant noted that these techniques regarding bison hunts were present long before either of these traditions.

for people coming or going from the west, the east, or the south. The same was true for a host of terrestrial, avian, and aquatic animals that variously migrated and resided along the rivers. The rivers also brought gifts to the Confluence. These included the trunks of great trees that had been washed downriver by a flood event, the bloated carcasses of bison that had died while trying to cross a frozen river (thus providing much needed animal protein to downriver communities after a long winter). Smaller rivers and creeks also provided easy routes of access to the north by way of Little Muddy River, which drains a wide and level bottomland. This corridor extends northward from the Missouri River near present-day Williston to the northeastward trending Souris River Basin and the prairie pothole country that once teemed with huge flocks of migratory waterfowl. Big Muddy Creek and the Poplar River, which empty into the Missouri between 34 and 62 miles above the Confluence, also provided good travel routes to the Saskatchewan River Basin and other locales to the northwest. Because large flood events on the Yellowstone and Upper Missouri deposited gravels, cobbles, and stones from other regions, the Confluence area also abounded in various lithic materials that could be used for tools, points, pigments, grinding stones, the manufacture of ceramics, and a host of other purposes. [29]

One of the best known and most studied archeological sites in the Confluence area is the Mondrian Tree site (32MZ58). Located about four miles south of the Confluence and situated above the mouth of an extensive catchment basin that flows into the Yellowstone River, the site has not been affected by the shifting courses and meanders that have shaped and reshaped the Confluence area over thousands of years. Given these circumstances, the two-acre site presents abundant evidence of resource use and gathering, lithic reduction and toolmaking, residence, hunting, and temporary encampments from at least 4500 BP to the mid 19th century. Dennis Toom and Michael Gregg regard the Mondrian Tree site as the residential base for a band composed of several families that focused on tending and harvesting plant materials as well as hunting and processing bison, elk, deer and—to a lesser extent—pronghorn and beaver.

The catchment basin in which the Mondrian Tree site is located also supported smaller seasonal encampments. One of these is the Edna Mae site (32MZ369), which is located further up the catchment basin and seems to have been closely associated with the

[29] This and the following paragraph draw from Michael L. Gregg and Amy C. Bleier, "The Garrison Study Unit," in *Historic Preservation in North Dakota: A Statewide Comprehensive Plan* (Bismarck: North Dakota Historic Preservation Office, 2016), 6.28-29, 39-41-44, 47-48, 55; Dennis L. Toom and Gregg, *The Archaeology of the Mondrian Tree Site (32MZ58), McKenzie County, North Dakota. Vol. 193* (Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, 1983), 4.6-12, 4.40, 6. 28-29, 6.39-41. It is worth noting at this juncture that archeological materials within and near the site of historic Fort Union also indicate long periods of regular seasonal residence and use. Because archeology within the national historic site has primarily focused on the reconstruction of the fur-trade fort complex, pre-fort Indigenous materials were not rigorously identified or catalogued. See Ann C. Bauermeister, "Chipped Stone Use at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota" (master's thesis, University of Nebraska, Lincoln), 2-4, 18, 20, 44, 82-84.

Mondrian Tree site over much of its existence. Aside from the repeated use of these two sites (and others yet to be encountered) through the Late Plains Archaic period, it is very likely that more ancient peoples in the region also spent time in—and utilized the resources of—the Confluence Area. The presence of an Early Plains Archaic (8,000-5,500 BP) archeological site about 24 miles northeast of the Mondrian Tree site, and another in the Killdeer mountains about 65 miles to the east, certainly places the Confluence within the territorial reach of these more ancient peoples. As such, it would have been attractive as a place of seasonal use and residence for other peoples over a long period of time—especially when considering the likelihood of unrecorded or unrecognized archeological sites within the intervening miles. At present there is no identified, direct connection between these Early Plains Archaic sites and at the Mondrian Tree site, but they do situate the Confluence area within an area of human use and residence that extends back at least 5,500 years, and perhaps much further.[30]

The array of plants and animals that lived around the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, along with ready access to a variety of exposed lithic sources and an abundance of river cobbles, would have made the larger Confluence area an attractive and well-known locale for seasonal residence, use, and congregation at different times of the year. Given the vast watersheds of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, and their connections to regions further south, the meeting of these two rivers was a key feature in the geographic associations, stories, resources, and memories that informed ancient Native peoples' "cultural maps" of the Northern Plains and their situation within the broader region. Such associations and memories would have been passed on to new generations, as well as shared with newcomers and allies. The Confluence itself would have also served as a dynamic illustration of what the Siouan speaking Nakoda identified as dáguwaką šká šká –where the ongoing process of creation was readily apparent and life sustaining.[31]

[30] T. Weber Greiser, Lynne B. MacDonald, and Daniel F. Gallacher, *Testing and Evaluation of Cultural Resource Site 24RV102, the Mondak Townsite, Roosevelt County, Montana* (Historical Research Associates, Missoula, Montana); submitted to the North Dakota State Highway Department, Bismarck, Contract Number NDSHD 35-0006-1081, 14-15; Toom and Gregg, *Archaeology of the Mondrian Tree Site (32MZ58),* 4.40, 6. 28-29.

[31] On "cultural maps" and their durability across many generations, see Roger Echo-Hawk, "Karu Katit Pakutu: Exploring the Origins of Native America in Anthropology and Oral Traditions" (master's thesis, University of Colorado, 1994); and Echo-Hawk, "Forging a New Ancient History for Native America, in *Native Americans and Archaeologists: Stepping Stones to Common Ground,* ed. Nina Swidler (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997), 88-102, quotation from p. 90. On lithic sources, see George H. Odell, "Stone Tool Research at the End of the Millennium: Procurement and Technology," *Journal of Archaeological Research*, vol. 8 (December 2000), 271, 277, 286.

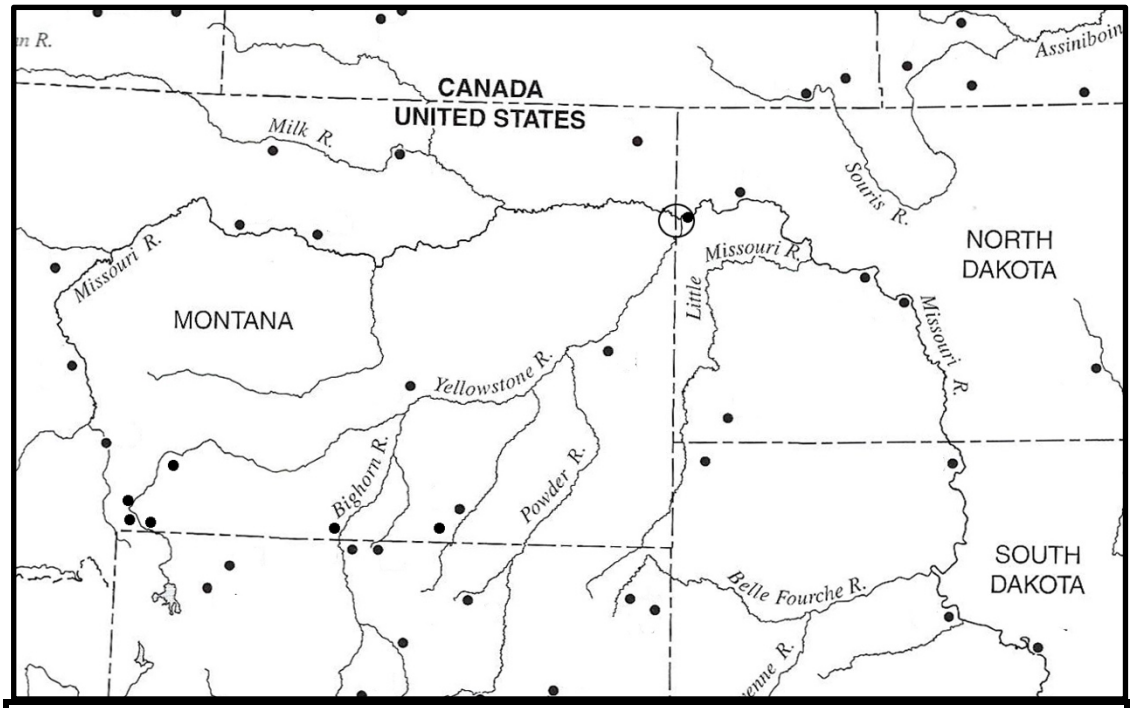


Image 1.8: Middle and Late Archaic Period sites on the Northern Plains. Though not a comprehensive map in terms of identified sites, this image gives a fair sense of population distribution in the region. The Mondrian Tree and Edna Mae sites are situated within the circled area. Source: Ian Dyck and Ricard E. Morlan, "Hunting and Gathering Tradition: Canadian Plains," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, vol. 13, pt. 1, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 116.

Shaped by two great rivers, the changing of seasons, and marked shifts in climate regimes since the end of the Pleistocene, the Confluence area was—and still remains—a dynamic landscape. Yet, the area also has a remarkable constancy that dates back to the Pliocene Epoch—long before humans walked the earth. As such, the Confluence is a persistent manifestation of the world that Lone Man and First Creator made, and literally binds the two landscapes they shaped. Regardless of when it was first (or subsequently) encountered by various Indigenous peoples, the Confluence has long been a recognizable feature in the geographic associations, stories, and collective memories that continue to inform the cultural maps of the region's Native peoples. Roger Echo-Hawk has convincingly argued that these "maps," and the ancient layers of world formation and lived experience that they convey, became embedded in the oral histories and self-understandings of subsequent generations—and persist to this day. As Echo-Hawk suggests, a good deal of Indigenous oral history articulates "landscapes of the most distant human antiquity," and carries "historical information from the late Pleistocene[:]" a time of floods, giant beasts, migrations, and new beginnings that required adjustments to profound environmental changes.[32]

[32] Quotation from Echo-Hawk, "Forging a New Ancient History for Native America," 90.

Regardless of the duration or antiquity of their associations, countless generations of Native peoples borrowed and shared their understandings of distinct places that manifested profound geographical, environmental, and cultural significance. The Confluence area is one such locale, along with several other sacred and materially significant places on the Northern Plains that include Noavosse (Good Mountain, aka Bear Butte), Mo'ȯhta-vo'honáaeva (Black Hills), Mni Wakan (Spirit Lake, aka Devil's Lake), Buffalo Home Buttes (aka Cave Hills), and Mathȟó Thípila (Bear's Lodge, aka Devils Tower), and the Missouri River itself, which the Nueta (Mandan) regard as the "'Backbone' of our culture." Through a process that Linea Sundstrom refers to as "cross-cultural transference," the names and understandings of these places were generally conveyed to allies, migrants, and interlopers—who subsequently adopted the stories and attitudes of reverence already associated with a locale, and incorporated them in to their own cultural understandings. This process corresponds with the life-sustaining vitality of a particular place and its intrinsic sacredness, which in many respects were one and the same thing. In this way, an adaptive continuity was maintained in the ways that different peoples recognized the central importance of the Confluence area and its association with the ongoing creation of the world. Put another way, there is no specific lineage that lays claim to the Confluence—nor is it a place that would necessarily have more meaning to one cultural tradition over another. [33]

The Nakoda, who have a strong historical association with the Confluence area, offer a good illustration of this process of cross-cultural transference and inheritance. While they had a long familiarity with the Upper Missouri and Lower Yellowstone rivers, these places became increasingly more central to their cultural and material well-being in the first half of the 19th century. Yet, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, the Nakoda clearly recognized—and still recognize—that the Confluence area abounds in "origin stories," "spiritual significance," and an array of "archeological sites" that affirm the presence of the "spirits that live all around here," and speak to ancestral associations of many different peoples. The same is true of other Native communities on the Northern Plains, including the Apsáalooke (Crow), Nueta (Mandan), Hiraacá (Hidatsa), Arikara (Sahnish), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Néhinaw (Cree and Plains Cree), Nahkawininiwak (aka

[33] References to the first two sites are rendered in Tsėhésenėstsestȯtse (Cheyenne language), the third site is translated from a Nueta (Mandan) reference, and the last two are from Lakȟótiyapi (Lakota language). The quotation on the Missouri River comes from Gerard Baker, "The Missouri River: The Backbone to Survival," in *Dam Projects and the Growth of American Archeology: The River Basin Surveys and the Interagency Archeological Salvage Program*, eds. Kimball M. Banks and Jon Czaplicki (London: Routledge, 2016), 202-213; quotation on p. 213. On the linkages between sacred sites, see Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study*, 218-219; and Kaitlyn Chandler, *Fort Union Ethnohistory: Final Report, September 29, 2014*, prepared for National Park Service Midwest Region [M.N. Zedeño, Principal Investigator and Editor], 42, 49-50. On cultural transference, see Linea Sundstrom, "Sacred Islands: An Exploration of Religion and Landscape in the Northern Great Plains," in *Islands on the Plains: Ecological, Social, and Ritual Use of Landscapes*, ed. Marcel Kornfeld and Alan J. Osborn (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 258-300, quotation from p. 260.

Plains Ojibwe), and Húŋkpapȟa Lakȟóta (Hunkpapa Lakota), whether or not they had direct or lasting associations with the fur trade at Fort Union. Moreover, the array of contemporary affinities with the Confluence area serves as an important reminder that the ancient and more recent histories of the place involve many different peoples across several thousands of years. As the observations of contemporary Native peoples make clear, the Confluence area is not the inheritance or domain of a specific group or cultural tradition. Rather, it is a common ground that is appreciated and understood in broadly shared terms. While this perspective underscores the broader cultural and ecological significance of the Confluence, it also provides a basis for assessing the subsequent impact of the fur trade—and how profoundly it transformed the cultural geography of the region and resituated the Confluence within the commercial, imperial, and industrial contexts that linked the Northern Plains fur trade companies operating out of present-day St. Louis and Winnipeg, the markets of New York and Montréal, and the maritime trade that brought goods from East Asia, Europe, and eastern North America to Fort Union.

Chapter Two

Paleo-Archaic to the Plains Village Tradition: Transitions on the Prairies and the Plains, ca. 500 BCE–1400 CE

The focus of this chapter is on the deep ancestry and continuous adaptations, movements, and cultural exchanges that defined Native communities on the Northern Plains in the 2,000 years that preceded the arrival of Europeans in North America. While emphasizing groups with overlapping associations to the Confluence Area, the chapter begins with the transition from the Late Archaic Period to the development of the Plains Woodland Tradition. Further discussion is given to the ways that distinct ecological niches and ancient social patterns, along with protohistoric developments, formed the persistent patterns of resource use and residence that defined life on the Northern Plains. Because these environmental and cultural dynamics continued into the historic era, this material also provides an important environmental and cultural basis for subsequent chapters on Native peoples' associations with other groups, as well as their connections to the Confluence area, their early encounters with non-Native peoples, and subsequent engagements with the fur trade.

As the seasonality of the Holocene epoch continued, the climate in central and eastern North America became wetter and marginally cooler about 2,000 years ago**.** These changes slightly shortened the growing season on the mixed grass prairies of the Northern Plains, but they did not cause a commensurate reduction in the size of human populations. On the contrary, the number of people grew significantly, as did the scale of their material cultures. Along with Late Plains Archaic groups already situated in the region, Along with Late Plains Archaic groups already situated in the region, archeologists have identified another cultural expression, Plains Woodland (500 BCE to 900 CE), at locations along the eastern margins of the plains. These sites are situated in the lightly wooded mix of tall and mixed grass prairies. In addition to seasonal activities of hunters and foragers, Plains Woodland peoples maintained more permanent villages where they cultivated the region's native food plants, including marshelder (*Iva annua*, aka sumpweed), goosefoot (*Chenopodium pratericola*), lamb's quarters (*Chenopodium album*), pale smartweed (*Persicaria lapathifolia*), and sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*). The diets of Plains Woodland peoples were not more varied than those of Late Plains Archaic peoples. However, cultivating plants within a seasonal hamlet augmented food stores and allowed for a more selective focus on the gathering of plant foods and plant-based materials that did not take to cultivation.[1]

[1] Mary J. Adair, "Great Plains Paleoethnobotany," in *People and Plants in Ancient Eastern North American*, ed. Paul E. Minnis (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2003), 261-267; Fred Schneider, "Prehistoric Horticulture in the Northeastern Plains, *Plains Anthropologist*, 47 (February 2002): 33-50; Ann Mary Johnson and Alfred E. Johnson, "The Plains Woodland," in *Archaeology on the Great Plains,* ed. W. Raymond Wood (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 218; and David G. Anderson,

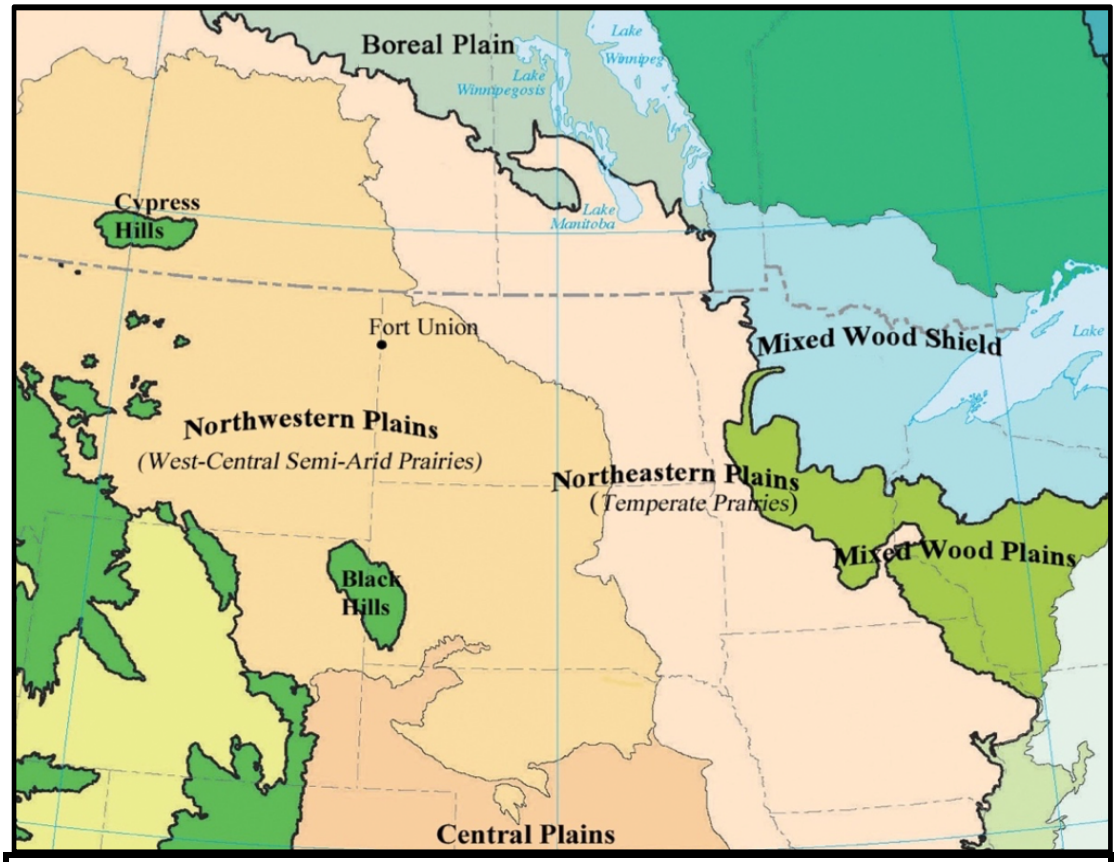


Image 2.1: Subregions of the Northern Great Plains and Adjoining Areas. In this and subsequent chapters, general references to the "Northern Plains" encompass parts of the Northwestern Plains and Northeastern Plains, which the U.S. Geological Survey respectively identifies as the West-Central Semi-Arid Prairies and the Temperate Prairies ecoregions. Source: Adapted from *Ecological Regions of North America, Level II* (U.S. Geological Survey and the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, 2005).

Planting, tending, and harvesting crops certainly required labor and time, but not nearly as much as that given over to searching out, harvesting, and transporting undomesticated plant varieties. Consequently, the time previously allotted to these endeavors could now be directed toward other tasks related to conducting larger hunts and processing the spoils, catching or gathering mollusks, fish, and other sources of animal protein, building and repairing semi-permanent dwellings, organizing ceremonial gatherings, and processing resources for exchanges with other communities both far and near. The resulting bounty of these various pursuits proved more consistent, allowed for surpluses that could be tapped during lean times, and sustained larger populations. As would later occur among early historic populations on the Middle Missouri River, it is very likely that this new accumulation of tasks was reflected in gender differentiation. If that is the case, then men would have focused more on hunting, putting up the framing

"Climatic and Culture Change in Prehistoric and Early Historic Eastern North America," *Archaeology of Eastern North America* 29 (2001):146, 164-168.

for residential structures, and taking the fore in matters related to war and diplomacy. Women would have owned their family's lodges, tended their plots of land and the crops they harvested, made pottery, stored and prepared foods, processed the returns of the hunt, instructed their children or younger relatives in how to assist in these tasks, exercised authority over their households, and played important roles in mediating disputes within their communities.[2]

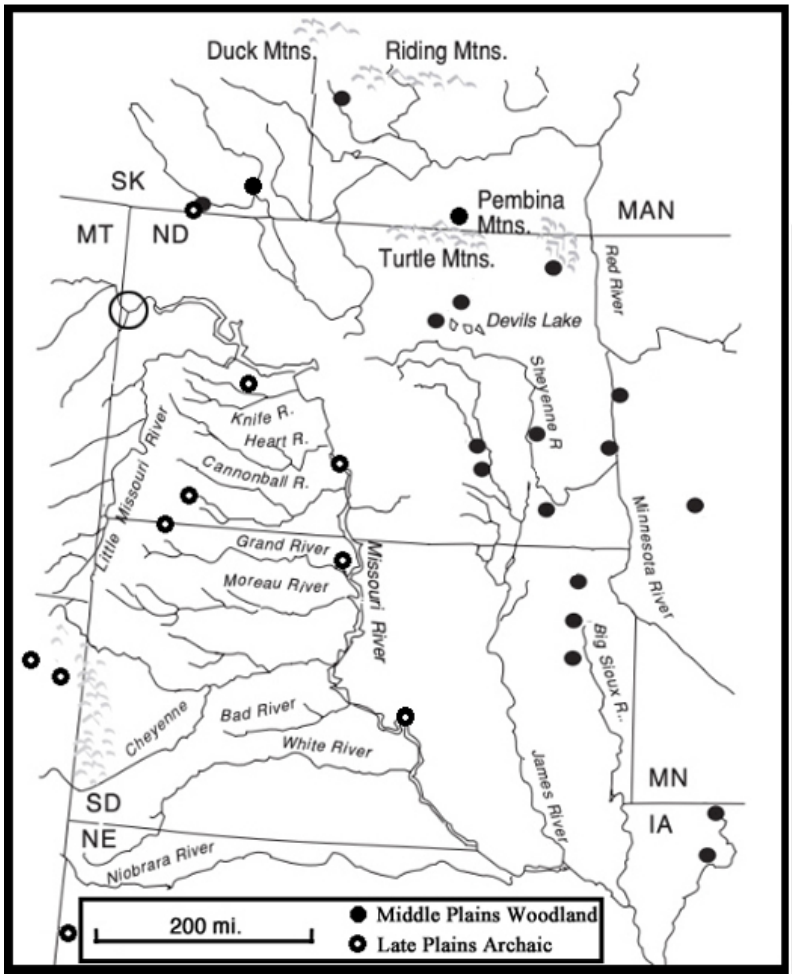


Image 2.2: Middle Plains Woodland and Late Plains Archaic Sites. Map shows the general locales of Plains Wood-sites along the western edge of the Northeastern Plains, and Late Plains Archaic sites along the Missouri River and its tributaries. Nearly all of these sites were utilized by various Native groups from the Paleoamerican period to the historic era. Compare this image with Image 1.8 in Chapter One. Also note that the Confluence Area. is designated with an open circle. Sources: See footnote.[3]

While Plains Woodland peoples represented a new cultural manifestation on the Northern Plains, it is important to note that the Late Plains Archaic period (1 CE-500 CE) largely overlaps with the Middle Plains Woodland period (100 BCE-750 CE). Over the

[2] Johnson and Johnson, "The Plains Woodland," 218; John Williams, "Bioarcheology of the Northeastern Plains," in *Archeological and Bioarcheological Resources of the Northern Plains: A Volume in the Central and Northern Plains Archeological Overview*, ed. George C. Frison and Robert C. Mainfort (Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series No. 47, Arkansas Archeological Survey), 120-25. On gender differentiation, see Lisa Frank and Kathryn Weedman, "Introduction," in *Gender and Hide Production*, ed. Frank and Weedman (New York: Altamira Press, 2005), 1-12; and Rosemary A. Joyce and Cheryl Classen, "Women in the Ancient Americas: Archaeologists, Gender, and the Making of Prehistory," in *Women in Prehistory: North America and Mesoamerica*, ed. Joyce and Classen (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 1-16.

course of 500 years, both of these archeologically defined periods were shaped by similar environmental, demographic, and social processes. The onset of the warmer and dryer conditions that characterized the climate of the Scandic episode (350-1225 CE), for instance, offers a good illustration of this broader dynamic. Warmer conditions on the Northwestern Plains increased the length of the growing season and may have fostered some experimentation with crop production at sites within or adjacent to riparian zones.[3] Conversely, this new climate regime stressed bison populations in the more mesic prairies of the Northeastern Plains. As the quality of tallgrass prairie forage declined, herds migrated to the more nutritious and drought tolerant mixed grasses of the plains. Together, these climate related changes created a geographic and demographic convergence of material cultures, as Plains Woodland peoples spent more time on the Northern Plains hunting bison while Late Plains Archaic groups along the Middle Missouri River and the lower stretches of its tributaries became more reliant on horticulture.[4]

These adaptations and population movements also coincided with shifts in the material cultures of peoples in both regions and resulted in an increasing reliance on two technologies: the bow and arrow, and pottery. The manufacture of durable pottery coincided with the need to store an increasing array of plant-based foods, and replaced an older practice of using of heated stones to simmer foods in containers made from animal parts or carved from wood. Because ceramic can withstand higher heat for longer periods of time, this new approach to cooking also allowed for the wider use of fibrous plants, seeds, and dried meats that were all rendered more tender by boiling or stewing. The widespread adoption of the bow and arrow toward the latter part of the Woodland period also contributed to this new food storage and culinary regime. Because the bow and arrow is lighter and more accurate than a spear, and could be used on large animals as well as some that were too small for an atlatl, the weapon allowed for the procurement of more animal protein from a greater array of game animals. This weapon also provided an added element of stealth, since its use did not require a hunter to stand. This would have been of particular use in the potholed uplands of the Missouri Couteau to the north and east of the Missouri River trench as well the eroded topography in the unglaciated areas to the west and southwest. In both regions, hunters with a bow and arrows could use the

[3] See James D. Keyser, "The Evidence for Mckean Complex Plant Utilization," *Plains Anthropologist*, 31 (August 1986), 225-235

[4] This and the following paragraph are based on Kaitlyn Chandler, *Fort Union Ethnohistory: Final Report, September 29, 2014*, prepared for National Park Service Midwest Region [M.N. Zedeño, Principal Investigator and Editor], 22-23; George C. Frison et al, "Archeology of the Northwestern Plains," in *Archeological and Bioarcheological Resources of the Northern Plains: A Volume in the Central and Northern Plains Archeological Overview*, ed. Frison and Mainfort (Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series No. 47, Arkansas Archeological Survey), 18-22; Mervin G. Floodman, *Prehistory on the Dakota Prairie Grasslands: An Overview* (Bismarck: US Forest Service, Dakota Prairie Grasslands), 62-74; James V. Wright, "Late Western Shield Culture," in *A History of the Native People of Canada, Vol. 2: 1,000 B.C.-A.D.* 500, ed. Wright (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1999), 732-764.

rim of a hill or coulee to approach unseen by their prey—and thus take more animals before they scattered. Together, food storage and efficient hunting may have allowed more time to be devoted to other tasks, and while there may have included an additional amount of time given over to making hunting tools and pottery, the cumulative efforts fostered an increase in population density among related communities that shared common territories.[5]

While all of these undertakings applied equally to Late Plains Archaic and Middle Plains Woodland communities, the most revolutionary development of this period involved the increasing importance of horticulture. Initially, and somewhat ironically, horticulture fostered a more strategic focus on harvesting native plants "of high seasonal or local availability," with supplemental augmentation from the cultivation of tropical cultigens like squash as well as cultivars of the common plants noted above i.e., marshelder, goosefoot, lamb's quarters, sunflower, etc). This adoption of horticulture very likely came to the Northern Plains via Woodland peoples who lived in the prairie regions to the east and southeast, and maintained longstanding material and cultural exchanges with larger Woodland societies that lived in the Mississippi and Ohio river valleys. While these new developments reshaped the material culture of Late Plains Archaic and Middle Plains Woodland groups, communities within both cultural traditions continued their "mixed program" of residential and nomadic procurement strategies alongside their horticultural practices. Together, these varied strategies better accommodated "abrupt as well as more gradual environmental changes" that allowed communities to adjust to "the adaptational requirement[s] of specific localities on a day-to-day, month-to-month, and year-to-year basis."[6]

Orientations and Connections around the Confluence Area

These similar adaptations and demographic shifts contributed to significant technological, economic, and social changes in both regions. On the Northwestern Plains, for instance, the manufacture of pottery became more common. The bow and arrow, which had been more commonly used in the wooded prairie regions to the east, also began to replace the atlatl among some Late Plains Archaic groups on the Northwestern Plains. These changes are all discernable within the Mondrian Tree site, through the presence of distinctive lithic points, potsherds, basketry, animal remains, charred plant material, and other associated items at this relatively pristine archeological site. Though less abundant and harder to assess, Late Plains Archaic-Early Plains Woodland period

[5] Michael L. Gregg and Paul R. Picha, "Early Plains Woodland and Middle Plains Woodland Occupation of the James River Region in Southeastern North Dakota," *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 14:1 (1989): 38-61.
[6] Ibid., 42-43; Schneider, "Prehistoric Horticulture in the Northeastern Plains," *Plains Anthropologist*, 47 (February 2002): 33-38, 41. Quotations from Marvin Kay's analogous study of the Central Plains region; see Kay, "The Central and Southern Plains Archaic," in *Archaeology on the Great Plains*, ed. Wood (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 193.

materials have also been found within more disturbed archeological sites in the immediate vicinity of the historic Fort Union and Fort Buford sites. However, some well-documented sites from the same general period have also been identified in the broader Confluence area. Among these are a copper awl that was found at the Boots site (32MZ732), about 15 miles to the south of the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. The presence of the awl, which can be sourced to copper deposits around western Lake Superior, situates the Confluence Area within a series of interregional exchange networks that ultimately linked to Middle Woodland period groups in present day northern Minnesota and southwestern Ontario, Canada.[7]

There have been relatively few archeological investigations on the Northern Plains, and information is limited regarding Late Plains Archaic and Plains Woodland communities. This circumstance partly derives from the low population densities of these groups. It is also a consequence of scale and antiquity, in which numerous but relatively small sites were subsequently altered or buried by floods, wind-blown (aeolian) soil deposition, and other environmental processes. The rarity of well-documented sites is further compounded by opportunity and circumstance, since most information about these communities has been acquired during brief periods of salvage archeological investigation that preceded the construction of federal dams, the routing of oil pipelines, and other large-scale infrastructure projects. Nevertheless, as the archeologist Marvin Kay notes, enough is known about the Late Plains Archaic period as a whole to recognize that it was "a time of varied responses to a changing Holocene landscape, biota, and climate," as well as a time of dynamic shifts in "hunting and gathering systems." The Late Plains Archaic, in particular, also represents a period of adaptations to environmental and demographic changes which in turn "established [archeologically] identifiable groups that [conformed] to regional physiography, … experimented with ceramic technologies and with horticulture, and participated in [social and material] exchange networks that extended" throughout and beyond the region.[8]

The locations of Late Plains Archaic sites frequently occur within the same advantageous locales as protohistoric and historic Indigenous communities, but Late Plains Archaic communities should not be regarded as the direct precursors of these more

[7] Timothy G. Baugh and Fred W. Nelson, "Archeological Obsidian Recovered from Selected North Dakota Sites and its Relationship to Changing Exchange Systems in the Plains," *Journal of the North Dakota Archeological Society* 3 (1988), 74-94; Sara Alicia Scott, "Ties that Bind on the Northwestern Plains: Contexts for Prehistoric Trade and Travel" (PhD diss., University of Montana, 2014), 104; Alice Beck Kehoe, *North American Indians: A Comprehensive Account,* 3d ed. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006), 268-270; Susan C. Vehik and Baugh, "Prehistoric Plains Trade," in *Prehistoric Exchange Systems in North America*, ed. Baugh and Jonathon Ericson (New York: Plenum Press, 1994), 254-255.

[8] Alfred E. Johnson, "Plains Woodland Tradition," *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, vol. 13, pt. 1, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 159-164. Quotation from Kay, "The Central and Southern Plains Archaic," 193. MWAC Archeololgist Jay Sturdevant, in the Consolidated Review Comments, Fort Union Historic Resource Study, April 30, 2020, notes that these have been some of the more interesting and difficult periods to work with.

recent residents. Rather, the archeological materials associated with Late Plains Archaic, Middle Plains Woodland, protohistoric, and historic era communities all provide collective insights on two related dynamics: how particular landscapes attracted different peoples, and the measures they took to sustain themselves within the conditions and places where they lived. Around the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence area, for instance, the twin processes of ecology and culture are manifested in an archeological record that extends back at least 7,500 years. Both Late Plains Archaic and Early Plains Woodland groups are part of that site's ancient history and legacy, and thus are both the inheritors and transmitters of lifeways and cultural practices that long precede and supersede their association with the Confluence Area. Besides finding a similar cultural association with the same site, Late Plains Archaic and Early Plains Woodland peoples shared a similar commitment to communal bison hunting, the maintenance of seasonal use areas variously devoted to hunting smaller game, the acquisition of similar floral and aquatic resources, and promoting the growth of the same cultivars.[9]

Because Late Plains Archaic and Middle Plains Woodland encompass two cultural traditions with considerable geographic and temporal overlap, it cannot be assumed that the former is directly ancestral to the other, or that both represent a common cultural inheritance. Yet, there are strong similarities between the lifeways of Late Plains Archaic and Middle Plains Woodland groups, and both traditions overlap in the vicinity of the Confluence Area. Moreover, archeological evidence from Late Plains Archaic and Middle Plains Woodland sites further indicates that these two cultural traditions were aware of, and interacted with, each other. Consequently, it is reasonable to surmise that the Confluence Area may have been a commonly used locale for exchange and seasonal congregation, much as would become the case in the proto-historic and historic eras.[10]

While these similarities and likely interactions are significant, both cultural traditions nevertheless maintained two distinct geographical orientations. Late Plains Archaic sites on the Northern Plains, for instance, are more common in areas that are well to the north and west of the Confluence area, while Middle Plains Woodland sites are mostly located to the east and southeast. Consequently, the material cultures of these roughly coeval traditions are generally distinguished by two factors: the landscapes and ecologies in which they spent most of each year, and their associations with a different set of locales and peoples that were further situated from the Confluence area. In the case of Late Plains Archaic groups, this generally involved interactions with peoples who

[9] Fred Schneider, "Prehistoric Horticulture in the Northeastern Plains," *Plains Anthropologist*, 47 (February 2002): 33-50.
[10] This and the following paragraph are based on Michael Michlovic, "Northern Plains-Woodland Interaction in Prehistory," in *The Woodland Tradition in the Western Great Lakes: Papers Presented to Elden Johnson*, ed. Guy Gibbon (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Publications in Anthropology, 1990), 45-54; Alice Beck Kehoe, *North American Indians: A Comprehensive Account,* 3d ed. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006), 268-270.

lived and hunted closer to the Rocky Mountains or on the plains and prairies of present-day southern Manitoba. Middle Plains Woodland peoples, for their part, generally retained cultural affiliations and established trade relations with groups to the east and south.

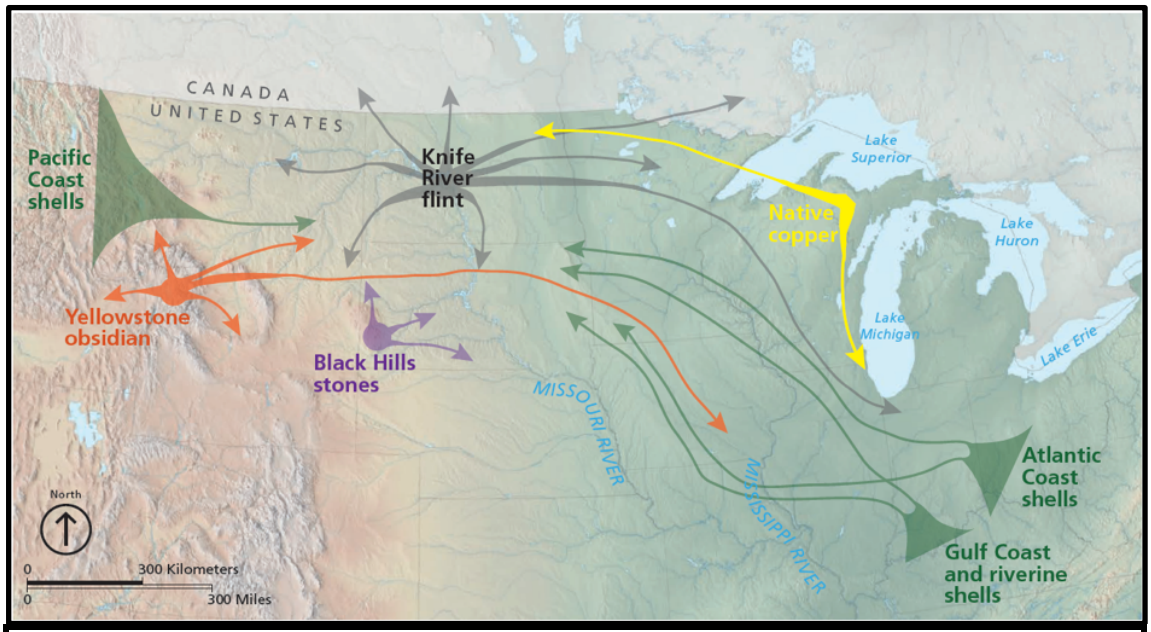


Image 2.3: The Northern Plains within the Hopewellian Interaction Sphere (100 BCE-500 CE). Source and Description: See footnote below.[11]

Eastern Connections to a Continental Trade

The production, acquisition, and use of these transformative technologies on the Northern Plains did not occur in isolation. Rather, they developed in the context of cultural and material down-the-line exchanges with larger Hopewellian populations (ca. 100 BCE-500 CE) to the northwest of Lake Superior, around the confluence of the Missouri, Mississippi, Illinois, and Ohio rivers, and throughout much of the Ohio River Valley. Though not a collective or uniform cultural expression, nearly all Hopewellian peoples manufactured refined ceramic wares and intricate metalworks that were often incorporated into a complex ceremonialism that had been central to community life for many generations. These skills were also reflected in the production of sturdy pottery for everyday use, as well as intricate blades and points made from obsidian and Knife River Flint that they acquired through Late Plains Archaic and Middle Plains Woodland trade networks. Beyond the areas noted above, Hopewellian groups were also connected to exchange networks that interlaced most of eastern North America, from the Great Lakes to the Gulf Coast, the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, and the prairie-plains border between

[11] J.P. Graham, *Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site: Geologic Resources Inventory Report. Natural Resource Report NPS/NRSS/GRD/NRR—2015/1016* (National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado, 2015), 10.

the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Whatever their ultimate sources, and however they were acquired or created, these technologies and associated practices were readily integrated into established lifeways of Northern Plains peoples.[12]

Northern Connections to the Confluence Area:

Beginning about 1,600 and 1,700 years ago, a climate shift known as the Scandic episode (ca. 350–725 CE) created warmer and drier conditions on the Northwestern Plains. Temperatures, rainfall and weather patterns approximated those of recent times, but with significantly more variation across years and decades. The result was greater variability in sub-regional environments and a general expansion of plains grasslands. Both conditions led to an increase in the size and movements of bison herds, which grazed a wider swath of the plains and found respite during the relatively milder winters in protected ecological niches along river bottoms, in canyons, and subalpine parklands.[13] Not surprisingly, these new conditions fostered commensurate adaptations among resident Plains Woodland peoples that archeologists identify as Besant, whose ancestors likely arrived on the Northern Plains during the Late Archaic period about 2,000 years ago. Regarded as Woodland peoples, Besant communities manufactured ceramics, were horticultural, and exhibited a high degree of social organization that centered on carefully orchestrated communal bison hunts. [14]

While the Scandic episode fostered adaptations among Besant communities, it also attracted people from the northwest that archeologists call Avonlea. Having fully adopted the bow and arrow, Avonlea peoples probably first moved onto the plains from the Northern Rockies between 150 and 250 CE.[15] Occupying and migrating through more open and dryer stretches of the region, which were almost uninhabited prior to their arrival, Avonlea groups probably did not compete directly with the larger and more numerous Besant groups. Less oriented toward large communal hunts, which were not as productive on the relatively level portions of the plains where they lived, the Avonlea peoples hunted in small groups or as individuals. Bows and arrows proved especially effective in this context since they allowed a single hunter to remain hidden while still in

[12] Michael J. O'Brien, "Theoretical Considerations Concerning the Study of Hunter-Gather Societies," in *Archaic Prehistory on the Prairie-Plains Border,* ed. Alfred E. Johnson (Lawrence: University of Kansas Publications in Anthropology, 1980), 113-119; Gregg, John R. Bozell, and Susan C. Vehik, "Plains Woodland," in *Encyclopedia of Prehistory*, *Volume 6: North America*, ed. Peter N. Peregrine and Melvin Ember (New York: Springer Science, 2001), 432-437.
[13] Richard Perry, "The Apachean Transition from the Subarctic to the Southwest," *Plains Anthropologist*, 25 (1980): 279-296.
[14] Theodore Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 61.
[15] The presence of dentalium shells and obsidian in early Avonlea sites strongly suggests an association with people from the Rocky Mountains and further west. Bow and arrow technology was probably introduced to North America by Inuit migrants and had reached the Pacific Northwest around 2,350 BP, then spread eastward. See Brian O. K. Reeves, "Communal Bison Hunters of the Northern Plains," *Hunters of the Recent Past*, ed. Leslie B. Davis and Reeves (New York: Routledge, 2015), 168-94.

the midst of a herd. Along with a different approach to bison hunting, Avonlea groups also seem to have utilized a more widely distributed array of plant and animal foods than did the Besant, which further suggests a higher degree of nomadism.[16]

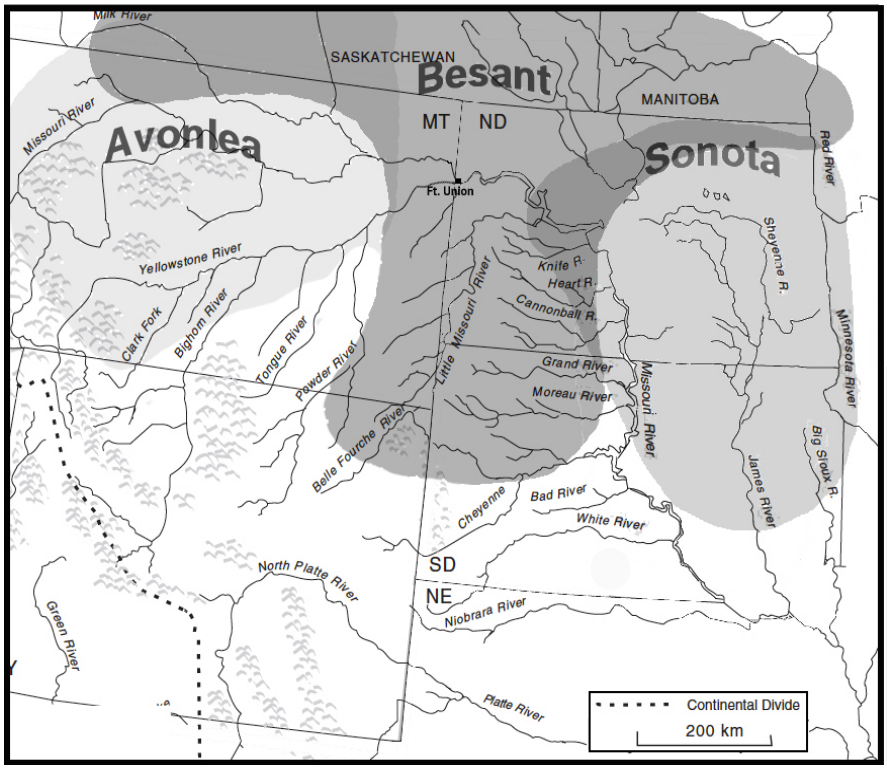


Image 2.4: General Territories of Avonlea, Besant, and Sonota complex cultural expressions. Dark zones show areas of considerable overlap. Source: Based on a map from the Manitoba Archaeological Society.

Avonlea points, ceramics and other cultural materials as far southwest as the White River Badlands in present day South Dakota, have been found in the vicinity of the Garrison Dam and Lake Sakakawea, and at the Mondrian Tree site. Because evidence of Besant and Sonota complex peoples has also been found in the Confluence area, it is likely that it was a shared space within their broader territories. Whether people from these constituent groups were in the area at the same time for the same purposes cannot be determined. At the very least, it is likely that the Confluence area was an important nodal point within all of their regional associations, and may have also supported a localized complex that incorporated elements from the communal bison hunters to the northeast and the smaller nomadic groups to the west and south.[17]

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[16] Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground*, 63-64.

[17] J. Sanderson Stevens et al., *Discovery and Re-Discovery in the White River Badlands: Historic Resource Study, Badlands National Park, South Dakota* (Louisville: John Milner Associates, 2011), 84; David Meyer and Dale Walde, "Rethinking Avonlea: Pottery Wares and Cultural Phases," *Plains Anthropologist*, 54 (February 2009): 49-73. Besant and Sonota-complex materials often appear in the same sites, but they reflect different geographic origins and resource procurement strategies. In short, the Besant were particularly focused on bison hunting and are presumed to be derived from a late Plains Archaic tradition. The Sonota-complex is thought to derive from a Middle Woodland tradition from areas to the north and east. See Frison et al, "Archeology of the Northwestern Plains," 24-26.

Late Plains Woodland (850-1250 CE)

Toward the end of the Scandic episode, the Confluence area became situated near the center of a broad triangular arrangement of horticultural groups to the south along the Middle Missouri River and the lower reaches of its main tributaries, band-level pedestrian nomads to the west and southwest, and a somewhat hybridized version of horticultural and seasonal nomadism among communities to the north and northeast. Most of the horticultural groups along the Missouri seem to have been composed of migrants from Hopewellian groups in present-day Wisconsin and Iowa, along with people who descended from Late Archaic peoples already in the region. Conversely, the Plains Woodland communities in the James River area to the east of the Confluence area seem to have been mostly derived from Late Archaic groups already in the area along with some Hopewellian migrants (Laurel Complex) from the Laurel Complex, a broad cultural expression located to the northwest of Lake Superior. These demographics could explain the geographic, material, and temporal continuities between Late Plains Archaic, Middle Plains Woodland, and Hopewellian groups within the region. This probability is further bolstered by the continuation of long-established patterns of semi-permanent residence in small hamlets punctuated by seasonal congregations of associated communities in resource-rich and culturally significant locales.[18]

While these various communities and groupings contributed to specific iterations of what archeologists refer to as Plains Woodland cultures, the Late Plains Woodland period is more broadly associated with the advent of the Neo-Atlantic Climate Episode between 850 and 950 CE, which initially brought increased rainfall and more moderate temperatures to the plains. This resulted in larger bison populations and allowed for the extension of agriculture northward and westward along major river corridors. After a few generations, however, elevated temperatures, increased aridity, and periodic droughts became the multi-century norm until about 1350 CE. The Neo-Atlantic Period is thus associated with the growth and subsequent dissipation of large population centers in North America, including the Anasazi in what is now the American Southwest, the vast ceremonial and trade centers of Cahokia and its associated towns and villages near the confluence of the Missouri, Illinois, and Mississippi rivers, and the Caddoan Mississippian centers in the lower Red River of the South and Arkansas River valleys.[19]

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[18] Adair, "Refining Plains Woodland Chronology," 201-228; Johnson, "Plains Woodland Tradition," 159-164; Geoff Bailey, "Time perspectives, palimpsests and the archaeology of time," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 26 (June 2007): 198-223. On Missouri River dams and their consequences for the Mandan Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, see Gerard Baker-Yellow Wolf, "The Missouri River: The Backbone to Survival," *Dam Projects and the Growth of American Archaeology: The River Basin Surveys and the Interagency Archeological Salvage Program* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2012), 202-213.

[19] Edward R. Cook et al., "Long-Term Aridity Changes in the Western United States," *Science,* 306 (November 2004): 1015-1018; Sridhar Venkataramana et al., "Large Wind Shift on the Great Plains during the Medieval Warm Period," *Science,* 313:5785 (July 21, 2006): 1015-1018.

The warming climate was also accompanied by a shift in the jet stream that established a dry, northeasterly prevailing wind from the southern Rockies to the Northern Plains. This dynamic made drought conditions more intense on the southern and western Great Plains, which in turn led to population movements toward the more mesic prairie-plains border to the east and the well-watered foothills of the Rockies to the west. Over time, horticultural groups with ancient connections to the Lower Missouri, Middle Mississippi and Lower Ohio Rivers moved up the Middle Missouri and its main western tributaries, while pedestrian nomads from the Rocky Mountains moved eastward to the more hospitable Northern Plains. All of these peoples, newer arrivals and more established groups, increasingly came in contact with each other, at times for trade and at other times in competition for the common resources on the Plains.[20]

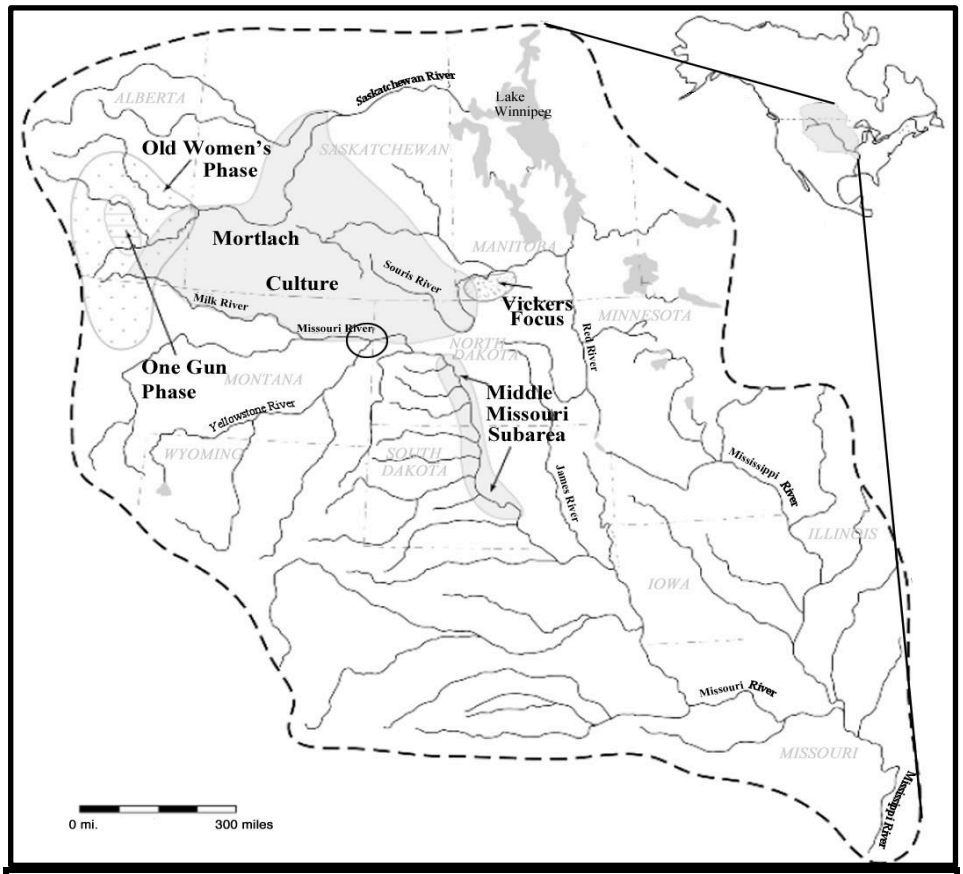


Image 2.5 Late Plains Woodland cultural expressions. Map corresponds to following paragraph. Confluence are is circled. Source: See footnote below.[21]

Given the temporal proximity of the Neo-Atlantic Episode period and its end, archeologists and anthropologists can somewhat confidently surmise the proto-historical

[20] Johnson, "Plains Woodland Tradition," 169-170.
[21] Map is closely adapted from Dale Walde, "Sedentism and Pre-Contact Tribal Organization on the Northern Plains: Colonial Imposition or Indigenous Development?" *World Archaeology*, 38 (June 2006), Figure 5, p, 297.

groups that derived from the late prehistoric peoples discussed above. The Vickers focus, near the center of the map above, corresponds to an in-situ group of Woodland peoples who abandoned their horticultural villages in the wake of a severe cold spell, and subsequently remade themselves into large-scale bison hunting people on the Northern Plains. Mortlach phase communities show affinities with Besant peoples in terms of ceramic production, bison hunting, and plant cultivation. They also served as key "middle men" in exchanges that involved groups to the north, south, and west. Many scholars have also suggested that Mortlach is ancestral to some elements of the Nakoda. Old Women's Phase sites show affinities with older Besant and Avonlea peoples. Like Mortlach peoples they also engaged in large bison hunts. Archeological and cultural resources also suggest that the Old Women's Phase is an ancestral iteration of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy). One Gun Phase peoples shared material culture traits with Mortlach and Old Woman's Phase groups, but their earth lodge homes and evidence of trading with Middle Missouri villagers, suggests they are ancestral to the Ashalaho (Mountain Crow) who first separated from the Hiraacá (Hidatsa) in the late 16th century. The Middle Missouri Sub-Area was populated by communities that were ancestral to the Nueta (Mandan), and Hiraacá (Hidatsa).[22]

Horticultural Hunters and Pedestrian Nomads

As the conditions of the Neo-Atlantic climate episode became more entrenched, the broad triangular arrangement of horticultural groups along the prairie-plains border, band-level hunters and foragers along the more topographically varied stretches of the Northwestern Plains, and residual communal hunters around the Confluence area largely held. The persistence of relatively moderate climate conditions allowed or encouraged band-level groups to expand westward to the Powder River Basin as well as the Big Horn Mountains and the Black Hills. Similarly, large communal hunting groups extended their range northwestward to the Saskatchewan River Basin. The Northern Plains between the Middle Missouri and the Powder River Basin received new populations of pedestrian nomads from the Central Rocky Mountains and the southwestern plains. The climatic conditions of the Neo-Atlantic also triggered a gradual, northward migration of some horticultural communities from the Platte, Kansas, and Arkansas river basins to seek out locales on or near the Missouri River (mainly within present-day Nebraska) where crop production would be more secure and tributary rivers offered better access to larger bison herds on the plains. Among these latter groups were communities ancestrally related to the Caddoan-speaking Sahnish (Arikara), who were culturally and linguistically associated with the Chaticks si Chaticks (Pawnee Confederacy) and kirikir?i:s (Wichita). The Sahnish split away from the Ckírihki Kuuruúriki (Loup Pawnee) and moved north sometime after 1350 CE., and subsequently established themselves on the Missouri River

[22] Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground*, 65-69, 72-79, 82, 93. The Caddoan-speaking Sahnish were situated in the lower Platte River Basin during the Late Prehistoric Era.

between the mouths of the Niobrara and White rivers in what is now southeastern South Dakota.[23]

Though it is difficult to establish specific origins for any of these peoples, archeologists postulate that four broad language families were represented in these new movements onto and through the northern plains. Siouan speakers from the Upper Mississippi and Lower Ohio river likely pushed westward and integrated with some more established Besant groups along the Middle Missouri; Caddoans from further south made a similar move up the Lower Missouri; Algonquian speakers from the Great Lakes and the northeastern plains (who may have been distantly related to some earlier Besant groups) moved further north and west; and Athabaskan speakers from the northern and southern Rockies (who may have included descendants of Avonlea groups) increased their numbers on the western plains. While these linguistic affiliations were not determinative of how people would live and interact in the region, they were situated on a rim like the endpoints of spokes emanating from a common hub at the Confluence. As such they were proximate to different peoples and regions, but linked to a common area where they would encounter, ally, trade, and conflict with each other as they used common resources and similar residential areas.[24]

Northern Plains Villagers (1000-1500)

Within a vast region of diverse peoples, the demographic center of the Northern Plains was south of the Confluence area, where agrarian-based villages had developed along the Middle Missouri River during the Neo-Atlantic episode. Because the climate generally restricted the range and scale of agriculture on the plains to the Middle Missouri and the lower reaches of some of its tributaries, archeologists have previously surmised that the agrarian village communities that developed along the Middle Missouri were pushed into this "marginal area" by more powerful groups further east and south. Yet it is probably more appropriate to focus on what drew people to the Middle Missouri rather than what pushed them away from someplace else. The appeal of the area was obvious, and it lay in the opportunity to grow crops in the midst of "one of the optimum

[23] Gregg et al., "Plains Woodland," 440-448; Walde, "Sedentism and Pre-contact Tribal Organization on the Northern Plains: Colonial Imposition or Indigenous Development?," *World Archaeology*, 38 (June 2006): 291–310; Gregg, "Archaeological Complexes of the Northeastern Plains and Prairie-Woodland Border, A.D. 500-1500," in *Plains Indians, A.D. 500-1500: The Archaeological Past of Historic Groups*, ed. Karl Schlesier (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 72-88; Fern E. Swenson and Bleier, "The James River Study Unit," in *North Dakota Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation: Archeological Component*, Vol. 7, ed. Gregg, Picha, Swenson, and Bleier (Bismarck: North Dakota State Historical Society, 2008), 47-55. On the northward migration of the Sahnish, see Kacy L. Hollenback & Richard A. Krause, "Sahnish Then and Now: Past and Current Themes in Arikara Archaeology and Anthropology," *Plains Anthropologist*, 61 (November 2016): 291-307.

[24] Patricia C. Albers et al., *The Home of the Bison: An Ethnographic and Ethnohistorical Study of Traditional Cultural Affiliations to Wind Cave National Park; Cooperative Agreement #Ca606899103 between the U.S. National Park Service and the Department of American Indian Studies, University of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), 17-25.

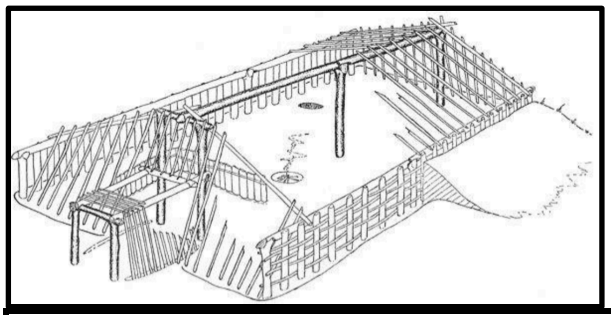
areas of the world for nomadic hunting and gathering." The result was an effective integration of Besant or Middle Plains Woodland subsistence strategies with eastern agricultural traditions for a more stable and diverse resource base.[25]

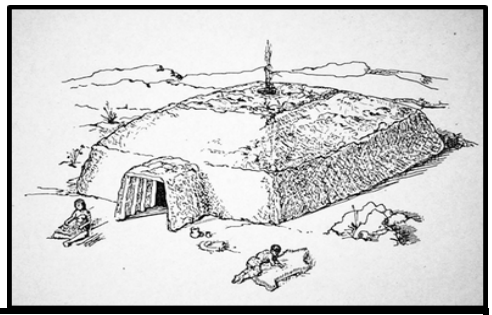
Early Plains Villagers, who archeologists identify as Initial Middle Missouri groups, first developed their communities on the Middle Missouri River between 850 and 1100 CE, where they lived in semi-sedentary villages and cultivated maize, sunflower, pole beans, and squash. Generally located near the mouths of the Niobrara, James, and Big Sioux Rivers, residential groupings were composed of several relatively small and unfortified hamlets that each housed around 100 individuals. Initial Middle Missouri communities probably moved onto the Plains in late spring, after the first weeding of their crops. These hunts were large community affairs that functioned as mobile villages for several weeks of the summer, and probably resembled the large communal hunts of Paleo-Archaic, Besant, and Avonlea peoples in the past. By fall the hunting camps would have closed down and the people returned to their villages and the relatives who stayed behind, where together they laid up stores from the summer hunts and harvested their crops. A somewhat shorter hunt often occurred in late autumn, before winter arrived in full force.[26]

The population movements triggered by the Neo-Atlantic episode brought more people to the Middle Missouri around 1100 CE, including large groups of Oneota peoples from the Upper Mississippi River Valley who conducted extensive bison hunts on the prairies of what is now northwestern Iowa and on the plains between the Niobrara and Platte Rivers. Caddoan speaking, semi-sedentary villagers from the Central Plains (namely, groups that were ancestral to both the Chaticks si Chaticks (Pawnee) and Sahnish (Arikara) also pressed on the hunting territories of the Initial Middle Missouri groups. These developments led to increased competition for the same resources, which in turn led to conflict or the threat of conflict.[27] In response to these developments, related groups of Initial Middle Missouri peoples migrated further up the river to locations between the White and Cheyenne rivers, which provided direct and well-watered routes to the bison country as well as to the plant, arboreal, and lithic resources of the southern Black Hills.[28] The new villages tended to be larger, fortified, and

[25] Dennis Lee Toom, "Early Village Formation in the Middle Missouri Subarea of the Plains," *Research in Economic Anthropology: Long-Term Subsistence Change in Prehistoric North America, Supplement 6*, ed. Barry L. Isaac (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1992), 131-191. Quotation from Toom, "Climate and Sedentism in the Middle Missouri Subarea of the Plains" (Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1992), 1.
[26] Wood, "Plains Village Tradition: Middle Missouri," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, vol. 13, pt. 1, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 186-95.
[27] Dale R. Henning, "The Oneota Tradition," in *Archaeology on the Great Plains*, 345–414; and Henning, "Plains Village Tradition: Eastern Periphery and Oneota Tradition," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 13, Plains*, 222–233. It is likely that these Oneota communities were ancestral to Jiwére (Oto), Ñút'achi (Missouria), and Báxoje (Ioway).
[28] Stevens, *Discovery and Re-Discovery in the White River Badlands*, 86-93; E. Steve Cassells, David B. Miller, and Paul V. Miller, *Paha Sapa: A Cultural Resource Overview of the Black Hills National Forest,*

composed of one or two dozen large earth lodges that housed a community of as many as 300 people. These rectangular structures were built with heavy posts, wattle and daub walls, and exterior thatching. As occurred in earlier times, villages would have largely emptied in late spring, to live as mobile hunters on the plains with sojourns at favored hunting camps on the plains where tipi rings still indicate long-term and community-specific use of a favored site.[29]





Images 2.6 and 2.7: Early Earth Lodges. The image on the left reveals the wood superstructure of a large, rectangular, semi-subterranean earth lodge, ca. 1100 CE. Image on the right depicts an exterior view of a similar proto-Sahnish (Arikara) earth lodge. Sources: (2.7) State Historical Society of North Dakota, and (2.8) S Kansas State Historical Society.

Mother-Corn and Bison

While bison on the Northern Plains were a draw for many different peoples, year-round residence was made possible by the incorporation of the three exotic cultigens noted above (maize, beans, and squash), which were acquired through the extensive trade networks. Maize was first domesticated in Mesoamerica, while most varieties of beans and squash were domesticated in eastern North America and Mesoamerica, they all took well to the silt-laden flood plains of major rivers on the plains, as well as the banks of smaller rivers and perennial streams. Known in some Indigenous languages as the "Three Sisters," maize, beans, and squash facilitated a successful and stable polyculture that provided the nutritional basis for larger, more sedentary populations. Besides their value as food, the nature of these three plant types allowed crops to flourish in the same plots for several years. Because each of the "Sisters" take root at different depths, they access different nutrients and moisture levels. This dynamic helps sustain soil fertility during the growing season, since each of the Three-Sisters puts different nutrients into the soils while the plants are growing and after they were tilled into the soil. These qualities also allow for close plantings, which creates symbiotic growing patterns whereby dense tangles of squash vines inhibit weed growth, corn stalks provide scaffolding for beans,

South Dakota and Wyoming (Custer, S.D.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Black Hills National Forest, 1984), 13-19.

[29] Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton. *Native American Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 127-130; William B. Fawcett, Jr., "Changing Prehistoric Settlement along the Middle Missouri River: Timber Depletion and Historical Context," *Plains Anthropologist* Vol. 33, No. 119 (February 1988), pp. 67-68; and Wood, "Plains Village Tradition: Middle Missouri," 186-95.

and bean plants return nitrogen to the soil. Because close planting requires less clearing of land and less soil augmentation, the same plots could be used multiple times before new ground needed to be cleared. Consequently, hamlets and villages were able to remain in the same advantageous locations for longer periods of time.[30]

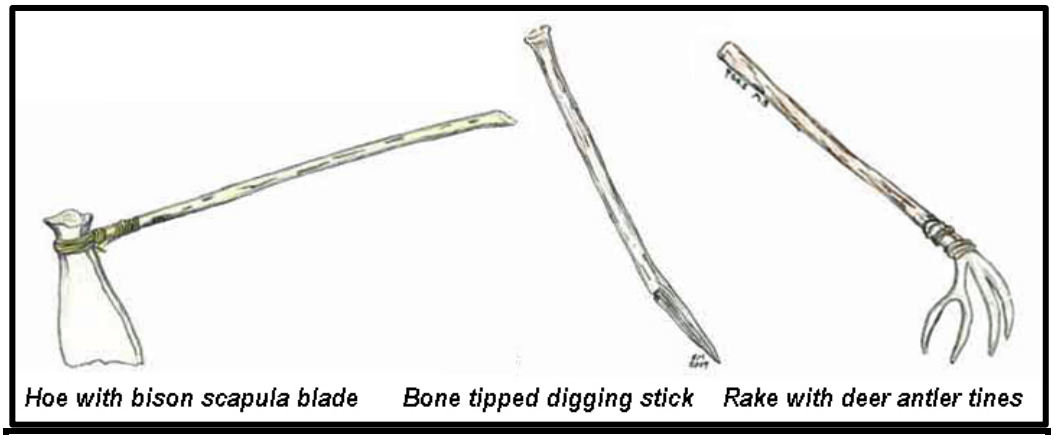


Image 2.8: Hunting and Farming. These three tools were indispensable to planting (hoe) and tending (rake) the Three Sisters. The digging stick was used for harvesting plant foods away from a village and during extended bison hunts. Source: NPS.

Cultivating the "Three Sisters" also coincided with an increased focus on hunting bison –especially as the animals became more abundant and accessible on the eastern plains. While some animals were taken singly, or in small numbers, as occurred with pronghorn, elk, and deer near the Missouri River, most bison hunting involved the organization of related communities for large hunts further to the west. The scale of these hunts, as well as the bounty of flesh, hides, bone, and other products of the hunt, made them as central as the "Three Sisters" to the social structures and material cultures of Plains Village peoples. Much like the planting, tending, and harvesting associated with agriculture, bison hunting and the processing of large kills was a central feature of life in the region. Substantial hunts involved a good deal of preparation and organization. For pedestrian hunters, the most prolific hunts generally required a large number of people working in concert to direct a herd toward an advantageous (and often prepared) killing site, where the animals would be surrounded and dispatched. Even as the killing was underway, those no longer directly involved in the hunt would promptly differentiate into specific groups that focused on processing various parts of the animals, then preparing the spoils of the hunt for subsequent transport to their home villages.[31]

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[30] Amanda J. Landon, "'The How' of the Three Sisters: The Origins of Agriculture in Mesoamerica and the Human Niche," *Nebraska Anthropologist*, 40 (2008): 110-124. During the historic era, when plains equestrianism was widespread, the timing of these large community hunts would have required less time travelling away from and back to the main villages, and thus shifted the annual calendar.

[31] Walker, "An Overview of Prehistoric Communal Bison Hunting on the Great Plains," 122-153; Jonathan C. Driver, "Meat in due season: the timing of communal hunts," in *Hunters of the Recent Past*, ed. Leslie

While the twin emphases on cultivating crops and hunting bison characterized life on the Middle Missouri, it is important to note that gathering plants for foods, medicines, balms, smudges, seasonings, and other uses was an ongoing concern from early spring to early winter. The same was true of quarrying and making lithic tools and points from Knife River Flint and other sources, as well as the acquisition and preparation of materials to make pottery, and to build or repair lodges. Just as Native plants diversified diets, plenty of other animals (whether of fin, feather or fur) were hunted or caught near semi-permanent residence areas. In other words, the suite of resources and materials that sustained people throughout the region were similar to earlier periods. Nevertheless, agriculture and bison hunting took up more of the annual calendar and provided more dietary and material sustenance than before. In this way, the various communities of the region largely became people of the bison and the hoe (which was made with a bison scapula.[32]

Toward the Confluence

Sometime after 1400 CE, Middle Missouri groups moved further upriver to the Heart River, the Knife River, and the intervening stretch of the Missouri River. Around the same time, descendants of Plains Village groups that had previously moved from the Central Plains to the southern portions of the Middle Missouri River Basin also migrated north. Among these were ancestors of the Caddoan-speaking Sahnish (Arikara), who would later become associated with the more northerly Middle Missouri groups (i.e., the Siouan-speaking Nueta (Mandan) and Hiraacá (Hidatsa). These movements, and subsequent cultural manifestations on the Northern Plains, roughly corresponded to changing environmental conditions associated with two climate regimes known as the Medieval Climate Anomaly or Medieval Warm Period (950-1250 CE) and the Neo-Boreal or "Little Ice Age" (1350-1800 CE).[33]

Migration and concentration in the midst of a variable climate regime proved a successful adaptation, but also created new risks and challenges. In the locations noted above, which were all situated on perennial rivers in an increasingly arid landscape, agriculture was viable but geographically limited. Consequently, there was a relative dearth of potential sites that could sustain larger villages as well as support additional crops for lean seasons or for trading with other groups. These circumstances also limited

B. Davis and Brian O. K. Reeves (New York: Routledge Press, 2015), 11-33. Also see James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 68-92.

[32] Preston Holder, *The Hoe and the Horse on the Plains: A Study of Cultural Development Among North American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 23-88. Knife River Flint is found near the confluence of the Knife and Missouri rivers in present-day North Dakota.

[33] At the time of these northward migration, the Hiraacá also included several bands who eventually became the Apsáalooke (Crow Nation) sometime after 1500 CE. See Peter Nabokov and Lawrence Loendorf, *Restoring a Presence: American Indians and Yellowstone National Park* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 40-46.

the amount of time that villagers could devote to large bison hunts. Because the Missouri drained southeastward, the groups lower down the river lived further east than the peoples to the north. Their situation had always meant that their large groups hunts to the bison country would require more time than the more northerly groups. However, they also had to limit their hunts to periods when water and food sources were sufficient along the way. In general, the Middle Missouri groups did not have to contend with either of these issues since they lived much farther to the west and conducted their hunts in a more mesic environment. Consequently, their bison hunts (which now included access to the Lower Yellowstone River Valley) were not as encumbered by the challenges of distance and drought that affected groups to the south and southeast.[34]

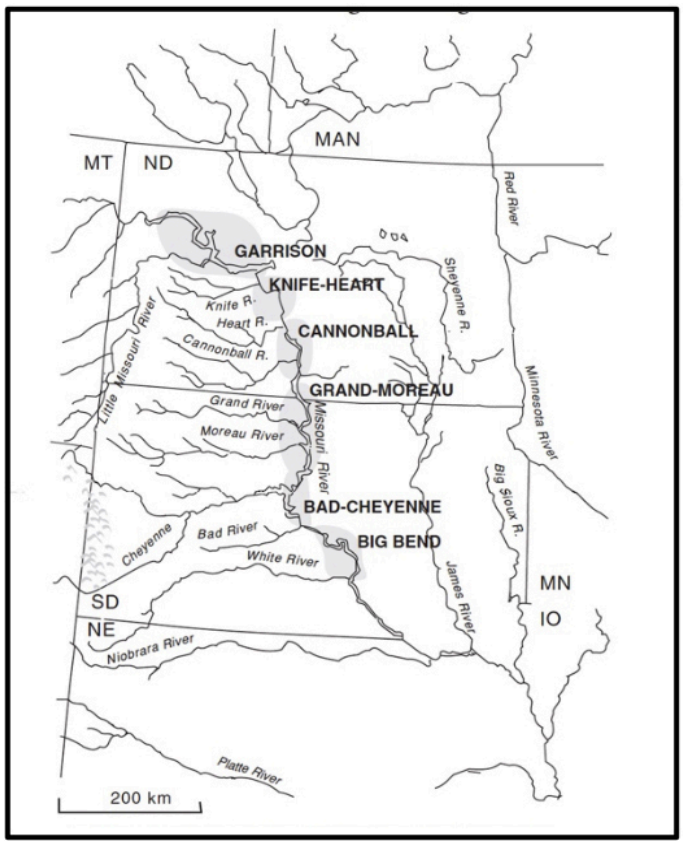


Figure 2.9: Archeological Regions of The Middle Missouri subarea of the Great Plains. Image represents archeological study areas that correspond to Village and use areas of Plains horticulturalists. With the exception of "Garrison," which corresponds to the area inundated by the Garrison Dam, locales are identified with tributaries of the Missouri River. Source: Dennis L. Toom, "Archeology of the Middle Missouri," in *Archeological and Bio-Archeological Resources of the Northern Plains: A Volume in the Central and Northern Plains Archeological Overview*, ed. George C. Frison and Robert C. Mainfort (Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series No. 47, Arkansas Archeological Survey), 56.

Among the communities on the Middle Missouri River, archeological evidence indicates that exchange-oriented production of foodstuffs and durable goods was a long-standing component of their social and material economies. Crops, hides, pelts, skins, and

[34] John R. Bozell, "Culture, Environment, and Bison Populations on the Late Prehistoric and Early Historic Central Plains," *Plains Anthropologist*, 40 (May 1995): 145-163; Ernest G. Walker, "An Overview of Prehistoric Communal Bison Hunting on the Great Plains," in *Bison and People on the North American Great Plains: A Deep Environmental History*, ed. Geoff Cunfer and Bill Waiser (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2016), 132-139. Bison country, as used in this study, is not a specific place. Rather, it is generally identified as the mixed and short grass prairies around the upper sections of the eastward-flowing rivers and streams of the Middle and Northern Plains.

meat were produced and stored in quantities that far exceeded a community's own needs. The same was true for lithic tools, points, knives, and ornaments made from the Knife River flint that was quarried near its namesake river. This dark, semi-transparent lithic was especially prized for its durability and knappability, and was widely traded across much of central North America. Not surprisingly, increased production and exchange had broad ramifications that found expression in various nodal points within continental networks of exchange. Peoples on the Canadian Plains, for instance, produced surpluses from their large bison hunts that were processed and packed for trade. As Dale Walde argues, these communal hunting societies were able to obtain non-local foodstuffs and other materials by expanding "a communal bison-hunting subsistence system that included the construction of bison gathering facilities such as pounds and jumps. Through these large hunts" and the amount of collaboration they required, "people were able to increase their food production capabilities while reinforcing their tribal social structure." These cultural developments also occurred in the context of conflict with Plains Village hunters who also presented, at other times and in other seasons, an important locus of exchange for the Northern Plains hunters.[35]

The Interband Trade System

Towards the end of the Late Prehistoric period, while living above the mouth of the Cannonball River in present-day North Dakota (ca. 1400-1550), ancestral communities of the historic Nueta (Mandan) and Hiraacá (Hidatsa) became the key nexus in what Donald Blakeslee has called the Interband Trade System. In some respects, this was an extension of other long-range North American trade networks that were at least as old as the Early Woodland Period (3000-2200 BP). As depicted in the map below, these networks moved prestige, ceremonial, and decorative items, highly valued lithics, and regionally specific products of the hunt from the Pacific Coast to the Plains, the Plains to the Southeast via Woodland groups in the Upper Mississippi and Ohio River valleys, and between the Plains and what is now the southwestern United States. Trade items that passed through the Upper Missouri River villages included shells form the Pacific, Atlantic, and Gulf coasts, bison hides, pemmican, dried salmon, Knife River flint and obsidian, and stones from the Black Hills that were used in various ceremonial ways.[36]

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[35] Mitchell, "Continuity and Change in the Organization of Mandan Craft Production, 1400-1750," (PhD diss., University of Colorado, 2011), 70-79; Walde, "Sedentism and Pre-contact Tribal Organization on the Northern Plains: Colonial Imposition or Indigenous Development?," *World Archaeology*, 38 (June 2006): quotation on p. 291.

[36] Donald J. Blakeslee, "The Plains Interband Trade System: An Ethnohistoric and Archaeological Investigation," (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 1975); Wood, "Northern Plains Village Cultures: Internal Stability and External Relationships," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 1-17; and Wood, "Plains Trade in Prehistoric and Protohistoric Intertribal Relations," in *Anthropology on the Great Plains*, ed. Wood and Margot Liberty (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980): 98-109. On Black Hills stones, see Albers et al, *The Home of the Bison*, 459-465.

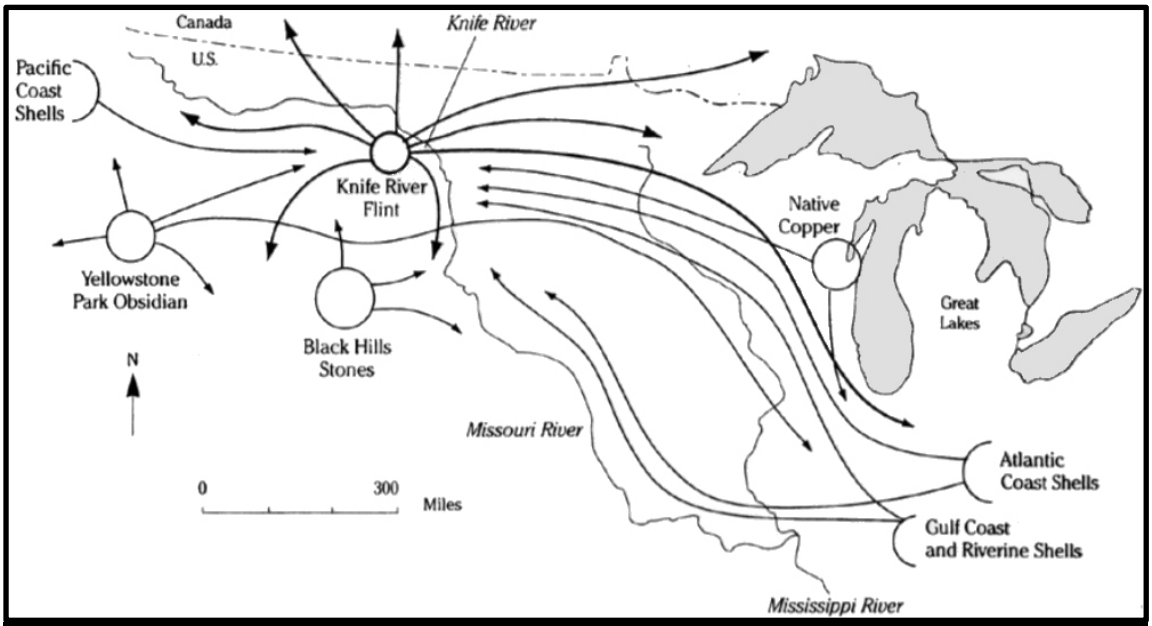


Image 2.10: Northern Plains Trading Centers (a). Map does not show trade routes toward what is now the American Southwest. Source: National Park Service.

On the Northern Plains, this older and more geographically extensive trade network overlapped with the Interband Trade system, which Blakeslee views as an instrument for guaranteeing material needs, nurturing mutual associations, alliance building, and risk management. As Blakeslee describes the trade system, associated communities

> traded for items of the sort that they could readily acquire for themselves. Products of the hunt, such as meat and hides, were regularly exchanged for other meat and hides. Another important feature of the trade system is its reticular structure. Instead of having one or two major trading centers, the trade network was composed of a multitude of approximately equivalent trade centers scattered across the plains. These included the villages of horticulturalists and [the] rendezvous hosted by [groups of nomadic peoples to the west and east].[37]

These trading relationships never devolved into the kind of commerce that might try to "corner" a market in a particular resource, let alone a competition to acquire more resources than a village neighbor or another group. Rather, trade within the Interband Trading System was something of a hybrid between resource exchange and group insurance. As W. Raymond Wood notes, trade was a matter of "internal stability and external relationships." Within the region, the majority of the traded goods could have been produced or obtained by most, if not all, participant communities without accessing the trade system. However, the goal seems to have been more about managing risk than

[37] Blakeslee, "The Plains Interband Trade System," dissertation abstract.

acquiring more resources. If a resource base failed or was depleted, an affected community or group could rely on its trade relationships to seek assistance. In another way, however, the redundancy that was built into the Plains Interband Trade System could also foster specialization. The clearest and most persistent example was the trade that occurred between nomadic groups that specialized in bison hunting, and the horticultural groups that produced surplus crops. In a manner that resembled the somewhat anonymous nature of the marketplace, trade in crops and the products of the hunt functioned as a straight exchange. Yet, like other aspects of the Plains Interband Trade System, the ethic of reciprocity ensured that both sides of the exchange came out with a similar balance of plant and animal-based resources.[38]

The success of the Interband Trading System was ultimately predicated on three dynamics. The fist depended on the amount and breadth of resource distribution. As Blakeslee argues, the material efficacy of the system was best measured in how well hunter-farmers and hunter-gatherers were able to reduce subsistence risk and thus also pursue the acquisition and exchange of more specialized resources. The second dynamic involved a basic trust in the system by its participating communities, which was best demonstrated during periods of peak "redundancy." This occurred during times of abundance, when the material significance of trade was less important but commitments to trading relationships were maintained. The third dynamic related to environmental conditions. Unlike most groups on the Northern Plains, the Middle Missouri villages were somewhat immune to the region's periods of severe drought. However, the same was not true for most of their trade partners. As Mark Mitchell notes, it is hardly surprising that the Northern Plains Interband Trade first developed in the early fourteenth century, when conditions on the Northern Plains were more temperate. Several generations later, as a mega drought set in by the mid fifteenth century, the ethics that defined the Interband Trade System began to falter. On the Upper Missouri, this is evidenced in the archeological record through the fortification of villages and a diminution in the presence of trade items. In short, trade gave way to conflict as resource starved communities sought to re-set the ledger as former trading partners became competitors and adversaries.[39]

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[38] W. Raymond Wood, "Northern Plains Villages Cultures: Internal Stability and External Relationships," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 30 (Spring 1974): 1-16; Wood, "Plains Trade in Prehistoric and Protohistoric Intertribal Relations," *Anthropology on the Great Plains*, ed. Wood and Margot Liberty (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 98-109; Donald J. Blakeslee, "The Plains Interband Trade System: An Ethnohistoric and Archeological Investigation," (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 1975); Blakeslee, "The Origin and Spread of the Calumet Ceremony," *American Antiquity*, 46, (October 1981), 759-768. Also see Mark D. Mitchell, *Crafting History in the Northern Plains: A Political Economy of the Heart River Region, 1400-1750* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), 56-73.
[39] Mitchell, *Crafting History in the Northern Plains*, 193-199.

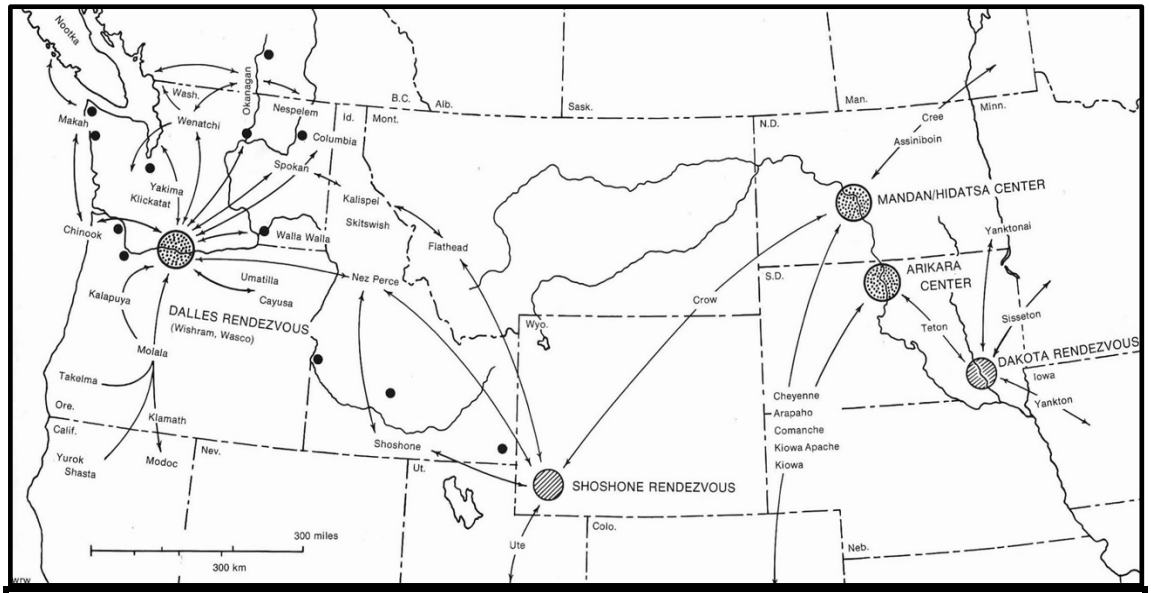


Image 2.11: Northern Plains Trading Centers (b). Image shows the broader network of trade in which the Interband Trade System functioned. Unlike the resources identified in Image 2.10, the trading centers on this map are not necessarily focused on prestige goods. Source: W. Raymond Wood, "Plains Trade in Prehistoric and Protohistoric Intertribal Relations," *Anthropology on the Great Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), ed. Wood and Margot Liberty, 101.

The Nature of Conflict and Trade

Prior to the long drought that enveloped the Great Plains in the second half of the fifteenth century, any pronounced shift in the varied geographies of drought, crops, and bison could give rise to tensions between horticultural groups along the Middle Missouri River and the more nomadic bison hunters to the west. Because essential resources were involved (water, grasslands, and bison), these circumstances were often fraught with the possibility of conflict: which could take the form of raids by western hunters on harvestable crops while plains villagers were conducting large communal hunts in the bison country. Similarly, the large group hunts by horticultural peoples threatened people on the western plains who depended on bison for an outsized portion of their material, caloric, and trading needs. With a frequently unbalanced ledger on both ends, strategic and opportunistic violence certainly occurred, but it was not endemic. In sum, the megadrought threatened all three elements, with diminished forage for bison, the desiccation of small rivers, streams, and creeks on the plains, and declines in crop production that lowered the amount of surplus produce that plains villagers could use for trade or as food insurance.[40]

[40] This and the following paragraph are based on Alice Beck Kehoe, "America before European Invasions," (London: Longman, 2002), 125–27, 131; Karl H. Schlesier, "Commentary: A History of Ethnic Groups in the Great Plains, A.D. 150–1550," in *Plains Indians, A.D. 150– 1550: The Archaeological Past of Historic Groups* ed. Schlesier (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 368-381; William C. Meadows, *Kiowa Ethnogeography* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 118-134; Gerald Anthony Oetelaar "Better homes and Pastures: Human Agency and the Construction of Place in Communal Bison Hunting on

By 1550s, the series of droughts that had hit the plains for the better part of a century gave way to the cooler and wetter Neo-Boreal climate regime (ca. 1550-1850). However, better crops and better pasturage did not necessarily rekindle the Interband Trading System, nor did it diminish the potential for violence between different groups. The migration of Ka'igwu (Kiowa) and Haisndayin (Apachean) communities into the Black Hills and the contested bison country of the Northwestern Plains neatly conveys the tenuous nature of trade, resource acquisition, and violence. Drawn by increasing bison numbers during the onset of the Neo-Boreal, these peoples blended extensive nomadism with periodic horticulture. By adding more people to the region they also made the hunting grounds more contested, but not necessarily more violent. The reasons partly stem from the behavior of bison. Herd movements could be predictable, but bison could also be spooked or dispersed. Consequently, pedestrian hunters, whether nomads or horticultural villagers, had to devote a good deal of time and effort in defending the herds they followed from rivals who sought to scatter some of the animals and hunt them elsewhere. Similarly, those who came into the bison country for shorter hunts had to work harder to find undefended herds and be more prepared for conflict. In each of these instances, preparing for and preventing the threat of conflict would have been a more persistent concern than any direct engagements.

Whether actual or potential, conflict during this period of shifting populations and environmental insecurities also corresponded with expanding trade networks. While the latter is generally associated with reciprocal relations and mutually beneficial exchanges, more trade could also lead to more conflict. As Susan Vehik notes, expanding trade networks seem to have fostered a level of conflict that directly corresponded to an increase in the trade of "nonlocal resources" that were not related to essentials like food and residence. A key reason for this dynamic relates to the leadership structures and social changes that accompanied the formation of larger group identities.[41]

During the Neo-Boreal, "conflict and the rapid aggregation of horticulturists provided greater opportunities for the differential accumulation of wealth, power, and prestige. Control of access to nonlocal resources was one mechanism by which this was accomplished." The "nonlocal" or "prestige" resources that Vehik alludes to included obsidian from the headwaters of the Yellowstone River, beads and gorgets made from

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the Northern Plains," *Plains Anthropologist*, 59 (February 2014), 9-37; Albers et al, *Home of the Bison*, 32-36.

[41] This and the following paragraph are based on Vehik, "Conflict, Trade, and Political Development on the Southern Plains," *American Antiquity* (January 2002), 37-64; quotation on p. 58. While Vehik's thesis is derived from research on Kirikir'i·s (Wichita) sites on the Central Plains during the Neo-Boreal, it has also been effectively applied to the Northern Plains and the Middle Missouri villagers; see Mitchell, *Crafting History in the Northern Plains*, 56-89. The same is true of Blakeselee's work, which has been incorporated into scholarship on Native peoples and trade on the Southern Plains in the protohistoric era; see Douglas C. Comer, *Ritual Ground: Bent's Old Fort, World Formation, and the Annexation of the Southwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 109, 138-40.

Pacific and Gulf coast shells, turquoise from sources to the southwest, red pipestone from present-day southwestern Minnesota, copper from western Lake Superior, and ceramics from as far east as present-day Tennessee. Most all of these items and materials were incorporated into community rituals and the accoutrements of leadership, and were broadly recognized of embodying "power" that could be imparted to the people or community who cared for them. When not in use, they were likely stored or displayed within or in front of the residences of people who "enjoyed differential access to nonlocal resources," whose possession of such objects "demonstrated they possessed the talent, authority, power, and wisdom to understand and articulate the "ceremonial/ritual knowledge" that guided community decisions and actions.[42]

The growth and coalescence of villages, and the commensurate significance of leadership, are linked to the conflict that persisted through the Neo-Boreal Period. One key reason, as Vehik argues, is that "conflict provide[d] political leaders and competitors for political leadership with opportunities to increase wealth, power, and prestige. Procurement of resources through trade" was one way to achieve these goals since the favorable "contacts established through this trade [could] … facilitate obtaining food when crops or animal resources fail[ed]," and bolster alliances in periods of crisis. "Being able to get food and allies when needed is much like obtaining nonlocal resources," she notes, "it reinforces power and prestige for political leaders." This was equally, if not more true, of the growing trade of prestige items and materials. In sum, the conflict that bolstered leadership within large coalescent communities was an adjunct to growing networks of trade that included nonlocal resources, sustained alliances (as moderated between other regional leaders), widened access to foods and materials, and when successful, affirmed new leadership structures.[43]

Imperial Paradigms and a New Disorder on the Plains

Vehik's scholarship, like Blakeslee's, offers a compelling framework for understanding patterns of trade, alliance and conflict among Plains Village communities. However, it is somewhat surprising that she does not fully grapple with the earliest European intrusions on the Central Plains in the late 16th century, which can be said to have brought the region into the realm of recorded history. Of course, "history" can mean several things, including the end of the "prehistoric," a distinct period of time in the past, or a way of organizing the world and framing the meaning of events. In most of the Americas, "historical" represents a line between prehistoric "people without history," and

[42] Vehik, "Conflict, Trade, and Political Development;" quotations on pp. 57, 58. Also see Timothy G. Baugh, "The Anthropologies of Trade and Exchange: An Essay on Kirikir'i·s and Southern Plains Political Economy," *Plains Anthropologist*, 53 (November 2008): 415-430.

[43] Ibid., quotations on p. 41. While the theories presented here are highly plausible, it is important to note that many interpretative theories within the field of archeology are necessarily speculative.

the subsequent peoples, ideologies, animals, tools, materials, diseases, opportunities, and disasters that reshaped the world. Without "history," one might reasonably expect that a period of growing populations, evolving networks of trade, and ongoing social changes within consolidating Indigenous groups would have persisted for countless generations. Instead, populations, routes to leadership, and networks of exchange were profoundly altered with the advent of the historical era, when European peoples, markets, and imperial ventures came to the middle of North America.[44]

Among other things, this constellation of change included an array of deadly diseases to Native peoples. High mortality rates subsequently gave new purposes to conflict that included a pronounced emphasis on taking captives to replenish populations that were cleaved by disease and war. As diseases depopulated some areas, stronger (or less weakened) groups pushed into the resource areas of badly weakened groups. The disintegration and reconfiguration that accompanied these movements often made warfare more chronic, and more focused on maintaining an advantageous situation within expanding networks of European exchange. Born of the diseases and "*economies of violence* engendered by [European] intrusion," as Ned Blackhawk writes, "such warfare and conflict brought heightened levels of trauma to the everyday lives of Native peoples" that would persist across generations and profoundly reshape the region and the continent. These developments and their ongoing consequences for subsequent iterations of the Interband Trading System, are the subjects of the following chapter.[45]

[44] This and the following paragraph are informed by Matthew E. Hill, Jr. and Sarah Trabert, "Reconsidering the Dismal River aspect: A review of current evidence for an Apachean (Ndee) cultural affiliation," *Plains Anthropologist* (2018), <10.1080/00320447.2018.1435606> (accessed 7 May 2018); Laura L. Scheiber, "The Late Prehistoric on the High Plains of Western Kansas: High Plains Upper Republican and Dismal River," in Robert J. Hoard and William E. Banks, eds., *Kansas Archaeology* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 133-150; Richard H. Wilshusen, "The Diné at the Edge of History: Navajo Ethnogenesis in the Northern Southwest, 1500–1750, in K. G. Tregonning, Laura L. Scheiber, and Mark D. Mitchell, eds., *Across a Great Divide: Continuity and Change in Native North American Societies, 1400-19*00 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 192-211; Timothy G. Baugh & Jay C. Blaine, "Enduring the violence: Four centuries of Kirikir'i·s warfare," Plains Anthropologist, 62 (May 2017): 99-132; Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1-15, 22-30. On the phrase "people without history," see Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).
[45] Quotation from Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*, 26, 28; italics added for emphasis.

Chapter Three

Empires and Revolutions: The Fur Trade and the Violent Remaking of North America

In the first half of the 17th century, the North American fur trade became a foundational component of European imperial competition and corporate aggrandizement. This in turn contributed to the rapid growth of a new economic system known as mercantilism: a kind of imperial monopolism that fomented conflict in North America and financed a series of ever-expanding wars in Europe. Native peoples, for their part, readily incorporated European wares into their ceremonial and day-to-day lives. The virtues they accorded to axes, metal pots and pans, firearms, fabrics, tools, mirrors, beads and a host of other foreign goods soon made these items cultural and material necessities. In time, and often in alliance with a particular European trading ally, sustained war against other Native communities became a strategy for ensuring access to future trade while denying it to outsiders. Such conflict was made all the more deadly through the use of metal weapons, firearms, the impact of exotic and virulent diseases, and the participation of European allies who tended to see Native conflicts as proxies for the imperial wars on the other side of the ocean. While these processes would change over time, they clearly reveal the imperialist dynamics that underlie the fur trade in North America as inherently exploitative, destructive, and violent. These dynamics, which became fully developed in the eastern half of North America by the early 18th century would ultimately push across the Great Lakes and move on to the Northern Plains, where the Hudson's Bay Company in the north and the St. Louis-based trade in the south would become the poles of the last iteration of the Colonial Era fur trade.

The North American fur trade likely began around the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, when Basque fishermen came ashore to recharge their water casks, gather or hunt some food, and sort their gear. Some of these forays led to onshore encounters with Mi'kmaq (Micmac) in Newfoundland and along the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The Mi'kmaq had seen the fishing boats, which seemed like small wooden islands that moved over the surface of the water with the assistance of broad white wings. The Basque sailors had also spied Mi'kmaq off the coast in their large birch bark canoes. For the latter, approaching a small crew of half-starved and scurvy-ridden men searching for edibles and filling water casks was a different matter. Because the Basque had not previously expressed any signs of belligerence or implicit danger, their small ships, strange clothes, and sea-worn condition probably invited curiosity, and provided an opportunity for a small group of Mi'kmaq to proffer assistance to people with unknown abilities and powers. Whether out of fear or as an invitation, they certainly followed the dictates of reciprocity that informed diplomatic and personal relations, and would have presented gifts to establish formal and mutually beneficial relations. The Basque, for their part, would have recognized gifts and assistance in almost similar terms and (perhaps from fear or wonder) would have reciprocated with small gifts of cloth, metal ware, or an object of curiosity. From these encounters, social relations were established along with an

unexpected opportunity to exchange common items for exotic prizes like metal wares and cloth for pelts, food, and other objects.[1]

More strangers would come to eastern North America in the early 17th century, primarily from France, England, and the Netherlands, and quickly recognized the possibilities of a more extensive trade in furs and pelts along the northeastern coast and major river valleys of the interior. As had occurred around the Gulf of St. Lawrence, all parties were eager to trade. Most European-sourced goods came into Native villages through long established exchange networks that were maintained through the extended social ties that existed within and between villages. Though impressive and extremely useful, glass beads, metal ware and textiles all had direct analogs within Native communities throughout the Great Lakes and beyond. European beads were generally used to adorn ritual objects, clothing, bodies, and everyday items in much the same way as polished shells, quartzes, and Great Lakes copper. Metal ware was usually acquired in the form of pots, utensils, or blades, but such items were also cut and reprocessed for the making of arrowheads and lance points, as well as tools for chopping wood, butchering animals, cultivating crops, and building structures. In short, Indigenous communities defined the meaning and use of European objects and materials in accordance with their cultural values and material wants or needs.[2]

Much the same was true of how the French viewed the pelts they received through down-the-line exchanges from the lower Great Lakes and areas to the north and the southeast. Within Great Lakes communities, and among American Indians throughout much of North America, an animal like the beaver was appreciated in several different contexts: as a source of food, medicine, and material for warm and water-repellent cloaks, as the maker of ponds that sustained a variety of plants and animals, and as an ancient ancestor or *toodaim* (Clan identity). For the French, a beaver was the source of a pelt, fur, and gland that were transformed into part of a luxurious piece of clothing, a durable and fashionable hat, and perfume. Its inherent value, then, was as a lightweight

[1] George R. Harnell, "Strawberries, Floating Islands, and Rabbit Captains: Mythical Realities and European Contact in the Northeast during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Journal of Canadian* Studies, 21 (Winter 1986-1987): 72-94; Darlene Abreu-Ferreira, "Terra Nova through the Iberian Looking Glass: The Portuguese-Newfoundland Cod Fishery in the Sixteenth Century," *The Canadian Historical Review*, 79 (March 1998): 100-105; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, vol. 5 (Cleveland: The Burroughs Brothers, 1898), 119–21; Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 9-12.
[2] Colin G. Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 43-68; Bruce M. White, *Grand Portage as a Trading Post: Patterns of Trade at "the Great Carrying Place"* (Grand Marais, MN: Grand Portage National Monument, National Park Service, 2005), 5-26.

commodity that could be shipped to Europe, sold, processed, and utilized in a manner wholly foreign to the communities from which it came.[3]

While the differences between Native and French conceptions of the early fur trade were apparent to all participants, each side believed they got the better side of the bargain. French traders marveled at how readily Native people would give away a trove of expensive furs in exchange for a few cheap trinkets and baubles. For their part, American Indians wondered about the sanity of people who would trade such valuable things for a few beaver pelts. An Innu (Montaignais) man made this perfectly clear in a gentle ribbing of a Jesuit priest: "The Beaver does everything perfectly well, it makes kettles, hatchets, swords, knives, bread; and, in short, it makes everything." Yet these different perspectives, and the judgments they fostered, did not undermine the nascent fur trading between Europeans and American Indians in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Rather, the exchanges persisted and grew through a kind of mutual exploitation. As the historian Richard White notes, "diverse peoples adjust[ed] their differences through what amount[ed] to a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings" that allowed each to value the exchanges on their own terms.[4]

Trade Relations and Obligations

Within this arena of accelerated trade, European goods were especially valued for several reasons. Some items, like axes, awls, and metal pots were highly sought after because they were durable and fit seamlessly with the daily tasks and chores that sustained a village, a lodge, and an extended community. The objects could also be replaced, if necessary, with lithic tools, a bone awl, and pottery. Less utilitarian items like beads, mirrors, and bells were also analogous to decorative and spiritually charged objects already found in North America, but were prized for their distinctive qualities and foreign origins. None of these items or materials were really essential to daily life, and it could hardly be said that American Indians were dependent on European goods. Nevertheless, as Richard White notes, they incorporated "these valued goods into a series of social relationships [within and between Native communities] on which the honor, power, and prestige of both individuals and groups depended." Consequently, acquiring "sufficient European goods became a requirement of … ceremonials and diplomacy." In

[3] On beaver as *toodaim* (aka totem), see Heidi Rosemary Bohaker, "Anishinaabe Toodaims: Contexts for Politics, Kinship, and Identity in the Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600 to 1900," in *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, ed. Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 93-118. For the mutual misconceptions about the value of fur trade items, see Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada,* 14-16.

[4] Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), x. Quotations from Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations*, 6: 203, 297.

this latter regard, at least, American Indian societies became increasingly involved, if not dependent, in the process of trade itself.[5]

Because Native peoples understood trade as relational rather than transactional, they also expected European traders and officials to participate in, or at least support, their conflicts with enemy peoples. In the case of the French and the Native communities with whom they traded, this meant assisting with an ongoing conflict against the Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) peoples who lived to the south of the St. Lawrence River. Samuel de Champlain, who first established direct trade relations with Native communities around the eastern Great Lakes, and would later administer French trading ventures from *Habitation de Quebec* (Quebec City) through the 1630s, immediately recognized the import of this expectation. The people with whom Champlain and his countrymen engaged were entirely responsible for acquiring and transporting the resources that the French coveted, controlled all the networks of trade, and generally determined the place and terms of exchange with Europeans. If they declined to trade, opposed a colonial settlement, or rejected a diplomatic overture, Champlain knew that the vision of empire he served might collapse before it began. At the very least, this dependence required a level of tolerance and begrudging respect for the motives of Native leaders.[6]

Champlain accepted the request and agreed to provide metal for blades, spear tips and arrow points along with nine French soldiers armed with harquebuses.[7] The battle, which took place near Lake George in present-day New York, was a complete route, with the force of 200 Kanien'kehaka suffering 62 deaths and a large number of wounded. A similar scenario played out the following year (1603) during a trade fair at Trois-Rivières, where the French and their Native allies gathered "to traffic in peltries." When word came that a group of 100 Kanien'kehaka warriors were ensconced in a small fort just a few miles away, a force of nearly 200 was quickly assembled and headed south. Bolstered by eleven French musketeers, the attackers (including some armed with swords) managed to tear down the Kanien'kehaka defense works and quickly routed their foes "without finding much resistance." All were either killed or drowned while trying to escape, or captured and made prisoners.[8]

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[5] Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 49-53; White, *Middle Ground*, 104-05.
[6] David Hacket Fischer, *Champlain's Dream: The European Founding of America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 366-372.
[7] Calloway, *New Worlds for All*, 43-68; White, *Grand Portage as a Trading Post*, 44-45; Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660,* 2 vols. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976), 1: 296-305. Quotation from Samuel de Champlain, *Voyages of Samuel De Champlain*, trans. Charles Pomeroy Otis, Vol. 2. (Boston: The Prince Society, 1878), 186.
[8] Champlain, *Voyages of Samuel De Champlain*, 2: 103-05; Kathryn Magee Labelle, *Dispersed but Not Destroyed: A History of the Seventeenth-Century Wendat People* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 33-39; and Fischer, *Champlain's Dream*, 274-279.

These two events shocked the Kanien'kehaka and the larger Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy, emboldened their enemies, and marked a profound shift in the dynamics of trade and war in the region. By making conflict more lethal, firearms and metal weapons allowed those who possessed them to exclude enemies from exchange networks and the alliances they fostered. This proved especially significant as the volume of trade increased, with more pelts and European items moving through established exchange networks alongside the wampum, tobacco, corn, gourds, Great Lakes copper, hides and other items that continued to make up the bulk of trade. The need to maintain a strong position within regional exchange networks in a world that was both more dangerous and more abundant also had a pronounced inflationary effect. Stronger and weaker parties sought to appease the other through increasingly generous exchanges, while antagonists wanting to end their estrangement attempted to give more gifts and feasts, and allies combined their efforts to either acquire or share more European weapons.[9]

Mourning, Trade, and Cycles of Violence

The central importance of exchange networks, and their intrinsic associations with alliances and conflict, came with a number of vulnerabilities. Once beaver were overhunted within a community's or alliance's recognized hunting area, continued participation in the fur trade often led to an escalation of violent conflict and the invasion or usurpation of other groups' hunting areas. More warfare required more metal for weapons, as well as guns, powder, and ammunition. Since European weapons were both prestige items and martial necessities, their relative scarcity only further accelerated the inflationary dynamics of the fur trade. The result was a repeating cycle of more competition for good hunting grounds, more conflict, and more casualties. For the French, this deadly dynamic resulted in greater profits which they captured through regular trade fairs at Trois-Rivières that coincided with the arrival of ships full of trade goods, colonists, soldiers, administrators, and priests. Not surprisingly, though unwittingly, the unprecedented mix of people also made these fairs into the epicenters of new disease epidemics that quickly spread across a wide swath of territory.[10]

In 1634, for instance, an unknown disease (perhaps measles) struck the trade fair at Trois-Rivières, and was carried back to Native communities to the north and west. In 1636 and 1637, influenza swept across the lower Great Lakes as well as present-day northern Quebec and northeastern Ontario. Scarlet fever also appeared in 1637, and smallpox made a return in 1640. In this short period of time, according to the estimates of

[9] Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 184-93; Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How Indians, Empires, and Western Migration Shaped National Identity in North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 48-52; Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 261-64. Also see Sioui, *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 5, 84, 166, 235.
[10] Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 486-88; Labelle, *Dispersed but Not Destroyed*, 14-15.

Jesuit missionaries, the combined population of Wendakeronon (the Wyandot homeland around James Bay and areas to the east) had dropped from perhaps 30,000 to 10-12,000. Similar losses likely occurred in other affected regions.[11] For survivors, the disease epidemics brought on a collective crisis that weakened community structures and raised fundamental questions about core beliefs, inherited traditions, and social order. With high mortality rates among older men and women, many respected male leaders died as did the clan mothers and matriarchs who largely determined the selection of village leaders. The higher survival rates among younger men, on the other hand, brought a new generation of leaders with different priorities to the fore. William Fox suggests that this generational shift may have contributed to an escalation of warfare since younger men traditionally held leadership roles in matters related to war while their elders were primarily responsible for developing consensus in civil matters and issues related to diplomacy and alliances.[12]

The most pronounced and concerted response to the onslaught of disease epidemics came through an intensification of the traditional Mourning War complex that had long been common among most Native groups in the Lower Great Lakes region. Often described by Europeans as a kind of blood feud, a mourning war involved raids against an enemy for the primary purpose of acquiring captives, who would then be incorporated into the invading community to replace a deceased person. While battle deaths certainly led to calls for such raids, mourning wars were also inspired by death from murder, accident, or disease, with the latter becoming the most prevalent reason in the mid 17th century. Previous mourning wars had generally involved small scale raiding, but they entered a deadly and seemingly unending spiral in the context of accelerating trade, increased competition for beaver, more firearms, and a wave of disease epidemics. High mortality from conflict and disease caused profound and widespread grief, which led to calls for larger and more frequent mourning wars. The growing importance of firearms in these conflicts fostered a scramble for beaver pelts in order to acquire guns and metal for weapons, which resulted in more warfare and death, and thus further exacerbated the dynamics of the fur trade and the Mourning War complex. [13]

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[11] Garry Warrick, *A Population History of the Huron-Petun, A.D. 500-1650* (Cambridge: Campridge University Press, 2008), 220-227; Labelle, *Dispersed but Not Destroyed*, 16-28; Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 42-44.

[12] William A. Fox, "Events as Seen from the North: The Iroquois and Colonial Slavery," in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), ed. Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall, 64-65; Labelle, *Dispersed but not Destroyed*, 14-28.

[13] Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and the University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 32-38, 74; Labelle, "'They are the life of the nation': Women and War in Nadouek Society," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 28:1 (2008): 119-38.

The scale of these wars and the displacements they caused would have been unimaginable a few years earlier, but they were soon overshadowed by larger and more enduring conflicts. As Dutch and then English imperial interests were added to the cauldron of demographic collapse, accelerating trade, and old animosities, a period known as the "Beaver Wars" quickly overwhelmed all that had come before. The first shift in this new dynamic occurred in 1628, when the Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) and the Dutch entered into an exclusive agreement for trading on the upper Hudson River. This included firearms, which the Kanien'kehaka shared with the larger Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy. As a result, the Haudenosaunee were better able to prosecute and defend against the spate of mourning wars that wracked the region.[14]

For the Purposes of Empire

Though European traders, soldiers and servants were alarmed by this violence, and surely recognized how European diseases and trade were the catalysts, they likely viewed these matters as part of divine plan that would eventually benefit European interests. The French and Dutch already had long experience with an almost unbroken series of European wars that carried into the 17th century. Variously inspired by religious, political, and cultural divisions associated with the Protestant Reformation, these wars were fueled by Spain's imperial ventures and the wealth of gold and silver pouring into Europe from the Americas. When the long spasm of war finally drew to an end, it provided an opportunity for other European powers to consolidate power in their recently unified kingdoms and commit to strengthening their commercial interests in North America; all with an eye toward building up a depleted treasury, energizing domestic manufactures and trade, and countering Spain's diminished but still potent economic clout.[15]

In turning to North America, France and England took up the kinds of imperial ventures that had previously been dominated by Portugal and Spain. In doing so they joined the Dutch in a maritime contest for access to, and control of, overseas resources in North America. This imperialist competition was largely an extension of the warfare that had just ended in Europe, but now oriented toward monopolizing overseas resources with two basic goals in mind: strengthening the economic and political power of the imperial homeland within its European borders, and gaining financial advantage over rival nations or kingdoms in Europe. This relatively straightforward approach to overseas empire was known as mercantilism, a political and economic theory that was predicated on an assumption that the world possessed a vast amount of resources but a relatively finite amount of wealth or treasure (as measured by the amount of gold or silver specie then available). Success within the mercantile framework, which lasted through the entire

[14] Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 60-66.
[15] Colpitts, *North America's Indian Trade*, 4-9; Fred Anderson and Andrew R. L. Cayton, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500-2000* (New York: Viking, 2005), 2-9.

Colonial Period in North American, was achieved through the monopolization of resources that could then be sold to economic rivals (i.e., other kingdoms), and thereby impoverishing a rival while gaining a larger share of the world's treasure. While mercantilism defined international commerce as a zero-sum game for gaining and controlling wealth, it also created a kind of inflationary scramble to access, monopolize and defend more resources. As Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton note, "early modern statesmen instinctively understood trade as" a kind of battle for territory and thus imperial ventures largely amounted to the "continuation of war by other means."[16]



Image 3.1: Eastern Half of North America and the Great Plains. Map shows the various territorial claims of European powers at the beginning of the 18th century. Source: Christian Ionita, *New France After 1713* (edmaps.com, 2006). Site of Fort Union is circled.

In the early 17th century, the region to the east of the Great Lakes became one of the first arenas in this new imperial contest for resources. As the French accelerated their

[16] On mercantilism and imperialism more generally, see Sophus A. Reinert and Pernille Røge, "Introduction: The Political Economy of Empire," in *The Political Economy of Empire in the Early Modern World*, eds. Reinert and Røge (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1-10. Quotation is from Anderson and Cayton, *Dominion of War*, 8.

commercial endeavors in North America, they were soon challenged by Dutch traders on the Hudson River in the 1610s and by English Colonists on the coast of what is now New England in the 1620s. The growing popularity of hats made from felted beaver fur drove this competition, and obtaining beaver pelts became a primary focus of traders. Among European traders, success depended on establishing and maintaining exclusive access to American Indian communities that would channel the lucrative trade to a commercial outpost. While this required a level of cultural fluency with the protocols and interests of specific Native groups, such knowledge mostly functioned in the service of mercantile principles and imperial goals. The same was true of the close alliances that Europeans developed with particular Native communities, even to the point of joining them in conflicts with their enemies. When these enemies were also the allies of another European power—as often proved the case—trade was not so much a matter of "war by other means" as it was simply a proxy war in another place.[17]

Merchants of Empire and Death: The First Great Trading Companies

Unlike the Spanish and Portuguese, who closely wedded military institutions with the extraction of resources from their colonies in the Americas, the French largely operated through the licensing of privately funded corporations that received a royal grant develop a trade monopoly in a particular region. The first of these was granted in 1603 to Pierre Dugua, Sieur de Mons, and resulted in the establishment of the Habitation at Port-Royal in Acadia on the Bay of Fundy. Samuel de Champlain worked with Dugua in this effort and laid the ground work for expanding the company's trade to the north and west. Dugua's enterprise, like all the others that followed, was plagued by independent traders (i.e., *coureurs de bois*, "runners of the woods) who established direct trade relations with Native communities. While this cut into the profits of chartered companies, it also led to a new Crown policy that require licensed fur trade companies to also take charge of creating, administering, and enlarging colonial settlements. The new policy was intended to expand the French presence in North America, diversify the resource base of the colony, allow the companies to wield broader control over the colonists in their domain, and exercise more authority over *coureurs de bois.* All of these policies fell short of these latter goals, in large part because revenue from the fur trade superseded all other concerns. The value of furs clearly informed the risk-reward calculus of the *coureurs de bois*, who gained independence, a livelihood, and a host of social relations among Native communities. The directors of the licensed fur companies, for their part, had little interest

[17] Simon Middleton, "Conflict and Commerce: The Rise and Fall of New Netherland," in *History Now*, 12 (June 2007) <http://www.historynow.org/past.html> (accessed 18 February 2019); Colpitts, *North America's Indian Trade*, 8-13.

in developing or administering colonies, since they were a constant concern that drained company finances and offered few long-term gains.[18]

While colonization remained a central interest of Samuel de Champlain through the 1610s, the political and financial power of the fur trade of New France became institutionalized in the 1620s through a series of short-lived companies (the *Compagnie des Marchands*, and the *Compagnie de Montmorency*). The primary successor to these companies was the *Compagnie de la Nouvelle France* (Company of New France), which was more commonly referred to as the *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* (Company of 100 Associates). In an effort to eliminate or forestall some of the issues noted in the previous paragraph, the *Compagnie de la Nouvelle France* was granted a full monopoly over the fur trade of New France, and required to facilitate the immigration of 4,000 French Catholic colonists to New France over a period of 15 years. To stave off concerns about *coureurs de bois* and better regulate the trade, colonists were allowed to trade directly with Native peoples under the condition that all furs must be sold to the *Compagnie de la Nouvelle France*. By the early 1660s, however, the company folded after a series of developments that included ongoing wars in Europe, the British acquisition of New Netherland, and the growing strength of the Haudenosaunee in the ongoing "Beaver Wars" as a result of increased trade with the British.

Compagnie d'Occident and the Fur Trade in *La Louisane*

In a near perfect mirror of the Hudson's Bay Company's origin story, the genesis of the last new fur trade endeavor of the French Empire came through the efforts of the Scottish financier John Law. In 1715, John Law was charged with organizing a plan for economic and financial recovery in France that he termed the "*Système*." This subsequently resulted in the creation of the *Banque générale* in 1716 (the royal equivalent of a national bank). Law then created the *Compagnie d'Occident* in 1717, which was granted a monopoly over trade in Louisiana, which at the time included the Mississippi Valley and the lower Great Lakes. More a conglomerate than a company, the *Compagnie d'Occident* was charged with the transport of 6,000 colonists and 3,000 African slaves over twenty-five years, with most of both headed to the Gulf Coast and the lower Mississippi River. Lastly, the *Compagnie d'Occident* was required to use a portion of its profits for the support of religious institutions and imperial defense.[19]

The fur trade of the lower Missouri River was also folded into the purview of the *Compagnie d'Occident,* which generally purchased furs that had been brought to New

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[18] This and the following paragraph are based on Henry P. Biggar, *The Early Trading Companies of New France: A Contribution to the History of Commerce and Discovery in North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Library, 1901), 72-78, 86-91, 115-119, 133-136; and Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 156-172.

[19] "France in America: John Law and the Company of the West," <http://international.loc.gov/intldl/fiahtml/fiatheme.html#track1> (accessed 3 June 2020).

Orleans and arranged for their transshipment to France and other parts of New France. The trade itself was not as extensive, nor as closely administered as the trade that moved through Montréal, but the trade that did occur contributed to two paramount concerns of the *Compagnie d'Occident*: economic diversification and exercising territorial claims in the Trans-Mississippi region. The most lucrative trade came through the Wah-Zha-Zhi (Osage), who primarily traded furs, bison robes, and bear skins, along with human captives. More often than not, the latter were Kirikir?i:s (Wichita), Chaticks si Chaticks (Pawnee), and Sahnish (Arikara). In the 1720s the French established a trading post at the confluence of the Missouri and Kansas rivers, which tapped a lucrative trade with the Kaw (Kansas) nation and, somewhat indirectly, the Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne) who lived further up the Missouri.[20]

Aside from missionaries, very few citizens of New France ventured up the Missouri beyond what is now Vermillion, Nebraska, since that stretch of the river was already accessed by French traders and Native trading partners who were connected to the Great Lakes trade. Despite the promise of these developments in the fur trade, Law's hubris and the vicissitudes of imperial commerce ultimately destroyed the *Compagnie d'Occident*. This occurred when Law sought to create a much larger company in 1719, the *Compagnie d'Indes* (Company of the Indies), by annexing several other companies operating out of West Africa, the East Indies, and southern China. Despite its spectacular demise, the *Compagnie d'Occident* shaped the demographic origins of the St. Louis fur trade and laid the cultural and commercial foundations of the various Francophone companies that developed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and subsequently shaped the personal histories and business strategies of the fur trade at Fort Union and other posts on the Upper Missouri River.

Exchange and Empire on Native Ground

For more than two centuries, from the earliest trading ventures of the French through the 1810s, much of eastern North America and the Upper Great Lakes region remained "native ground." As Kathleen Duvall uses this term, the region was a place where "European colonization met neither accommodation nor resistance but incorporation. Rather than being colonized, [Native peoples] drew … [the agents of]

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[20] This and the following paragraph are based on Wedel, "The Kansa Indians," *Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science*, 49 (June 1946): 10-11; Michael Dickey, *The People of the River's Mouth: In Search of the Missouria Indians* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 72-76, 81-84; Kathleen Duval, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 103-106; Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 168-173; and Elizabeth Ann Harper John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540–1795* (Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 1975), 495-498, 591.

European empires into local patterns of land and resource allocation, sustenance, goods exchange, gender relations, diplomacy, and warfare." This is not to suggest that the experience of imperialism somehow met the goals and expectations of Indigenous leaders. Nor is it to deny that incorporating European materials into their everyday lives connected Indigenous communities to emerging commercial networks that increasingly followed the abstract principles of supply and demand, or monopoly and collapse. On the contrary, European diseases weakened communities, while trade with Europeans fostered conflict and competition over participation in the often-contested exchange networks of the fur trade. Increased usage of metal weapons and European firearms also transformed old animosities into wars of unprecedented scale. Yet for Native peoples, their responses to all of these challenges were predicated on sustaining the distinct needs and concerns of their communities within a rapidly changing and increasingly violent world.[21]

Throughout the Great Lakes region and much of North America, trade on the Native Ground was a social and material exchange that primarily intended to establish and nurture connections within and between communities. Put simply, the purpose of exchange was to "satisfy the … needs of each party" in a way that was mutually advantageous to both. As was the case in the Interband Trade System on the Northern Plains, these needs and advantages were often determined by the strength and significance of the relationship between the two parties. A stronger party might be more generous in order to maintain an established relationship, or a weaker party could give more than expected in order to foster a future reciprocation from the other. In either case trade was a physical manifestation of a social relationship and, especially in the case of tobacco, strings of wampum, copper beads, and other items with sacred characteristics, the exchanged items embodied the relationship and its obligations.[22]

While trade involved good relations and friendship, war entailed the opposite. Strangers and enemies were, by definition, people with whom mutually beneficial exchanges did not occur. Gift giving and diplomatic rituals could prevent or end conflicts and make strangers known. Absent these processes, however, enemies continued to be people who could be shunned, have things taken from, or warred against. By joining in the raid against the Kanien'kehaka, Champlain fully affirmed his status as a friend and ally—and further obligated himself not to trade with the Kanien'kehaka or other enemies of his allies. In doing so he embodied the age-old virtues of reciprocity and mutuality that informed Native worldviews. Yet Champlain's commitment to fight against the

[21] DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 5; Gregory Evans Dowd, "'Wag the Imperial Dog': Indians and Overseas Empires in North America, 1650–1776," in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Philip J. Deloria and Neil Salisbury (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 53-56.
[22] Dowd, "Wag the Imperial Dog," 54-55; and White, *Middle Ground*, 8-9, 94-100 (quotation on p. 8).

Kanien'kehaka brought European interests and technologies to the conduct of war and trade, and initiated a whole new era of unprecedented violence and destruction.[23]

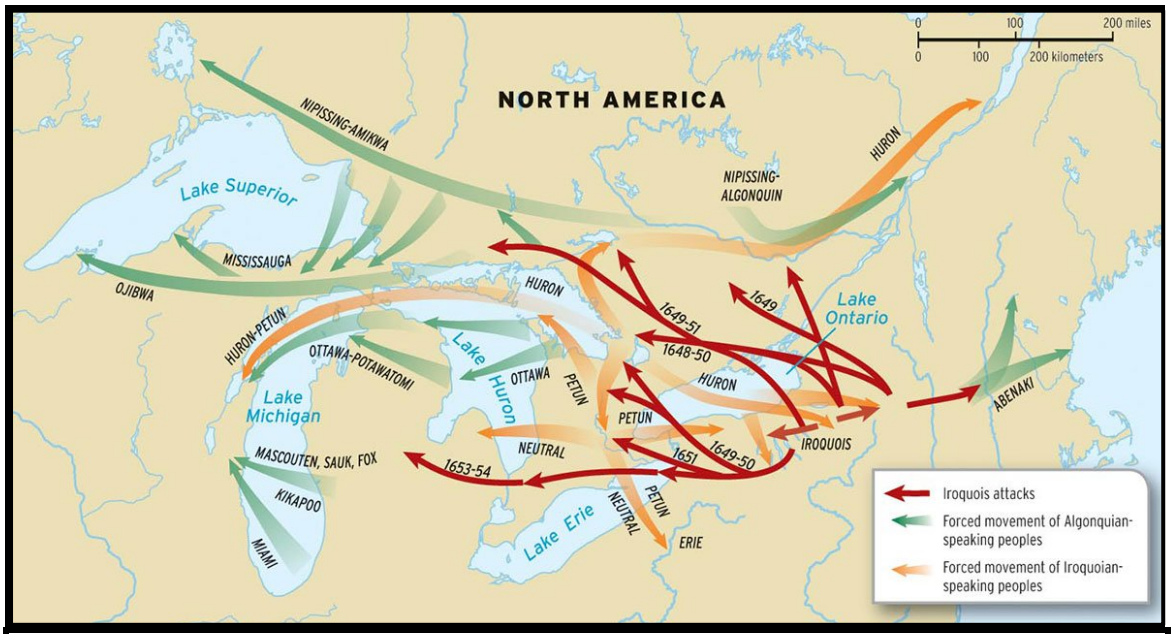


Image 3.2: Great Lakes Shatter Zone and Diasporas: Map illustrates significant military campaigns by English and Dutch allied Haudenosaunee groups (red arrows) into the homelands of (mostly French-allied) Indigenous groups. Iroquoian-speaking groups (orange arrows) and Algonquian-speaking groups (green arrows) do not represent clear divisions or distinctions, but are noted to more clearly show general patterns of attack and displacement. Source: "Beaver Wars: Huron Trade and Iroquois Disruptions, 1640-1648," *The Canadian Atlas Online* < http://www.canadiangeographic.com/atlas/> (accessed 12 February 2020).

In a changing world, where Native antagonists possessed an unprecedented arsenal and held an exclusive trading relationship with a specific European trading partner, destructive cycles of war erupted across the lower Great Lakes region from the early 1640s to the 1690s. In their wake, they left a depopulated "shatter-zone" from the lower Saint Lawrence River Valley to what is now northern Ontario. The Haudenosaunee, who were supported by Dutch and British trading interests, gained a complete victory and enjoyed almost unchallenged access to the homelands of their former foes. Forebears of the Wyandot Nation (who were Iroquoian-speakers allied with the French) and their Giishkaakhang (aka Kiskakon) Odawa allies were forced to flee their homelands between Georgian Bay (a northeasterly extension of Lake Huron) and the St. Lawrence River for the western shores of Lake Superior and Lake Michigan, where they found support among resident groups that were part of the Nswe'mishkote'win (Council of Three Fires) –a broad association of Anishinaabeg peoples that included Odawa (Ottawa), Ojibwe, and Bodéwadmi (aka Potawatomi), as

[23] Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 67-69; White, *Grand Portage as a Trading Post*, 5-14. Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 351-364.

well as Algonquian speaking refugees from the lower Great Lakes and areas to the southwest.[24]

Refugees and Traders Beyond the Great Lakes[25]

The Haudenosaunee victory over these groups was so complete that most of the refugees remained far from their depopulated homelands for the rest of the 17th century. The polyglot populations around Lake Superior and the western shores of Lake Michigan reconstituted and blended their communities, built new villages, planted crops, hunted, trapped, and formalized their relations with fellow refugees and old allies from the regions they had abandoned. As Richard White notes, "this clustering of diverse peoples" came with unavoidable challenges, as "older notions of territory [were disrupted] and geographical boundaries between refugees became difficult to maintain. Ethnic [and former territorial] distinctions remained, but now villages of different groups bordered on each other or previously separate groups mingled in a single village." While more scattered settlement patterns might have alleviated these tensions, dispersal had to be weighed against the virtue of strength in numbers when it came to the threat of a long-distance Haudenosaunee attack. Because traders, priests, and minor French officials also lived among the most densely clustered populations areas, they provided a kind of common denominator for disparate groups when it came to settling disputes related to residence, access to resources, and preparations for intergroup defenses. In time, a place and process developed in the western *Pays d'en Haut* (Upper Country, an expression used by French fur traders that encompassed most of the Great Lakes region, and areas further west and northwest). Consisting of several population centers that included Native peoples, missionaries, a small military contingent, and trading houses. The latter were administered by sanctioned traders who also served as de facto emissaries of the Governor of New France.[26]

Along with French traders, priests, royal officials, and the refugees from the lower Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River, the *Pays d'en Haut* also included a substantial population of Anishinaabeg on the western and north shores of Lake Superior. These included the Odawa and Ojibwe who lived around Chequamegon Bay (near the western tip of Lake Superior). Unlike the French or most of their refugee neighbors, they still lived within vast networks of clan and familial relations along a broad arc that extended from Rainey Lake and western Lake Superior to Lake Nipissing and the Ottawa River in what is now southeastern Ontario. This entire swath of territory was a homeland for diverse but related Anishinaabeg communities, where the landscape is scripted with aadizookaanag (sacred stories) that correspond to specific sites and features. Not

[24] White, *Middle Ground*, 34; Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations,* 246-53, 267-313.
[25] The Level II ecoregions to the west of Lake Michigan and southwest of Lake Superior are formally defined as the Mixed Wood Plains and the Central USA Plains.
[26] White, *Middle Ground*, 11-12.

surprisingly, the Odawa, along with their fellow Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe, Bodéwadmi, Mississauga), and Omàmiwininiwak (Algonkin), became the primary conduits of trade between the western *Pays d'en Haut* and Montréal. As a consequence, the mostly Ojibwe, Odawa, and Wyandot village on Chequamegon Bay developed into the "center for all the nations" of the region. As the Jesuit priest Jean Claude Allouez described it, at Chequamegon "More than fifty Villages can be counted, which comprise diverse peoples either nomadic or sedentary," and included seasonal residents from as far away as the Illinois River. Peltry and European goods were part of this diverse trade center, as were a host of items and materials that included maize, dried fish, tools, hides, canoes, garments, copper, pipestones, and more.[27]

Indigenous Trade to the North and West

The regular movements of these Anishinaabeg groups throughout their homeland became central to the development of trade within and beyond the western *Pays d'en Haut*. In 1660, for instance, people from several different Anishinaabeg communities came together at a village beside Odawaa Zaaga'igan [Odawa Lake], which the French had named Lac Courte Oreilles. Situated in what is now northwestern Wisconsin, the lake was readily accessible from the southwestern end of Lake Superior and drained into an excellent water route to the Mississippi River. As they established a sizeable encampment on the lakeshore, the Anishinaabeg sent out messengers to different groups within the *Pays d'en Haut* to develop a trade center that was outside French influence. Because the allied towns of various Odawa, Ojibwe, and Saulteaux (Ojibwe peoples who lived around Sault Ste. Marie, aka *Bawaating*) had made the Anishinaabeg a formidable and effective bulwark against any long-distance attacks from the Haudenosaunee, their push for an independent trade garnered respect and interest from the refugee communities along the western side of Lake Michigan.[28]

Along with communities from within the *Pays d'en Haut*, the Anishinaabeg at Odawaa Zaaga'igan also sent messengers to the Nèhinaw (aka Swampy Cree) in the Hudson Bay Lowlands to the north as well as the bison hunting Dakhóta (aka Dakota Sioux) on the prairies between the Upper Great Lakes and the Upper Mississippi River. While the venture at Odawaa Zaaga'igan showed promise, and established important trade connections to the west and north, the French perceived it as a threat. To assert more authority over the management of the fur trade, the French built trading posts on the upper lakes and organized *voyageur* brigades (boatmen contracted to transport cargo by large canoes) mostly composed of *Canadiens* (i.e. French people born in North America).

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[27] Trigger and Gordon M. Day, "Southern Algonquian Middlemen: Algonquin, Nipissing, and Ottawa, 1550-1780," in *Aboriginal Ontario: Historical Perspectives on the First Nations*, eds. Edward S. Rogers and Donald B. Smith (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), 74-75; D. W. Moodie, "Agriculture and the Fur Trade," in Sleeper-Smith, *Rethinking the Fur Trade*, 98-101; White, *Middle Ground*, 40-49; and Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 57-58, 65-68 (Allouez quote from p. 66).
[28] Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 29-37, 99-108.

Besides undermining the nascent Indigenous trade on the prairies, these new French policies usurped much of the trade that was gathered by Anishinaabeg "middlemen," and subsequently transported by canoe from western Lake Superior and Michilimackinac to Montréal. Aside from a desire to control more of the Great Lakes fur trade and its proceeds, this policy shift also reflected concerns about the recent establishment of three English trading posts at the southern end of James Bay between 1668 and 1679, and the possibility that Native traders could route the Upper Great Lakes trade to the north. These concerns ultimately created a template for future trading regimes in North America, and the French foray on the plains would become a standard practice for the Hudson's Bay Company in the 18th century and the American Fur Company in the 19th century. [29]

Undermining the "middlemen" of the Upper Great Lakes trade, and employing *voyageur* brigades in their stead, essentially guaranteed that the Anishinaabeg and their allies would seek out these new trade opportunities to the north. This proved especially true of the Ojibwe around northern Lake Superior, who had cultural, linguistic, and kinship ties with the Nèhinaw (Swampy Cree) whose homelands include the western shores of Hudson Bay and James Bay. By the 1680s, with the establishment of two more English posts on Hudson Bay, the boreal forests and marshy lowlands between Lake Superior and Hudson Bay became what the historian Michael Witgen describes as a kind of "Native New World and not part of any Atlantic empire." Like the "middle ground" of the *Pays d'en Haut*, "the social world" of the region was "the result of relationships between the members of an extended family. Unlike the middle ground, however, the inhabitants of this social world were not seeking a beneficially dependent relationship with powerful outsiders. In other words, this was not a world of European fathers and Indian children." Rather, it "was a world created by formal rituals … and by the ritualized meaning attached to the everyday exchanges that made the inland trade work." In time this "social world" would grow to become the Nehiyaw-Pwat (Iron Confederacy), an alliance of Nakoda (Assiniboine and Stoney), various Nehiyaw (Cree) communities, Aaniiih (Atsina, aka Gros Ventre), Ojibwe, and Métis (a person of European, or European American and Indigenous descent) that would become central players in the Northern Plains fur trade from the early 18th century until the mid-19th century.[30]

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[29] Ibid., 99-108; Ann M. Carlos and Frank D. Lewis, *Commerce by a Frozen Sea: Native Americans and the European Fur Trade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 33-41.

[30] Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 135-139; quotations from pp. 137-138. Also see Victor P. Lytwyn, *Muskekowuck Athinuwick: Original People of the Great Swampy Land* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002), 37-45; John S. Milloy, *The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy, and War, 1790 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1990), 5-26, 92-96**;** James G. E. Smith, "The Western Woods Cree: Anthropological Myth and Historical Reality," *American Ethnologist*, 14 (August 1987), 434-448; and Neal McLeod, "Plains Cree Identity: Borderlands, Ambiguous Genealogies and Narrative Irony," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 20 (February 2000), 449-452.



Image 3.3: *Pays d'en Haut*, ca. 1696. Map shows Native villages, French missions and trading houses between western Lake Michigan and the Upper Mississippi River. Source: Vincento Coronelli, *La Lovisiana, Parte Settentrionalle, Scoperta sotto la Protettione di Luigi XIV, Ré di Francia* [detail]. Source: Library of Congress.

The Great Peace, Slavery, and the turn to the eastern Great Plains

During the period when the western trade with the Dakhóta and the northern trade among the Nehiyaw (Cree) began to develop with Anishinaabeg communities around the Upper Great Lakes, the French decided to move their administrative and commercial operations in the *Pays d'en Haut* to Detroit. These plans coincided with a series of overtures from the Haudenosaunee to seek a broad agreement to end their wars with the French-Native alliance. The result was the Great Peace of Montreal (1701), which involved more than 1,300 people representing 40 distinct nations from as far away as the Acadian Peninsula, James Bay, the upper Mississippi River, and the lower Ohio River. Most, however, had come from the communities of the western *Pays d'en Haut*. After weeks of negotiation, ceremony, feasting, speeches, and proclamations, an agreement was reached on five broad conditions. All participants agreed not to war against each other, while the Haudenosaunee agreed to free all of their captives, remain neutral in any

future conflicts between France and England, and end their opposition to the founding of Detroit. All of the Native nations also agreed to have the Governor of New France or his representatives mediate any disputes or conflicts that arose between them. While little came of the last element of the Great Peace, many of the refugee communities in the western *Pays d'en Haut* returned to their former homelands on the Lower Peninsula of Michigan and the Ohio Valley between the Appalachians and the Wabash River (which drains most of present-day Indiana). A large number also chose to move to the Detroit area, where they strengthened their alliances with the French and occupied a central position in the new trade center.[31]

The move to Detroit provided a key entrepôt for the Great Lakes fur trade, and brought French officials and trading houses closer to the Indigenous nations living in the lower Ohio River Valley. This in turn resulted in a series of indirect ties to the lower Missouri River Basin via groups of Bodéwadmi (Potawatomi), Myaamia (Miami), and Illiniwek (Illinois Confederation) peoples in what is now southern Michigan, Northern Indiana, and most of Illinois. Prior to and during their time in the western *Pays d'en Haut*, these Algonquian-speaking groups had long engaged with and competed against the Báxoǰe (Ioway), Jiwére (Otoe), Niúachi (Missouria), Páⁿka (Ponca), and Umoⁿhoⁿ (Omaha) and Chatiks si chatiks (Pawnee) that lived in the prairies-plains region between the Middle Mississippi River to just east of Lower Missouri River. While this chain of relations brought European-made wares to the prairie-plains region, and new sources of furs and bison robes to Detroit, it also resulted in a lopsided relationship between the French-allied peoples from east of the Mississippi River and those further west. Because the former had more direct connections to European wares and weapons, they were able to mix threats with negotiations to gain more from their exchanges with the western groups, and thus a dynamic was established that made the rituals of alliance building and mutual agreement into an exercise of unequal power relations. When the better armed Algonquian peoples from the east and the leaders of the prairie-plains groups failed to reach agreement, the former used threats and violence that sometimes involved the taking of captives. While the latter action could be construed as an assertion of power, these captives were increasingly taken to the French in Detroit where they were presented as gifts to the French.[32]

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[31] Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 267-313; Gilles Havard, *The Great Peace,* 111-141.

[32] Taking captives to become slaves within the French colonial system initially began with a series of conflicts known as the "Fox Wars," which followed a failed attempt by the Meskwaki (aka Fox) to mediate trade between the French and Dakȟóta. Several Native groups in the Detroit area who maintained long-standing animosities toward the Meskwaki that predated the so-called Beaver Wars, prosecuted a total war against the Meskwaki. Along with the many killed and injured Meskwaki, as well as their Mascouten and Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo) allies, a large number of these defeated peoples were enslaved and taken to Detroit as gifts to the French or chattel for trade. See Richard Weyhing, "'Gascon Exaggerations': The Rise of Antoine Laumet dit de Lamothe, Sieur de Cadillac, the Foundation of Colonial Detroit, and the Origins of the Fox Wars," in *The Upper Country: French Enterprise in the Colonial Great Lakes*, ed. Claiborne A. Skinner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 77-112.

Taking captives to be "given" to an ally had broad precedent in Native cultures, but the captives that were brought to Detroit became chattel: to be bought and sold by the French, and made to work as freighters, field hands, domestics, and laborers. Incorporating humans into exchange networks was more a consequence of recent history than an echo of pre-Contact era mourning wars. Moreover, as the nature of Indigenous rituals of exchange were modified by European values and the precepts of mercantilism, so too were the mechanics and mortality of conflict. According to the Creek/Cherokee scholar Tom Holm, "prior to the advent of Europeans, … warfare … functioned largely to … divert youthful aggression outward, to take captives and to enhance a tribe's material wealth," and serve as collective a ritual that "reinforced tribal identity." Firearms and metal weapons did not end these cultural purposes, but they altered the calculus and redefined the spoils of war. This is particularly true in regard to the taking of captives. At the most basic level a captive enlarged the population and available labor of the victor's community while diminishing that of the enemy. Taking a captive could also atone for a death, from war or some other cause, and thus the captive became something of a functional replacement. Yet in the transformative context of European trade, captives also became highly valued commodities that could be exchanged for firearms and other highly prized items that European traders generally reserved for high value items and their preferred trading partners.[33]

By the first decades of the 18th century, Indigenous slaves were common among the French in Montréal and Detroit—who generally referred to these people as "*Panis*" because some of the first slaves brought to these population centers had been taken from Chaticks si Chaticks (Pawnee) communities that lived near the Middle Missouri River. For the most part, these raids were conducted by Native nations from the Detroit area or the lower Ohio Valley. However, slaving was also conducted by Odawa and other Anishinaabeg groups from Michilimackinac and western Lake Superior. Given their location, and long animosities toward the Dakȟóta, they targeted this nation for three purposes: to weaken and humiliate an inveterate enemy, trigger cycles of mourning among those who were able to flee the raiding parties, or transfer to a French official who would bring captives to the Haudenosaunee to assuage the mourning wars in accordance with the terms of the Great Peace of Montréal.[34]

The Dakȟóta, for their part, also took captives which they usually gave to French officials in an effort to further secure an existing trade alliance, or to traders for coveted items and promises of ongoing trade. At times, and if circumstances warranted, slaves

[33] Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New* France (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture, and the University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 136-137, 165-173. Quotation from Holm, "The Militarization of Native America: Historical Process and Cultural Perception, *Social Science Journal*, 34 (December 1997): 465.

[34] This and the following paragraph are closely informed by Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014),

were incorporated into Dakȟóta communities in accordance with the precepts of a traditional small-scale Mourning War. In the last case, that meant taking the place of someone who had died, or becoming the equivalent of convict labor. Whatever the ultimate fate of the captive, they were invariably beaten and marked upon their arrival into a Dakȟóta community, then undressed and forced to sing as part of a ritual that negated their cultural and personal identity, then prepared for death or forced incorporation into the captor's (or "owners") community. Though a troubling and distasteful subject, it is important to see these developments in the radical new contexts of their occurrence. Namely, a world of competing imperial powers, expanding transregional trade connected to the valuations of international exchange, and the proxy wars of imperial powers that were prone to expanding their conflicts into the Indigenous worlds of North America.[35] The general contours of the traditional Mourning War that had exploded into an unstoppable war in the early 17th century were now saddled with the commodification of human relationships that accompanied the fur trade: so much so that people could become chattel, and traded accordingly.

Remaking and Breaking the Fur Trade: Native Parameters and Mercantile Precepts

In so far as the Great Peace of Montréal was an instrument of peace, it also provided a new basis for the restructuring and expansion of New France. In I701, Louis XIV gave orders to convert the administrative district of Louisiana into a separate colony in North America, with an eye toward blocking British plans to create a settlement and small port at the mouth of the Mississippi. The establishment of Fort Pontchartrain du Détroit and the setting aside of adjacent lands for Native and French *Canadien* towns that same year, was partly intended to prevent British traders from accessing the Upper Great Lakes and the broader *Pays d'en Haut*. These commercial and geopolitical concerns made sense from the perspective of Versailles, but they were opposed by merchants and royal officials at Quebec. The latter were more concerned about the effects these changes would have on the fur trade and the lasting efficacy of the Peace of Montréal. The most vociferous critics feared that the establishment of Detroit would bring Native nations from the *Pays d'en Haut* into closer proximity with the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), which might lead to renewed conflict and cause the Peace to unravel. Even if this scenario did not come to pass, merchants also worried that proximity could also lead to a détente in which the Haudenosaunee allowed the peoples of the *Pays d'en Haut* to access the British traders in Albany. Though not a likely scenario, it became more worrisome after the establishment of the Colony of Louisiana was announced. If Native groups to the east of Detroit gained access to trade at Albany, and the westernmost trade of the *Pays d'en Haut*

[35] Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," *The Journal of American History*, 90 (December 2003): 840-48; Elliott West, *The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 47-51; Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 168-184.

was routed to the mouth of the Mississippi River, the eastern trading houses could be ruined.[36]

Such fears, even if they did not come to pass, served as tacit acknowledgement that the fur trade was now fully subordinated to the geopolitical concerns of the Crown. One of the first confirmations of this new order was reflected in a new policy that levied trading companies for a large share of the costs of maintaining French garrisons in the *Pays d'en Haut*, which were primarily charged with keeping English traders from the region. French imperial policy further required that the Native nations of the *Pays d'en Haut* and Acadia (present-day eastern Quebec, the Maritimes, and Maine) be treated as twin components of a singular commercial alliance with the French Empire, and must be actively prevented from engaging with English colonists to the south. Concerns about competition from the British trade also led to some administrative reforms in the 1720s. Among these was a cancellation of the policy of auctioning off rights to establish trading houses in the *Pays d'en Haut*, and instead placing them under the charge of military officers who were regarded as less likely to allow profit motives to affect their relations with Native trading partners, and more likely to toe the line for fear that a senior officer in Quebec might find cause to order a dismissal from a lucrative position.[37]

To the north, where France had relinquished its claims to Hudson Bay in the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, British claims were muddied by a dispute over the extent of land the treaty covered. Asserting title to the entire drainage basin of the Bay, which encompasses nearly a quarter of the entire continent, the British also insisted that the treaty had required the French restore these lands to Great Britain as opposed to merely ceding them. Because France never made a claim on all the river systems that drained into the Bay, the French only agreed to a cession of areas formerly occupied by the British. As a consequence of Great Britain's diplomatic overreach, the British had to limit their trade to areas on or near Hudson Bay while French traders established posts on the rivers that ran down to the bay and thereby controlled the flow of trade to the English. In doing so they acquired the choicest furs from their Native trading partners, which also ensured that the HBC traders only received poorer quality furs and pelts. Native peoples also pursued their own interests, which largely involved playing British and French traders against each other.[38]

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[36] Marcel Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana*, trans. Joseph C. Lambert and Giraud (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), I:39-43; Yves F. Zoltvany, *Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil.: Governor of New France, 1703-1725* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, I974), 39-41. Coureurs de bois from the western Great Lakes did carry furs to the Gulf of Mexico as early as 1702; see Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, *Iberville's Gulf Journals*, trans. Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 165, I78.

[37] See. W. J. Eccles, "The Fur Trade and Eighteenth-Century Imperialism," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 40 (July 1983), 345

[38] E. E. Rich, The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, I670-I870, I: 1670-I763 (London, I958), 423-425, 482-486, 554-556; Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart,

The centrality of the fur trade in France's imperial ambitions received its fullest affirmation in the early 18th century with the promulgation of Louis XIV's "containment policy" in North America, which required that fur trade posts had to be established and maintained among every Native nation that might seek to trade with British-licensed traders to the south or around Hudson Bay. So long as the French maintained a *bon marché* (i.e., good price, or fair trade), and did not make claims on Native lands, the system proved satisfactory to all parties. However, the "containment policy" did not extend to areas south of the Great Lakes. The reasons were primarily commercial, since traders regarded the furs that were taken in the Upper Ohio River Valley to be of poor quality, the river systems less amenable to transportation than those to the north, and relationships with Native peoples insufficiently developed.[39]

With the trading companies in Montreal taking a pass on trade to the south, and Versailles more concerned about British military actions in Europe during the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748), British-American traders from the colonies of Pennsylvania and Virginia moved into the Upper Ohio to establish trade with Shawnee, Lunaapeew (Lenape, or Delaware), and other communities. More an investment in land acquisition than the fur trade, these traders brought expensive gifts of gold, silver, and scarlet braids for Native leaders and a trove of cheap trade goods and liquor. While French-*Canadien* traders took offense at the news of these developments, they had no desire to compete for the trade. However, the Governor General of New France took alarm, as did the Minister of Marine, and dispatched troops to drive out the British-American traders as well as build and occupy a string of small forts running south from Lake Erie. The result was a kind of short-lived imperial détente on Native lands that soon became a fault line in the history of the fur trade and its relation to North American geopolitics, Native commerce and conflict, and the subsequent movement of trade to the Northern Plains.[40]

The Fur Trade and the First World War[41]

The so-called Beaver Wars that reshaped eastern North America through the near entirety of the 17th century had ultimately ended in what might be described as vague approximation of *status ante bellum* (conditions before the war). Yet much had changed in the decades after the Great Peace of Montréal. The fur trade had expanded into the

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2016), 118; and Arthur J. Ray, "Indians as Consumers in the Eighteenth Century," in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray (University of Toronto Press, 1980), 255-271

[39] Eccles, "The Fur Trade and Eighteenth-Century Imperialism," 358-359.

[40] See Charles Thomson, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Alienation of the Delaware and Shawanese Indians from the British Interest, 1759* [reprint] (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale ECCO, 2011), 101, 108-109; and Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies & Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), 8-20.

[41] In this context, the phrase "First World War" is widely attributed to Winston Churchill and his understanding of the Seven Years' War, aka "French and Indian War."

prairie country that lay to the west of Lake Superior and Lake Michigan, as well as areas to the north. Competition was extensive and expanded further on to the plains and north of the Great Lakes. Both empires were also competing for territory and trading partners in the Upper Ohio River Valley, where they expected to engage in a new round of conflicts that would coincide with ongoing conflicts in Europe. What no one recognized at the time, however, was that a war in North America would reshape the economic, military, and political power of Europe's most powerful kingdoms and profoundly transform the continent of North America. In what the historian David Skaggs has termed the "Sixty Years War for the Great Lakes," and lasted from 1754 to 1815, the "war" involved a series of conflicts known in the United States as the French and Indian War (1754-1763), Pontiac's War (1763-1765), Lord Dunmore's War (1774), the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), the Northwest Indian War (1785-1794), and the War of 1812 (1812-1815). As the various dates indicate, the region was not wracked by six decades of continuous warfare, but repeated conflict touched every community and marked each generation on all sides. Moreover, the treaties that ended each period of conflict tended to encapsulate—and thus perpetuate—the conditions that led to violence. This was especially true when treaties broached the issue of Native land cessions, and intervening years of "peace"—such as they were—invariably came with expectations of more conflict between Europeans, European Americans, and Native nations.[42]

In the Autumn of 1753, as the French and British empires prepared for war on the eastern edge of the Ohio Valley, Lt. George Washington was dispatched by Lieutenant Governor of Virginia Robert Dinwiddie to assess conditions in what is now western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio. Washington's mission fell along three related but distinct lines: evaluating the strength of French military forces and installations between Lake Erie and the Forks of the Ohio (present-day Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), confirming the laudatory reports on the area that were recently submitted to the Ohio Company of Virginia (a land speculating company in which the Dinwiddie and Washington families held shares), and gauging the disposition of resident American Indian communities toward the British and the French. With all of these matters in mind, Washington held an eagerly anticipated meeting in late November at the village of Chiningue (aka Logstown) on the upper Ohio River that was home to a mixed population of Ökwe'öwé (Seneca-Cayuga; aka, "Mingo"), Lunaapeew (Lenape, or Delaware), and Shawnee families.[43]

Washington's counterpart at this meeting was a man named Tanacharison, who was both a leader among the Ökwe'öwé as well as a "Half-King"—a sort of viceroy of

[42] David Skaggs, "The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814: An Overview," in *Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814*, ed. Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010), 1-20. The terms used here reflect commonly used designations in the United States, which can differ from American Indian, First Nations, Canadian, French, and British conceptions of these conflicts.

[43] For an overview of this meeting and its context, see McConnell, *A Country Between*, 89-112.

the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy)—who had concluded a treaty the previous year with the Colony of Virginia and the Ohio Company. While he resented the construction of new French forts near the southeastern shore of Lake Erie, and generally preferred to work with the British and Virginians, Tanacharison made it clear that he evaluated all parties by the same terms. Repeating a speech that he recently made to the French commander at Fort Le Boeuf (near the southeastern end of Lake Erie), Tanacharison told Washington that

> We live in a Country between, therefore the Land does not belong either to [the French] or the [British]; but the GREAT BEING above allow'd it to be a Place of residence for us; so … I desire you to withdraw, … for I will keep you at Arm's length. I lay this down as a Tryal for both, to see which will have the greatest regard to it.[44]

This encounter between Tanacharison and Washington, which occurred in the months before the formal outbreak of the French and Indian War (aka, Seven Years' War), touches on the array of interests that had taken shape in the *Pays d'en Haut* over the previous generation and would largely define the wars that embroiled eastern North America for the next four decades. As Tanacharison made clear, the overriding concern of Native communities was to continue as independent people on the lands "the GREAT BEING above allow'd" for them. Consequently, their decisions about engaging, avoiding, or repulsing a particular imperial power would be based on which option best accorded with that basic concern. At times this simply meant providing aid to the imperial power that was most likely to weaken the other—with the hope that both would be severely undermined and ultimately withdraw from the "Country between," but such hopes were fleeting around the Forks of the Ohio as British and French forces repeatedly contested the area and threatened or attacked Native towns that refused to take sides in the coming war.[45]

Living in a "country between" involved more than gauging or avoiding the concerns of imperial rivals. A Lunaapeew leader named Shingas, who guided Washington to Fort Le Boeuf after the council at Chiningue, cautiously engaged with French and British officials in 1753 and 1754, but did not trust their words. Shortly after a Pennsylvania militia's devastating attack on the town of Kithanink (Kittaning, Ohio), however, he abandoned any pretext of neutrality and became fully committed to war. He made his reasons known during a meeting with an emissary from the Governor of Pennsylvania in 1756. In a statement that was more a wish than a question, Shingas wondered aloud: "It is plain that you white people are the cause of this war; why do not you and the French fight in the old country, and on the sea? Why do you come to fight on

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[44] McConnell, *A Country Between*: 73-76; White, *Middle Ground*, 239-40; Alan Axelrod, *A Savage Empire: Trappers, Traders, Tribes, and the Wars That Made America* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2011), 126-45. Quotation from Axelrod, *Savage Empire*, 119.
[45] McConnell, *A Country Between*: 76-80.

our land?" Without waiting for a reply, he answered himself: "You [both] want to take the land from us by force, and settle it." The question of imperial or colonial alliances was meaningless in a war with such a goal, and Shingas determined instead to fight whomever posed the most imminent threat to the Lunaapeew and their lands—which in the case of Kithanink meant the backwoods communities that had been pressing west of the Alleghenies.[46]

Imperial Wars and the Exigencies of Alliance and Conflict

While Shingas' interrogation and answer clearly echoes Tanacharison's statement, it is important to see the different sides of the coming war in terms that are more complex than basic identifiers of race and nationality: of "white people," of "French and Indian," of British, Haudenosaunee, etc. When Tanacharison spoke with Washington, he did so as a representative of the Haudenosaunee as well as a leader within the mixed community of Ökwe'öwé, Lunaapeew, and Shawnee. As a "half-king," he was directly answerable to the Grand Council of the Haudenosaunee that met at Onöñda'gega' (Onondaga). For all these reasons, Tanacharison was the person George Washington most wanted to meet during his reconnaissance. With the coming war in mind, Washington wanted to build on Virginia's relationship with Tanacharison to formalize an alliance that would counter recent French efforts to control the Forks of the Ohio River. Just as importantly, he wanted to ensure that the Ohio Company's land claims (which encompassed most of what is now the state of West Virginia) would survive the war—regardless of the outcome. In all of these matters Washington was something of a "half-king" himself, with dual loyalties to the British Colony of Virginia as well as the Ohio Company.[47]

The meeting of Washington and Tanacharison embodied four broad but distinct interests: those of Great Britain, the Ohio Company, the Haudenosaunee, and the mixed community of Ökwe'öwé, Lunaapeew, and Shawnee that resided at Chiningue. For the Crown and Parliament, Washington's trek to Logstown was a small episode in a longstanding imperial contest with France in the global system of mercantile trade. From the perspective of the Ohio Company, Washington's endeavor was viewed as critical to advancing the interests of Virginia's colonial elites in a grand scheme of land acquisition and speculation. Tanacharison, on the other hand, represented the interests of the Haudenosaunee (as claimants of the Ohio Valley and as a significant Indigenous

[46] Ibid., 108-110; Matthew C. Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years' War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754-1765* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 22-35; quotation from Hale C. Sipe, *The Indian Wars of Pennsylvania: An Account of the Indian Events, in Pennsylvania, of the French and Indian War, Pontiac's War, Lord Dunmore's War, the Revolutionary War, and the Indian Uprising from 1789 to 1795* (Harrisburg: The Telegraph Press, 1929), 363.

[47] McConnell, "Peoples 'In Between': The Iroquois and the Ohio Indians, 1720-1768," in *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600–1800*, eds. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 81-107.

counterweight to French and British imperial designs), and the polyglot communities of the Upper Ohio Valley and their wariness of the Haudenosaunee.[48]

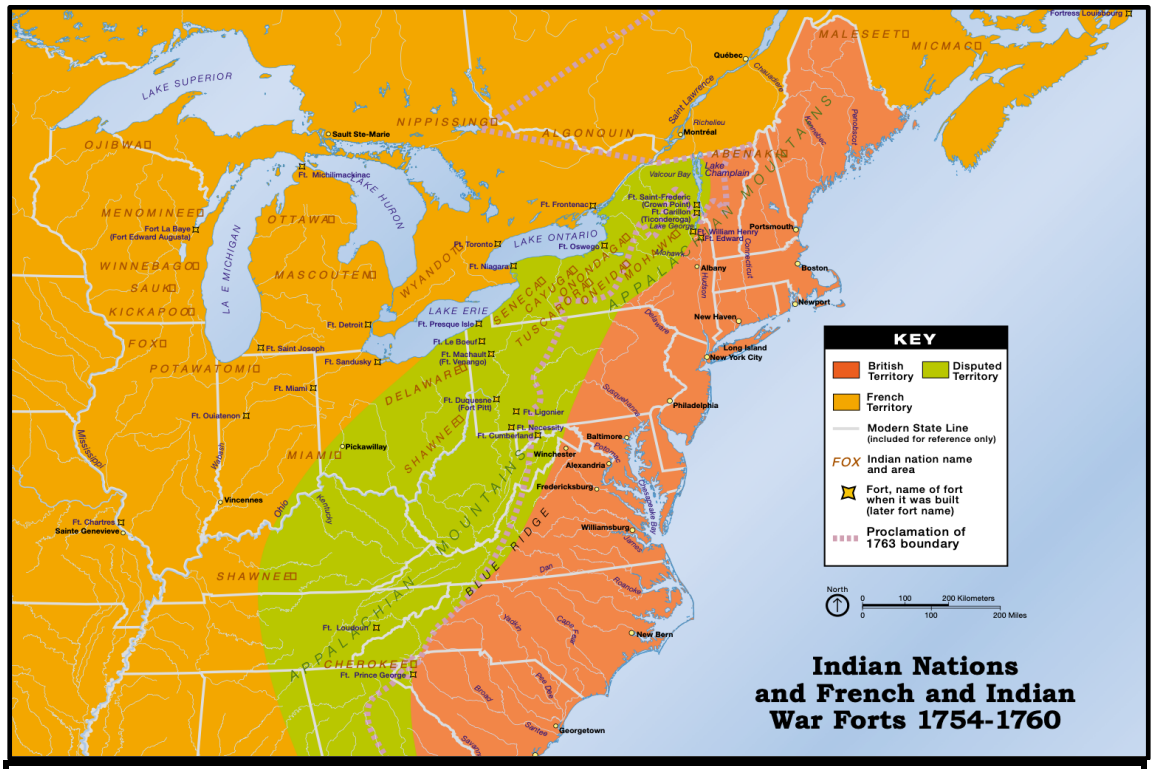


Image 3.4: Seven Years' War in North America. Along with the general locations of Indigenous groups, the map also shows forts, and populated areas. The site of Logstown is near the center of the image. Source: National Park Service.

Though unmentioned in the meeting between Tanacharison and Washington, there were other key interests that did not usually fit within the broader strategic interests of empires or the goals of Native confederacies. These included the livelihoods and concerns of *coureurs de bois* (i.e., independent entrepreneurial French-Canadian traders), who were often at odds with French officials in Montréal. Since many were married within Native communities, and cultivated extensive ties through Indigenous networks of exchange, their allegiances primarily lay with their Native kin and the broad alliance of Anishinaabeg peoples across the Great Lakes. In other words, their ties to the fur trade of New France could not be divorced from their livelihoods or the future prospects of their neighbors and kin. Another concern that more directly impinged on the meeting at Chiningue involved the mostly Anglo-American families and individuals that were pushing across the Alleghenies from the British colonies. Increasingly referred to as "Long Knives" (a general term applied by various Native groups to western Pennsylvanians, Virginians and, later, Kentuckians), these new people were a kind of British antithesis to the *coureurs de bois*. They resented royal authority, Virginia elites,

[48] Ibid.

and land speculators, but their greatest fears and aspersions were reserved for Native peoples and "half-breeds"—who were almost universally regarded as lazy and violent, with no higher goal than to war against poor people in need of property.[49]

In many respects, the most critical dimension of the coming war involved the choices that various Native communities would make in the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes region. Those who lived closer to the Middle Mississippi River and around the northern Great Lakes, had long ties with the French through trade and alliances that dated back to the mid 17th century. This association did not translate into a faithful alliance with French Imperial interests, but it was manifested in a preference to work with French traders in the Illinois River Valley, around Detroit, and Montréal. For the most part, however, these descendants of communities from the *Pays d'en Haut* maintained a certain ambivalence about the French and a general desire to steer clear of the coming war. At some level, most every American Indian community in the Ohio Valley and the Lower Great Lakes region distrusted the British and the French, and regretted that their diplomatic and trade relations with the French were about to give way to a future marred by frequent violent encounters with the Long Knives. The ultimate concern of these Ohio Valley Native communities was to ensure the future viability of their lands, communities, and longstanding alliances –either through a defeat of the British and the Long Knives or a functional peace. Neither would come, and many exercised a third option to move to the Illinois country or west of Lake Michigan, while the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Isáŋyathi Dakȟóta (aka Santee Dakota) who chose to ally with the French simply returned to the Upper Great Lakes.[50]

War and the Westering Trade

The geopolitical sorting that accompanied each period of conflict within the Sixty Years' War had an outsized effect on Native peoples. For instance, the Seven Years' War badly undermined the long-standing strategy of the Haudenosaunee to play-off French and British interests in northeastern North America. The same was true for the Tsalagi (Cherokee), Chikashsha (Chickasaw), Chahta (Choctaw), and Muscogee (Creek) peoples to the southeast. During the Revolutionary War, in which General Washington ordered the destruction of 40 Haudenosaunee towns in present-day Upstate New York, the

[49] Susan Sleeper-Smith, "Women, Kin, and Catholicism: New Perspectives on the Fur Trade," in *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World*, ed. Sleeper-Smith (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 443-80; White, *Middle Ground*, 264-68; Jeremy Engels, "'Equipped for Murder': The Paxton Boys and 'the Spirit of Killing All Indians' in Pennsylvania, 1763-64," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8, no. 3 (2005): 355-82; Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 95-124.

[50] Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 236-237; Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 30-37; Daniel P. Barr, "'This Land Is Ours and Not Yours': The Western Delawares and the Seven Years' War in the Upper Ohio Valley, 1755-1758," in *The Boundaries between Us: Natives and Newcomers Along the Frontiers of the Old Northwest Territory, 1750-1850*, ed. Barr (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2006), 25-43; Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 39-41, 43-46; White, *Middle Ground*, 215-27; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 24-25

Haudenosaunee were badly weakened and lost much of their influence in the Upper Ohio Valley. A similar dynamic occurred in the wake of the War of 1812 when the Tsalagi, Chikashsha, Chahta, and Muscogee were forced to cede vast tracts of land and move to present-day Oklahoma. All of the wars noted above involved conflict in the Upper Ohio River Valley and the eastern areas of the old *Pays d'en Haut*, but Pontiac's War (1763-1765), the Northwest Indian War (1785-1794) and the first years of the War of 1812 were entirely centered on those regions—and it was there that the federal policy of American Indian Removal began to take shape in the 1820s.[51]



Image 3.5: Great Lakes Trade Routes. Map shows primary routes of the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley Fur Trade from the late 17th to the early 18th centuries. Source: Public domain.

The cycles of war and displacement that punctuated the Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes were accompanied by intervening periods of land cessions and unauthorized usurpment of Native lands by squatters who cleared forest lands to build homesteads and planted crops, overhunted declining game populations, and harassed Native communities. By the late 1790s, many Native groups abandoned their towns and sought to create distance between themselves and the Long Knives by moving to the lower Illinois River Valley or across the Mississippi to the lower reaches of the Missouri River. Among these

[51] Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 131-47; Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 188-210; Colin G. Calloway, *Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783-1815* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 296-312.

refugees were members of various Algonquian-speaking groups in present-day Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.[52] Anishinaabeg peoples then living in present day southern Michigan, northwestern Ohio, and northeastern Indiana moved further north—to Georgian Bay in present-day Ontario, and to both sides of the Straits of Mackinac.[53]



Image 3.6: Central North America at the close of the American Revolution. Map depicts the approximate location of Native nations and significant land features in the Lower and Middle Missouri River valleys, the Upper Mississippi River Valley, the Ohio Valley, ca. 1784. Source: Detail from Thomas Kitchin, *North America drawn from the latest and best authorities* (London: John Harrison, 1787). Source: Library of Congress.

Re-Establishing a Fur Trade in the Great Lakes and the Eastern Plains

Some of the communities in the more polyglot world of the Ohio Valley began their westward migrations in the late 1790s and early 1800s, after suffering the invasion of their lands and agreeing to an unnegotiated land cession treaty just days before their departures. Among these were the Peeyankihšiaki (Piankeshaw), Peouaroua (Peoria), and Waayaahtanwa (Wea), whose numbers had declined precipitously over the previous two generations. Many of the Shawnee who moved west during this period did so to join family and extended kin on the west side of the Mississippi River, and were not party to

[52] Specific groups included Lunaapeew (Delaware), Myaamia (Miami), Bodéwadmi (Potawatomi), Peeyankihšiaki (Piankeshaw), Peouaroua (Peoria), Waayaahtanwa (Wea) and Shawnee
[53] Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations*, 331-338.

future treaties. The same was true for the small numbers of Shawnee, Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo), Myaamia (Miami), Lunaapeew (Delaware), and Bodéwadmi (Potawatomi) who moved to the Illinois River Valley before the outbreak of the War of 1812, and subsequently found intermittent work in the Missouri River fur trade.[54]

The Anishinaabeg who moved back to the north, and the various peoples who migrated to the southwest, resumed their participation in a fur trade that was still largely conducted in various Algonquian languages and French. To the north, the Anishinaabeg engaged with *coureurs des bois* who were associated with the North West Company (NWC), formed in the early 1780s. The company had grown out of the ashes of the American Revolution and the chaos that accompanied unregulated trade and cut-throat competition in the Upper Great Lakes. To address both issues, a joint stock company was established in 1779 by a number of small, Montréal based trading partnerships who established a truce—and a general sharing of profits—in order to revive a profitable Great Lakes trade. While the stock holders generally hailed from Scotland, or were Scotsmen who had left the United States for British Canada during the Revolutionary War, the NWC was largely grafted on to the trade networks of the former *Compagnie d'Occident,* which existed in various iterations from 1717 to the mid-1770s. The new company also emulated the investment strategies and management practices of their French predecessors. The NWC shareholders handled the logistics of financing, transatlantic shipments, the acquisition of trade goods, supplies and provisions, the hiring and remuneration of Montréal-based staff, traders and *voyageurs* (i.e., men who constituted the brigades that transported trade goods, supplies, pelts, furs, and trader in large canoes).[55]

Competition from small traders, and between traders associated with different NWC stock holders, continued to plague the Company through the early 1780s. In response, Company stockholders established firmer commitments to operate in accordance with the broader interests of the NWC—and to more aggressively undermine small, independent competitors. After several years of relative success with this strategy, the NWC attracted the interest of rival firms that agreed to merge with the NWC. The larger and restructured NWC then set out to monopolize the trade around Lake Superior and lands to the west. The "Nor'Westers," as Company owners and associates were called, became the major conduit through which trade goods, supplies, and credit were carried west from the St. Lawrence River Valley, and through which the proceeds of the

[54] John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 21-26; Robert Edward Lee, "Louisiana Purchases: The US-Indian Treaty System in the Missouri River Valley" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2017), 144.
[55] This and the following paragraph are based on Nathaniel Atcheson, *On the Origins and Progress of the North-West Company of Canada, with a history of the fur trade, as connected with that concern* (London: Cox, Son, and Baylis, 1811), 5-13; Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, *The North West Company* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1957), 24-42.

trade were sent back to Montréal and then on to London. Even as it grew, the NWC continued to confront new competitors who occasionally banded together to better take on NWC traders.

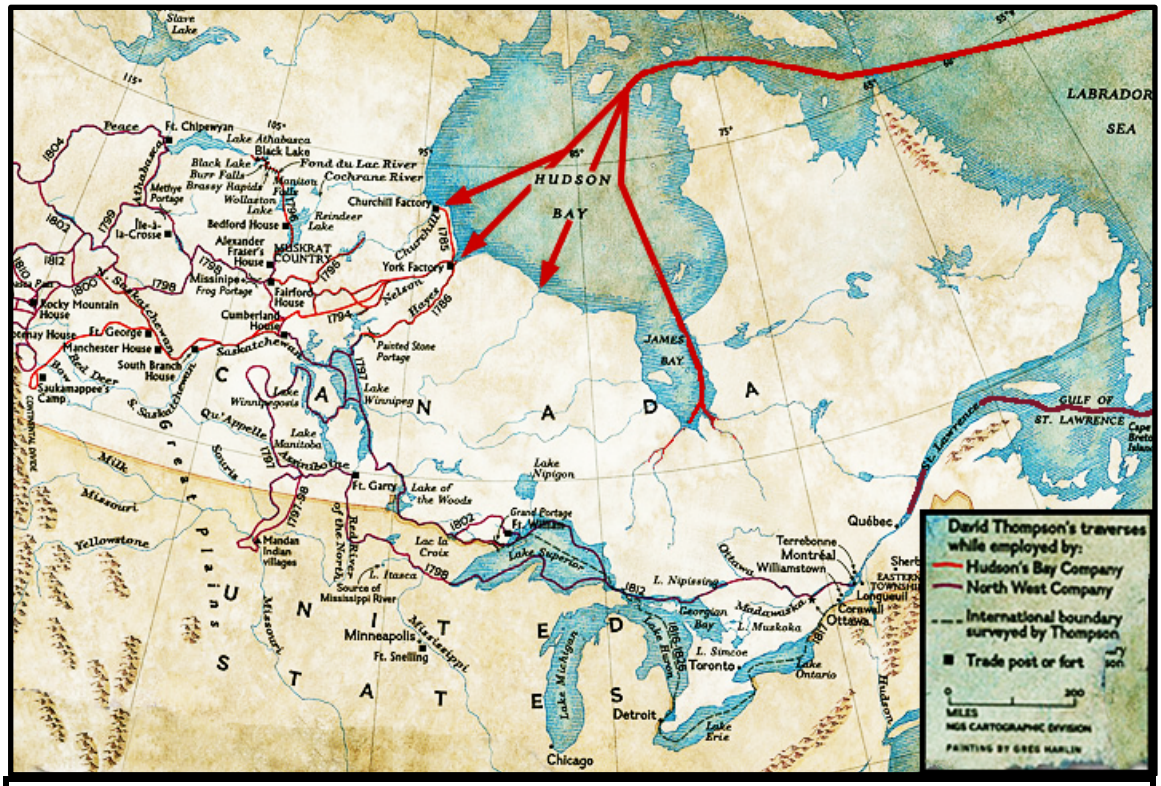


Image 3.7: Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company operations, ca. 1790s. Map depicts the primary shipping routes for the HBC (arrow via Hudson Bay) and the NWC (line into the St. Lawrence River). NWC operations were focused around the Great Lakes and the far Northwestern Plains. Both companies overlap between Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg, along the Assiniboine River, and parts of the Souris and Upper Missouri river basins. Source: *David Thompson's traverses while employed by Hudson's Bay Company [and] North West Company* Source: Archives of Ontario.

One of the Nor'Wester's most significant challenges came in the late 1790s, when several independent firms reorganized as the XY Company. After this new company embarked on a serious push to challenge the NWC around western Lake Superior, the two companies struggled to eliminate the other. By 1802, when the two companies were equally matched in terms of size and value, competition threatened to ruin all parties: including traders, stockholders, and Native peoples. By far the most toxic expression of this near mutual destruction derived from each company's policy of bringing unprecedented amounts of alcohol into the trade. The goal was to attract independent traders and Native suppliers to a particular company's posts, but such efforts tended to undermine rivals and culprits alike, as the traders associated with one of the rival companies sought to bully, entice and abuse all comers in an effort to keep them from

rival posts. The glut of skins and furs that came out of this alcohol-fueled competition also lowered the value of each piece.[56]

[56] Carolyn Podruchny, "Unfair Masters and Rascally Servants? Labour Relations Among Bourgeois, Clerks and Voyageurs in the Montréal Fur Trade, 1780–1821," *Labour/Le Travail*, 43 (1999): 43-70; Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, (1999), 264-267.

Chapter Four

Vectors on the Plains: Horses, Disease, and Trade

The Early Historic period on the Northern Plains was a period of rapid transformation and revolutionary developments. These included the rise of equestrianism and a commensurate acceleration of trade that accompanied the greater mobility of horses, growing markets for the proceeds of the hunt, and the incorporation of European and American materials within ancient networks of exchange. As access to European and American goods increased, trade became an arena for intense competition that often led to conflict between groups that wanted more access to expanding trade networks and those who sought to maintain their favorable positions. The centrality of trade did not necessarily result in dependency, but it coincide with increasingly violent conflict and proved to be a lethal accelerant for the spread of epidemic diseases.

In the early 18th century, Great Plains peoples' earliest encounters with horses generally took two forms: wonder and horror. A poignant example of the former was recounted in the 1930s by Belle Martin, an elderly Heévâhetane (Southern Cheyenne) woman then living on the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Reservation in Oklahoma. Two centuries earlier the Heévâhetane and some of their Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne) kin lived in a village on the Middle Missouri River near present-day Oacoma, South Dakota. Known collectively as Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne), these peoples had recently moved into the area from the prairie country between the Mississippi and Missouri River. In fairly short order, they adopted much of the material culture of other Middle Missouri communities. Like the Sahnish who lived several miles upriver, they built large, round, earthen lodges, planted crops, made sustained hunts onto the plains, and traded with distant groups drawn to both the Sahnish and Tsétsêhéstâhese villages. Sometime in the early 1700s, either at their villages on the Missouri River or perhaps at an encampment on the Cheyenne River near the southern Black Hills, they met with a group of Nu~~mu~~nu~~u~~ (Comanche) who had brought horses up from the Southern Plains[1]

As Alice Lee Marriott recorded Martin's story, the Heévâhetane were initially overwhelmed by the possibility of having horses.

> "We never heard of horses," said one Cheyenne priest. "Perhaps Maheo [the Creator] wouldn't like for us to have them."
>
> "Why don't you ask him?" a Comanche said. "We'll trade with you, if you're too afraid to go [with us to the Southern Plains] and get them."
>
> [The Cheyennes considered these proposals, and their priests] smoked and prayed to Maheo, fasting, for four days. At last Maheo took pity on them, and spoke to them through the oldest priest.

[1] On Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne) locations in the early 18th century, see John H. Moore, *The Cheyenne: The Peoples of America* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1996), 13-18.

> "You may have horses," Maheo said. "You may even go with the Comanche and take them. But remember this: If you have horses everything will be changed for you forever.
>
> "You will have to move around a lot to find pasture for your horses. You will have to give up gardening and live by hunting and gathering, like the Comanche. And you will have to come out of your earth houses and live in tents. I will tell your women how to make them, and how to decorate them.
>
> "And there will be other changes. You will have to have fights with other tribes, who will want your pasture land or the places where you hunt. You will have to have real soldiers, who can protect the people. Think, before you decide."
>
> The priests sat and smoked through another four days. Then the oldest one said, "Maheo, we think we can learn the things you can teach us and our women. We will take the horses, and with your guidance we will learn the new life."
>
> "So be it," said Maheo.[2]

Both in its specifics and its tone, this story reveals a great deal about the revolutionary changes that equestrian nomadism would bring to the Central and Northern Plains. The Nu~~mu~~nu~~u~~, who included bands that had migrated away from the Black Hills region just two generations earlier, had already undergone remarkable changes. In their southwestward migration across the plains, the Nu~~mu~~nu~~u~~ encountered horses among the Muache (Southern Ute) sometime around 1700 in the southern Rocky Mountains. Just a generation earlier, very few Native groups had any direct experience with horses through most of the 17th century. However, this situation rapidly changed in 1680 when Puebloan peoples expelled the Spanish from the Rio Grande Valley and took control of their abandoned livestock and horses. The Muache, who had longstanding ties to the peoples of Taos Pueblo, were among the most nomadic peoples of the Southern Plains. Unlike the more sedentary Taos, however, they could imagine an array of benefits that would come from incorporating horses into their communities. Consequently, they became early pioneers in a new equestrian world.[3]

[2] Excerpt is from "Out of the Earth Lodges," in *Plains Indian Mythology*, ed. Alice Lee Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), 95-96. Also see Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 29-34.
[3] Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire*, 24-28.

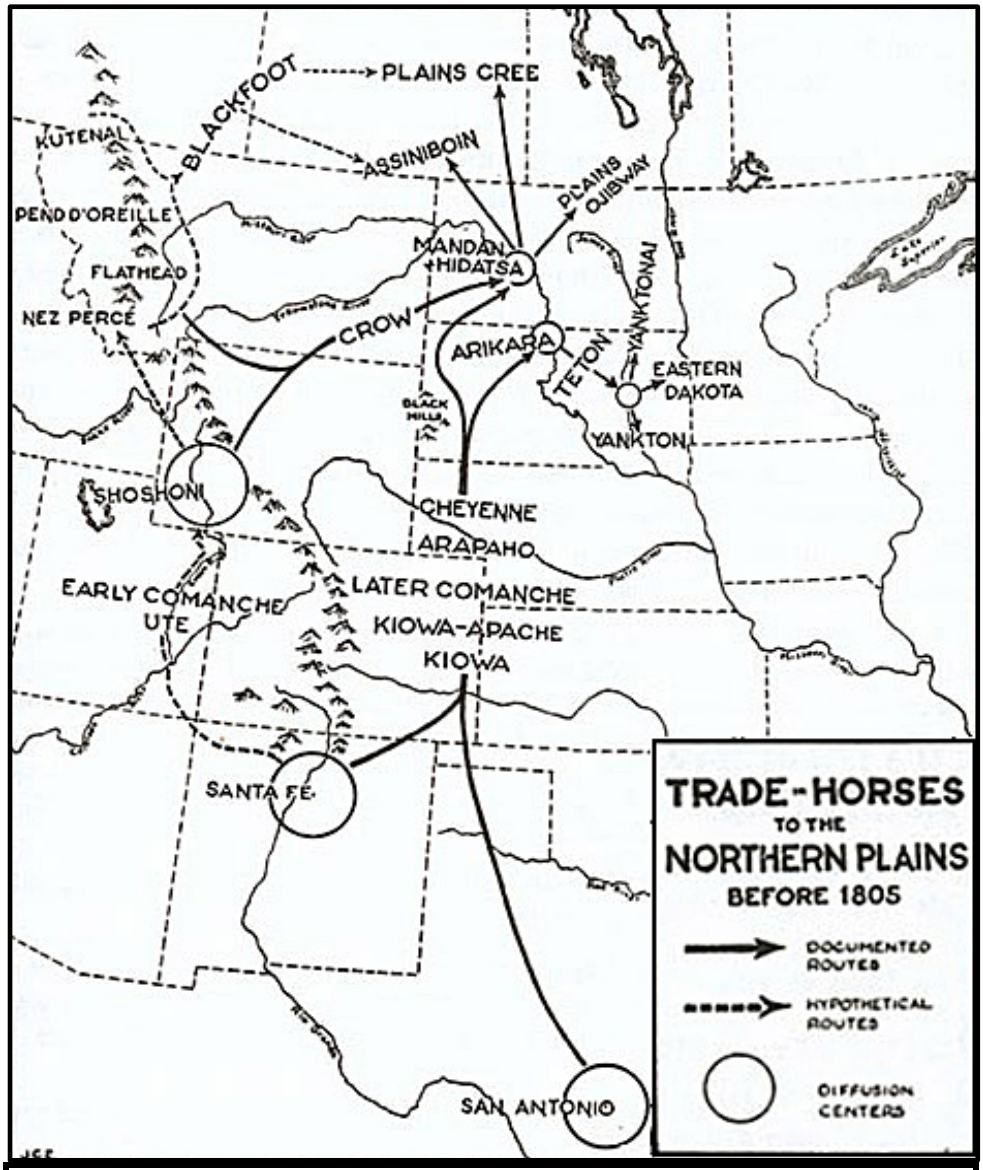


Image 4.1. Source: "Trade in Horses to the Northern Plains Before 1805," in John C. Ewers, *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1955), 11. Map places the Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne) in a locale where they would have lived after becoming equestrian peoples.

The Numunuu who met the Tsétsêhéstâhese presented a stunning model of what could be done on the plains. First, of course, was the ability to live with and manage such a remarkable animal. Prior to the horse, the only beast of burden for plains nomads was the dog, which could carry small packs or haul light loads on slender travois or drag poles. This effectively limited the size of portable shelters, the amount of materials that could be carried (whether from plant gathering, hunting, obtaining lithic materials, or from trading), the distances covered, and the number of days each journey would require. Just seeing a horse was to instantly re-imagine this world on a vast scale. The horse could pull a travois with several hundred pounds on it, pack at least four times as much as a

dog, and carry these larger loads much faster and further. Not surprisingly, the term that many Native peoples used for "horse" was some combination of "dog" and "elk," since the animal could be trained to do the work of a dog, but was as big as an elk.[4]



Figure 4.2: George Catlin, *Band of Sioux Moving Camp*, ca. 1837-1839. Source: Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Other Plains groups also encountered horses in the early 18th century, but not necessarily as people who were about to incorporate the animals into a new way of life. The Chaticks si Chaticks (Pawnee) who lived on the Platte and Loup rivers in what is now eastern Nebraska had their first dramatic encounters with horses in the late-17th and early-18th centuries. Over the course of a generation they were targeted by Kalth Tindé (Plains Apache) and Nʉmʉnʉʉ (Comanche) raiders who had long contested the bison country of the Central Plains with the Chaticks si Chaticks and other Caddoan-speaking peoples horticultural hunters during the pedestrian era. Though some of these encounters occurred during spring and fall hunts on the plains, the most punishing attacks came during long distance raids on Chaticks si Chaticks villages, where residents were forced to flee or defend themselves against equestrian warriors with metal tipped lances and other metal weapons. Chikashsha (Chickasaw) and Chahta (Choctaw) peoples from the southeast who had horses and French guns also raided the Chaticks si Chaticks. While these attacks were not related to contests over access to bison, they were strategic and material in their objectives: which included the theft and destruction of bison robes and

[4] John H. More, *The Cheyennes* (New York: Blackwell, 1996), 41. The Tsétsêhéstâhese have two different words for horse: the Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne) use the term *mo'éhno'ha*, which also means elk, while the Heévâhetane (Southern Cheyenne) say *nêstotse*, a word that is commonly used in reference to dogs but more generally means "pet." While these different terms probably stem from two different initial encounters with horses (an Ȯhméseestse story tells of first receiving horses from Hinono'eino, aka Arapaho), together the words echo a common assessment of the horse.

furs, the taking of captives, and undermining the Chaticks si Chaticks' ability to access the small network of French traders that came up the Missouri River.[5]

These examples certainly represent the horrors that could accompany early experiences with horses, but they also demonstrate the paramount importance of equestrianism for achieving or maintaining parity with powerful adversaries. Such concerns, though important, were small when compared with the larger cultural and material transformations that came with equestrianism. As Roger Echo-Hawk notes, "traditions about the origins of horses" tend to involve stories that suggest the people "had no knowledge of horses" when they first encountered the animals. These stories generally situate early (or first) horse encounters as a matter of bewilderment, a manifestation of a received vision, or the fairly prompt development of a companionate relationship between human and horse. All these themes convey a sense of the animals' profound impact on American Indian communities, but it was rarely immediate. Long before they owned horses, "a growing number of Chaticks si Chaticks (Pawnee) [surely] encountered horses in their travels among [European and some Indigenous] communities." Once acquired, however, horses were "adopted very swiftly into Chaticks si Chaticks lifeways, probably in only a single generation" and became so fully integrated into the culture that they inspired "new ceremonies and spiritual experiences."[6]

Horse Trading

The new possibilities of equestrian nomadism flourished within the context of growing trade relations among different Indigenous groups and with European traders. For the N~~u~~mun~~uu~~ (Comanche) and other equestrian nomads, horses were the primary resource they brought to a vast network of exchanges that spanned the entirety of the Great Plains. The Native peoples of the Northern Plains who acquired these horses were able to conduct larger hunts and more readily transport a surplus of pelts, hides, cured meats and other products of the hunt for trade with semi-sedentary horticultural groups on the Missouri River. This in turn fostered greater interdependence and specialization among all parties. The Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne) and their Sahnish neighbors offer a good example. Instead of the relatively even mix of horticulture and seasonal hunting they had practiced on the Middle Missouri, the Tsétsêhéstâhese emphasized the latter and became increasingly reliant on equestrian nomadism. A good deal of what

[5] George Hyde, *The Pawnee Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 51-56; Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press and Omuhundro Institute, 2012), 193-212. Other Caddoan-speakers on the Central Plains during this period include the Sahnish (Arikara), and Kitikiti'sh (Wichita).

[6] Quotations form Roger Echo-Hawk, "The Arrival of Horses," at *floating worlds* < http://www.roger-echo-hawk.com/resources/TheArrivalOfHorses.html> (accessed 21 September 2019). Also see *A Song for the Horse Nation: Horses in Native American Cultures*, a companion website for an exhibition of the same name at the National Museum of the American Indian, 29 October 2011—7 January 2013 <http://www.nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/horsenation/index.html> (accessed 21 September 2019).

Tsétsêhéstâhese women had once grown in the fertile alluvial soils of the Missouri River floodplain, could now be obtained by trading the products of the hunt that came from the animals men killed and women processed. Conversely, the Sahnish and Chaticks si Chaticks (Pawnee) continued their large community hunts on the plains in late spring and early fall, much as their forebears had done for countless generations, but they also became more focused on producing larger crops and maintaining surplus horse herds near their villages that they could exchange for the products of equestrian peoples' hunts.[7]

Even before the advent of equestrianism, the premiere trade center on the Northern Plains was focused around the Nueta (Mandan) and Hiráaca (Hidatsa) towns on the Missouri River between present-day Bismarck, North Dakota, to the south and the Heart River to the north. The breadth of the trade was further augmented by French traders around western Lake Superior in the mid 17th century and the more recent arrival of British licensed traders on Hudson Bay in 1670. Both locales were situated near the edges of important trade networks that intersected at the Hiráaca and Nueta towns, and thus the European traders also carried their trade through communities that had long-standing relations with the Missouri River villages. The Hiráaca and Nueta followed the same paths toward the Europeans, and tribal elders still recall a visit to Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) traders near the Assiniboine River in present-day Manitoba, where they acquired their first guns as gifts that affirmed the HBC's desire for further trade. For the most part, however, the Hiráaca and Nueta acquired guns as well as axe heads, kettles, awls, and metal pieces for the production of spear tips and arrow points through Nakoda (Assiniboine) and Néhinaw (Cree and Plains Cree) intermediaries who lived nearer Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg in present day Manitoba, Canada.[8]

Other items of European manufacture came through Lakȟóta (Lakota) communities that had access (via the Isáŋyathi Dakȟóta –aka Santee Dakota) to French traders located on the prairies between Lake Superior and the Upper Mississippi River. In return, the Nakoda (Assiniboine), Néhinaw (Cree and Plains Cree) from the north, and Lakȟóta from the east, generally acquired horses and agrarian produce at the Missouri villages, and very likely took advantage of the opportunity to engage with relatives, allies, and even adversaries in an otherwise neutral setting. The same was generally true for most of the people who came from the south and the southwest to trade at the Nueta

[7] Waldo R. Wedel and George C. Frison, "Environment and Subsistence," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 157, 160; John C. Ewers, "The Indian Trade of the Upper Missouri before Lewis and Clark," in *Indian Life on the Upper Missouri*, ed. Ewers (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 15-18; Joseph Jablow, *The Cheyenne in Plains Indian Trade Relations, 1795-1840* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 43-46.
[8] W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen, *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders Among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818, the Narratives of John Macdonnell, David Thompson, François-Antoine Larocque, and Charles McKenzie* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 96-112; Mark D. Mitchell, *Crafting History in the Northern Plains* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press), 46-48.

and Hiraacá villages, which served as a key nodal points in a vast exchange network that stretched to the northernmost plains, westward to the Rocky Mountains, south to the Indigenous and Spanish trade centers around present-day San Antonio and Santa Fé, and east to the Great Lakes and the Upper Mississippi River. Collectively, these peoples came to trade away or acquire exotic materials, prized lithics, horses, agricultural produce, and a host of other useful items and materials.[9]



Image 4.3: Indigenous Trade Routes, ca 18th and early 19th centuries. These routes closely align with the movement of horses across the plains and, tragically, with the pathways of epidemic disease. Source: National Museum of the American Indian.

[9] Colin G. Calloway, *Plains Indian Views of How the West was Lost* (Boston and New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996), 37-41; David L. Silverman, *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2016), 221-248.

With their connections to European traders to the north and east, the Hiráaca (Hidatsa) and Nueta (Mandan) acquired and traded an array of furs, pelts, deer and elk hides, bison robes, and cured meats, along with a mix of exotic items like seashells from the Pacific Coast, obsidian from the Upper Yellowstone River, powerful bows made from sheep horn by Shoshonean Tukudeka (Sheep Eaters) from the Rocky Mountains, as well as Indigenous and European ceramics, metal tools and weapons, horses, and surplus harvests of tobacco, sunflowers, varieties of legumes, corn, squash, pumpkins, and other gourds. When Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de La Vérendrye, a North American-born Frenchman who worked for the HBC, accompanied a Nakoda (Assiniboine) trading group to see to the Nueta towns in 1738, he marveled at the array of foodstuffs the Nueta had to offer in trade, and the variety of materials they received in exchange. La Vérendrye also expressed great admiration for the Nueta and their skills as "sharp traders [who] clean[ed] the Assiniboine out of everything they [had] in the way of guns, powder, ball, knives, axes, and awls."[10]

Thundersticks

The guns that La Vérendrye and the Nakoda brought to the Nueta and Hiráaca trade center were of fairly recent manufacture and had been designed specifically for the Hudson's Bay Company's trade with Native peoples. They were long-barreled, flintlock fowling pieces (i.e., smooth bore, single barrel shotguns) that were of better quality than similar rifles then available in eastern North America. Often referred to as "thundersticks," in accordance with a Narragansett term "*pésckunk*" that was coined in the early 17th century and directly corresponds to the two elements of the compound word. While "thunder" certainly refers to sound that a rifle makes, other Native words for the weapon situate the sound of thunder within broader cultural associations. Among the Anishinaabeg, the report and flash of a rifle was associated with the Horned Underwater Serpent and the Thunderbird, which are "locked in everlasting contention, but together … [form] a binary that [keeps] their opposite, yet complementary, forces in balance." As David Silverman notes, the Thunderbird was of the Sky World, and embodied light, the sun, and life, the Horned Underwater Serpent was from beneath the water and "connoted darkness, the moon, and death, including success in hunting."[11]

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[10] John C. Ewers, "Indian Views on the White Man Prior to 1850: An Interpretation," 22-37 (quotation on p. 23), and "The Influence of the Fur Trade upon the Indians of the Northern Plains," 38-60, both in *Plains Indian History and Culture: Essays on Continuity and Chang*e, ed. Ewers (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Preston Holder, *The Hoe and the Horse on the Plains: A Study of Cultural Development Among North American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), 70-72, 120-122; Wood and Lee Irvin, "Mandan," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains,* 349-350. La Verendrye was based out of Fort La Reine (present day Portage la Prairie), which is about 53 miles due west of Fort Garry (present-day Winnipeg, Manitoba) and approximately 120 miles east by northeast from Fort Union Trading Post.

[11] This and the following paragraph are based on David J. Silverman, *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016),



Images 4.4 and 4.5: Hudson's Bay Company Trade Gun (top) and Serpent or Dragon side plate ornament (bottom). Upper image shows an HBC Trade Gun and a close up of the side plate, trigger mechanism and flintlock. The lower image is a side plate that was recovered by archeologists at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. Sources: Hudson's Bay Company History Foundation; U.S. National Park Service.

The Lakȟóta, Silverman notes, refer to rifles as *mázawakan*, which is "a compound of words for metal (*maza*) and lightning (*wakan*)." "These terms also correspond to the Thunderbird and Horned Underwater Serpent binary, in which the latter protects itself "from Thunderbird's talons and lightning bolts by growing horns made from copper and scales [usually] made of flint …; [which is] the raw material for arrowheads. The flint of the gun's firing mechanism, along with the thunderous charge of gunpowder, certainly corresponds with the Lakȟóta term for a rifle. Recognition of these cosmologies led gun manufacturers to adorn muskets, ammunition pouches, and other accessories with imagery that alluded to the Serpent and the Thunderbird. Gun barrels were also finished with a deep blue sheen that represented "the Horned Underwater Serpent/Panther and death." In short, Thundersticks were powerful weapons –but they

11-12. The Absáalooka (Crow) refer to rifles as *baláxxiiha*—which is also the main cognate of the word *baláxxiihachke* –which means "coup stick." A coup stick was a straight or curved wooden object with idiosyncratic decorations that reflected elements of the owner's personal visions and identity. It was used to count coup on an enemy, which involved approaching a would-be victim and ouch the person with the stick. The action was meant to confirm the stealth and skill of the one counting coup, while humiliating the intended victim by demonstrating the ability to kill without being noticed or harmed. These meanings could also be attributed to a firearm, which often received some of the same decorative elements associated with a coup stick.

were also of the world that Native peoples inhabited and accorded with their understandings. The same could also be said of horses and European trade on the plains in the first half of the 18th century.

St. Louis: Fur Trade on the Southern Prairies and Plains

While the late-18th and early 19th-century fur trade of the Upper Great Lakes followed previous routes to the old western *Pays den Haut* via the Ottawa River, then along the northern shores of Lake Superior and to the upper reaches of the Mississippi River, the Algonquin-speaking groups in the Ohio Valley left behind a fairly casual and declining trade with *habitants* (i.e., francophone farmers and private fur traders) who subsequently sold the pelts and skins at Detroit, St. Joseph (Michigan), or Fort Wayne (Indiana). Looking west and downriver, a growing number of Native communities moved toward the small but growing trade center in St. Louis. First established in 1764 by René-Auguste Chouteau, Jr. (aka August Chouteau) and his step-father Pierre de Laclède Liguest, the site was located in an agricultural region that spread across both sides of the Mississippi River. While these crops were consumed domestically, they were also sold to the owners of nearby lead mines to feed enslaved Haitians and free laborers, as well as shipped to downriver markets including New Orleans. Laclède Liguest, who had previously worked for a New Orleans-based fur trading outfit (Maxent and Company), also worked toward establishing a fur trading center in St. Louis with connections to the lower Illinois River Valley as well as the lower Missouri River and its main tributaries.[12]

The early plans for the St. Louis-based fur trade also had an important geopolitical advantage, since the Treaty of Paris (which formally ended the Seven Years War) transferred to Great Britain the authority to license and govern the fur trade on all lands to the east of the Mississippi River. While this stipulation prevented the Chouteau-Laclède family from establishing a trading house within British-claimed territory, it allowed them to take advantage of the terms in a separate treaty between France and Spain. In recognition of Spain's alliance during the war, and the loss of Spanish Florida to the British, France transferred authority over the Louisiana Territory to Spain. This arrangement effectively kept British traders on the east side of the Mississippi and gave the Chouteau-Laclède family a near monopoly on the trade that France had previously administered in the Lower Missouri River Basin.[13]

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12 Robert Michael Morrissey, *Empire by Collaboration: Indians, Colonists, and Governments in Colonial Illinois Country* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 224-238; Carl Ekberg and Sharon Person, *St. Louis Rising: The French Regime of Louis St. Ange de Bellerive* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 1-8, 96-108, 159.

13 Stephen Aron, *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State* (Indiana University Press, 2009), 41-60. On the colonial French fur trade on the lower Missouri River in the 18th century, see Martha Royce Blaine, *The Ioway Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 39-42; and William E. Unrau, *The Kansa Indians: A History of the Wind People, 1673-1873* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 66-67.

Because St. Louis was the most convenient depot for pelts and furs taken in the lower Illinois and Ohio river valleys, and British regulation was almost nonexistent, the Chouteau-Laclède family quickly dominated the regional trade on both sides of the Mississippi River from the late 1760s through the 1780s. While their extra-territorial trade was banned by Spanish authorities, the Chouteau-Laclèdes were untouchable since enforcement would have undercut an important source of revenue for *La Luisiana*.[14] The family's fortunes would rise even further as Native refugees from the Ohio Valley sought to avoid a new series of conflicts that would come to be known as the Northwest Indian War (1785-1795) in the United States. Among these were families and villages of Shawnee, Lunaapeew (Lenape, or Delaware), Tsalagi (Cherokee), and Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo), who were all quite ready to engage in the St. Louis fur trade.[15]

First Portent: The Wah-Zha-Zhi (Osage) and the St. Louis Fur Trade

The fortunes of the Chouteau-Laclède family, especially after August reached majority around 1770, were ultimately founded on a half century of trade with the Wah-Zha-Zhi (Osage). Through the late 18th century, they were one of the most powerful Indigenous nations in North America, with a territory that extended westward from the Ozark Highlands of present-day Missouri and Arkansas to the Osage Cuestas of eastern Kansas and the Osage Hills of northeastern Oklahoma. From their vantage on the wooded prairies that give way to the southeastern Great Plains, they exercised an influence on par with the powerful Numunuu—Ka'igwu (Comanche-Kiowa) alliance on the Southern Plains and the Lakȟóta—Tsétsêhéstâhese—Nank'haanseine'nan (Lakota-Northern Cheyenne-Northern Arapaho) alliance that was gathering strength in the north. Though all of these nations have very distinct cultures, and their historical alliances functioned within particular commercial, environmental, and social contexts, the Wah-Zha-Zhi seized upon many of the same kinds of opportunities that made these later alliances so powerful, and experienced a similar set of trials that would become intrinsic to the plains trade; namely, ecological degradation, epidemic disease, resource depletion, material dependencies, territorial dispossession, multiple wars, and the process of internal colonization within a rising nation state. In the case of the Wah-Zha-Zhi, their power would begin to unravel in the 1820s when disease outbreaks as well as conflicts with southeastern Native groups that were forced to move west of the Mississippi River in the decades after the War of 1812.

[14] France transferred its claims on Louisiana to Spain in 1762 to prevent the British from occupying the region after the Seven Years' War. The territory was subsequently transferred back to Spain in 1800. In the interim, Spain utilized New Orleans within its imperial administrations of the Americas, and kept a wary eye on the United States from present-day St. Louis.

[15] Bil Gilbert, *God Gave Us This Country: Tekamthi and the First American Civil War* (New York: Atheneum, 1989), 191-93; John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York: Holt, 1997), 97-98; Amy C. Schutt, *Peoples of the River Valleys: The Odyssey of the Delaware Indians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 180-81.

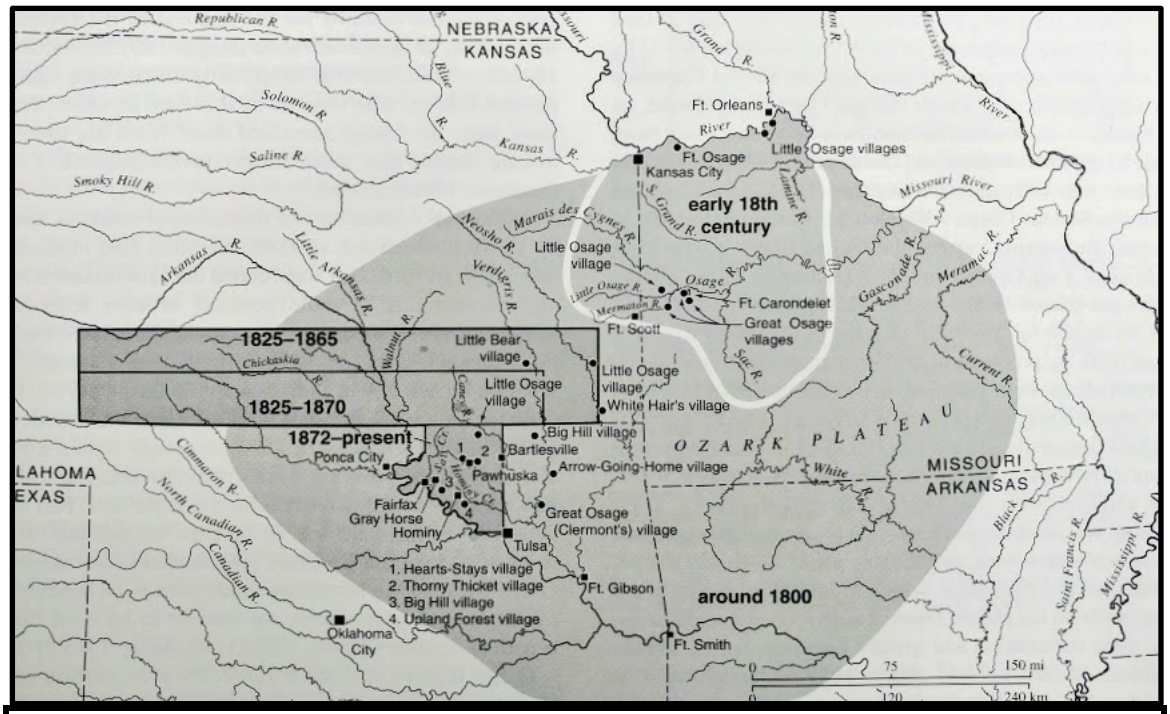


Image 4.6: Map of Wah-Zha-Zhi Territory, ca. 1800-Present. Image depicts core territory of the Wah-Zha-Zhi at the time fo their first contact with French traders in the early 18th century, the more expansive residential, hunting, and harvesting territory they controlled in the early equestrian era (the large oblong area), the rectangular reservation lands that were established in 1825, and the current boundaries of the reservation where the tribe holds title to just 4% of the landbase. Source: Garrick A. Bailey, "Osage," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, vol. 13, pt. 1, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 477.

At the outset of the equestrian era the Wah-Zha-Zhi mostly resided on the Osage and Little Osage rivers in present-day Missouri, where they lived in permanent villages and practiced a mixed economy based on horticulture, hunting, and harvesting native food sources. Given the richness of their environment, the Wah-Zha-Zhi did not travel far or spend long periods away from their homes to hunt or acquire lithic resources. Bison and elk were fairly abundant on the prairies to the south and the Osage Cuestas to the west. Bear, deer, beaver, game birds and other animals could also be found throughout the various woodlands and openings within the Osage River basin. Within these environmental and seasonal contexts, the acquisition of horses augmented their established lifeways, but did not result in a pronounced shift in Wah-Zha-Zhi culture or society.[16]

While seasonal patterns of residence and resource procurement continued into the early 19th century, trade with the Chouteau-Laclèdes nearly collapsed when a smallpox

[16] Garrick A. Bailey, "Osage," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, 1:476-477; Willard H. Rollins, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 17-24; Kathleen Duval, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 103-106.

epidemic killed 2,000 Wah-Zha-Zhi in the winter of 1801-1802 (approximately one-fourth of the nation's entire population). In the aftermath, the Wah-Zha-Zhi divides, with many heading to the plains to better access the bison country and war against the kirikir?i:s (Wichita), Numunuu (Comanche), and other groups on the Southern Plains. Those remained in the eastern portion of the Wah-Zha-Zhi homeland were overwhelmed by much stronger groups like the Tsalagi (Cherokee) and Mvskoke (Muscogee or Creek) other Native groups who were then leaving their eastern homelands to avoid expanding U.S. populations. In the midst of these conflicts, U.S. officials crafted treaties in 1808. that sought to end the conflicts and acquire vast land cession from the Wah-Zha-Zhi. Over the next two decades, the fate of the Wah-Zha-Zhi seemed to play out as the template for the future struggles of peoples on the Northern Plains, and a model for how U.S. officials could weaken and confine a once powerful nation. Subsequent treaties in 1818 and 1825 seemed to prove the case, as the Wah-Zha-Zhi were forced to live within a precisely defined reservation on the western fringes of their homeland.[17]

Očhéthi Šakówiŋ: A Nascent Power on the Northern Plains

Like the Wah-Zha-Zhi to the south, the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Seven Council Fires of the Lakota/Nakota/Dakota, or Seven Council Fires) was one of the most dynamic and powerful forces on the Northern Plains in the late 18th century, and they would remain so for the better part of century. Nevertheless, their movement onto the Northern Plains was initially tentative and sequential. The western-most Lakȟóta, Oglála and Sičháŋǧu (aka Brulé), likely migrated to the Missouri River in the first decades of the 18th-century, where they were subsequently joined by groups of Iháŋkt̆huŋwaŋ (Yankton), Iháŋkt̆huŋwaŋna (Yanktonai), and Sisíthuŋwaŋ (Sisseton) Dakhóta. Yet none of these people would make a significant movement toward the western plains or the Black Hills for another three generations. Bison were still numerous on the prairies to the east of the Missouri, access to the peltry and skin trade around the western Great Lakes was stable and profitable, and the demographic center of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ remained near the midway point between the Missouri River and Lake Michigan. It was during their time along the Missouri, however, when some Lakȟóta communities acquired their first horses from the Middle Missouri villages through trade and raiding. There are also stories among the Oglála about receiving their first horses from the Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne) at a village on the White River. At least until the early 1770s, however, the Lakȟóta generally remained on the east bank of the Missouri River, where a number of Oglála and Mnikȟówožu (Mniconjou) families took up a semi-sedentary horticultural life that

[17] Rollins, *The Osage*, 173-178, 228-244; Louis F. Burns, *A History of the Osage People* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Pres, 2004), 40-43, 152-156; 239-243; Duvall, *The Native Ground*, 211-225; "Treaty with the Osage, 1818," and "Treaty with the Great and Little Osage, 1825;" both in Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs, vol. 2*, 167-168, and 244-248. Also see "Treaty with the Osage, 1839," in op. cit., 525-527.

emulated the strategies of the Tsétsêhéstâhese and Sahnish (Arikara) communities who then lived near the mouth of the Cheyenne River.[18]

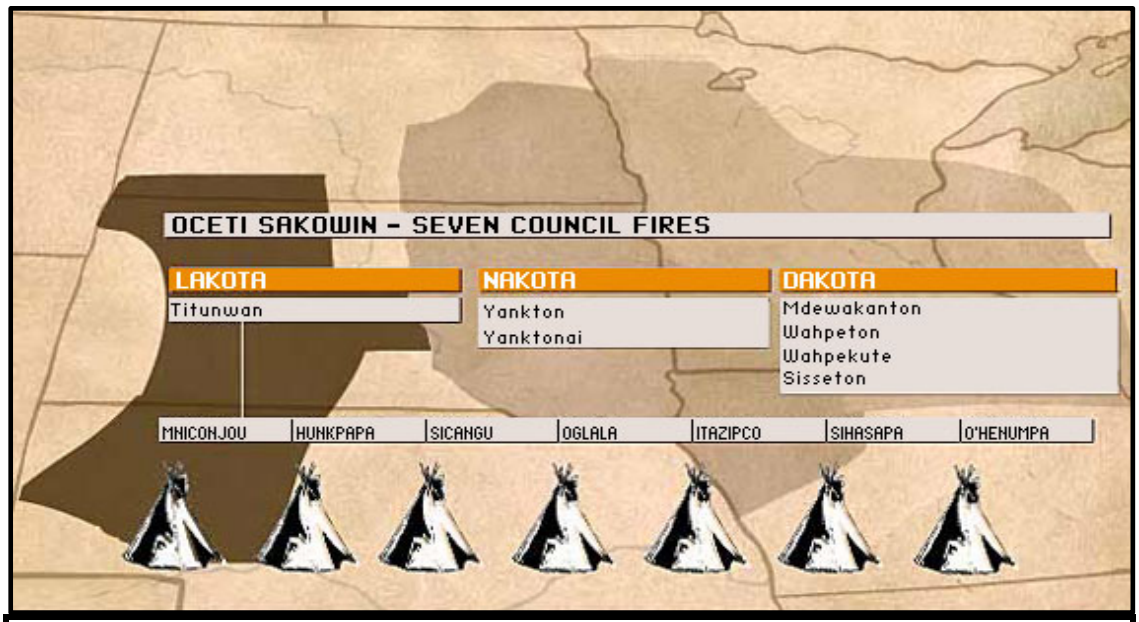


Image 4.7: Relative Positions of Lakȟóta, Western Dakȟóta (aka Nakota), Eastern Dakȟóta, and associated Tiyošpaye (bands), ca. 1830-1850. Source: Smithsonian Institution.

In the mid 18th century, as the British and French Empires battled for dominion over eastern North America during the Seven Years' War, the Lakȟóta benefitted from their eastern relations; namely, the Isáŋyathi Dakȟóta (Santee) who had direct access to French officials and traders around the western Great Lakes. Prior to this period, the Lakȟóta were mostly shut off from the main channels of the plains fur trade. To the south, a long phalanx of Sahnish (Arikara), Chatiks si chatiks (Pawnee), Jiwére (Otoe), and Pánka (Ponca), Niúachi (Missouria) and Kaw villages had kept French traders and *voyageurs* from moving further upriver to trade with the Lakȟóta and other groups on the Middle Missouri River. To the north, the Nueta (Mandan) and Hiraacá (Hidatsa) endeavored, with some success, to keep Lakȟóta from Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company traders. Following the British victory over French forces at the Battle of Quebec in 1760, and the subsequent surrender of New France in 1763, the Isáŋyathi Dakȟóta (Santee) and Lakȟóta lost their only secure access to trade goods and firearms. Their situation became even more acute when the British were forced to abandon the

[18] Patricia C. Albers et al., *The Home of the Bison: An Ethnographic and Ethnohistorical Study of Traditional Cultural Affiliations to Wind Cave National Park; Cooperative Agreement #Ca606899103 between the U.S. National Park Service and the Department of American Indian Studies, University of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), 46-50.

western Lakes trade by a widespread rebellion that was closely associated with the Detroit-based Odawa leader Obwandiyag (Pontiac).[19]

For nearly two years (1763-1765), Indigenous communities from the Detroit River area and the Ohio Valley—along with *Canadien* allies—fought against the British military and the Long Knives. Around the northern and western Great Lakes, Anishinaabeg warriors had seized, ransacked, and destroyed some key military and fur trade posts, including Fort Michilimackinac and Fort Edward Augustus (neé *Fort de la Baye des Puants*). The latter, which was located at the southern tip of Green Bay, had been the keystone of the French trade with the Dakȟóta and other Native peoples on the prairies of present-day Wisconsin and Minnesota. While the British met with a Dakȟóta delegation in 1763, and fully intended to restore the trade at the fort, the conflicts associated with the uprising led by Obwandiyag caused them to abandon the site completely. The fallout for the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ was difficult at best, but proved especially onerous for the Lakȟóta.[20]

Unable to acquire guns through their Dakȟóta relatives, who were themselves sorely pressed by Ojibwe from *Bawaating* (Sault Ste. Marie), the Oglála were forced to make do with the very limited resources and opportunities they had at hand. The Tsétsêhéstâhese who were then living in villages along the Missouri River became their main trading partners, but this relationship garnered little more than small caches of corn and a few horses. Though not as badly as the Oglála, the Tsétsêhéstâhese were also struggling, and could not afford to part with any substantial portions of their harvests or spare the guns they needed for hunting and their own defense. Harvesting plant foods on the plains to the west as an option for the Oglála, as was hunting various game animals with bow and arrow, spears, and traps. However, such activities could be dangerous or invite subsequent retaliations from groups trying to protect their access to the same

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[19] Wedel, "The Kansa Indians," *Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science*, 49 (June 1946): 10-11; Michael Dickey, *The People of the River's Mouth: In Search of the Missouria Indians* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 72-76, 81-84; Simone Amardeil Johnson, *The French Presence in Kansas: 1673-1854*, edited by David A. Dinneen (Manhattan: University of Kansas Libraries, 2016), 52-70; Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of American History* 65 (September 1978): 319-325.
W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen, eds. *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 3-17, 21, 32; Tim Holzkamm, "Eastern Dakota Population Movements and the European Fur Trade: One More Time," *Plains Anthropologist,* 28 (August 1983): 225-233; Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 54-60, 66, 74, 82.

[20] This and the following paragraph are based on Larry L. Nelson, *A Man of Distinction Among Them: Alexander McKee and the Ohio Country Frontier, 1754-1799* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1999), 105-132; Gregory Evans Dowd, *War Under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, & the British Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 62-68; White, *Middle Ground*, 353-68, 396-408; Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 66-68; Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 88-89.

resources. The Sahnish and Nueta, who had ample numbers of horses and guns, used violence to preserve their long-standing access to the bounties of the surrounding prairies. While they might attack some Oglála they found away from the river, it was more effective to lay siege to Oglála villages. A times, the only bison the Oglála might have taken without risking life and limb were the bloated carcasses of bison that had broken through the ice on the Missouri River, and came floating down the river during the spring thaw. After the deprivations that could accompany a long winter, this famine food was welcomed by the peoples who lived along the river, but its necessity was also a confirmation of persistent hardship. As the historian Pekka Hämäläinen notes, the "late 1760s emerge as a dark period in [Lakȟóta] winter counts: [with images of] mounted, gun-wielding enemies storming their camps; women joining men in fighting enemies; Lakota warriors … [barely straying from their lodges for] fear of enemy attacks. It was a low point." In short, the Oglála were refugees under siege in their own villages.[21]

Frustration and assistance came together in the early 1770s when the Oglála were joined by some of their Iháŋktȟuŋwaŋna (Yanktonai) kin during a raid on a Nueta (Mandan) village to the north. The goal was more strategic than tactical, however, and seems to have had very little to do with acquiring war honors. The combined Oglála and Iháŋktȟuŋwaŋna war party had travelled far, and the Nueta were unsuspecting. Consequently, the invaders were able to strike without initial resistance, and managed to set much of the village on fire. As residents fled their earthen lodges, their assailants struck them down or took them as captives. Most of the latter were women and children who were captured and carried away, while the rest of the Nueta fled upriver. In the aftermath, the Iháŋktȟuŋwaŋna remained in the area and created their own semi-nomadic horticultural village of earth lodges and varied crops. The Oglála returned south and joined with Sićangu to raid Sahnish (Arikara), Pá^{n}ka (Ponca), Chatiks si chatiks (Pawnee), Báxoǰe (Ioway) and Jiwére (Otoe) villages that were strung along the Missouri River between the Platte and Cheyenne Rivers. The attack on the Sahnish was especially violent and destructive. As many as seventy were killed while trying to defend their community; even more died when they were trapped in their lodges, which were then set on fire and guarded until they collapsed to the ground.[22]

A Mobile Center of Trade on the Northern Plains

As intended, these attacks changed the calculus of life on the Missouri River. While the Iháŋktȟuŋwaŋna (Yanktonai) gained a new village on the mainstem of the Missouri, the Oglála and Sićangu removed the main obstacles to their ability to access

[21] George E. Hyde, *Red Cloud's Folk: A History of the Oglala Sioux Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), 15, 18; Richard White, "The Winning of the West," 324; Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 88-89 (quotation on p. 89).
[22] Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 89-90; Douglas W. Owsley, Hugh E. Barryman, and William M. Bass, "Demographic and Osteological Evidence for Warfare at the Larson Site, South Dakota," *Plains Anthropologist*, 22 (Nov. 1977), 119–31; White, "Winning of the West," 321-325.

traders from the south and north. Moreover, their concerns about food, trade goods, horses, and guns were satisfied by the wealth of stores they were able to take from these attacks. With their rivals and enemies diminished and pushed away, the western Lakȟóta were now able to move freely on the plains to the west and the prairies to the east. Their new situation also allowed them to better withstand a decade-long period of climatic fluctuation that was marked by multi-year droughts interspersed with highly variable swings in precipitation and temperature. Though the Lakȟóta did not yet have especially large horse herds, the animals they acquired certainly broadened the geographic range of their resource base and made subsequent raids against riverine horticulturalists more effective.[23]

As the circumstances of the western Lakȟóta improved, so too did the fortunes of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ. British licensed traders and French *coureur des bois* re-established themselves around the western Great Lakes, and the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ moved at will throughout the northern prairies and mixed-grass plains that stretched between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Several years of access to French and British firearms and trade goods, along with growing horse herds, also made the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ into the largest and most powerful force of associated peoples in the region. Moreover, most of the nations that constituted the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ had horses—which gave them access to a wider array of resources that could be carried to traders around the northern, eastern, and southern perimeters of the prairie country. The Očhéthi Šakówiŋ also created their own trade center, through an annual *rendezvous* that was held at various locales within their homeland. The *rendezvous* was a vast trade fair that generally coincided with a summer reunion of the various nations of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ. In the latter part of the 18th century it generally occurred along the James River, in present-day western Minnesota, or other areas further west or north as the locations of various nations shifted over the years.[24]

In the mid 1790s, the North West Company fur trader Pierre-Antoine Tabeau gave a detailed accounting of one of these events, which could include as many as 6,000 people or more.

> All the other Titons [Lakȟóta], by different routes upon the east bank [of the Missouri River] go into the heart of the prairies to a kind of market, where are found also every spring the Yinctons of the North [Iháŋkt̆huŋwaŋ] and of the South [Iháŋkt̆huŋwaŋna], the Scissitons [Sisíthuŋwaŋ (117,)], some people of the *Leaves* [Waȟpéthuŋwaŋ (Wahpeton)] and often even some of the *Lakes* [Mnikȟówožu]. This

[23]Albers, "Symbiosis, Merger, and War: Contrasting Forms of Intertribal Relationship among Historic Plains Indians," in *Political Economy of North American Indians*, ed. John H. Moore (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 94-132; Adam R. Hodge, "'In Want of Nourishment for to Keep Them Alive': Climate Fluctuations, Bison Scarcity, and the Smallpox Epidemic of 1780–82 on the Northern Great Plains," *Environmental History*, 17 (April 2012): 365–403.
[24] Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 62-67.

> concourse is sometimes composed of a thousand to twelve hundred lodges, about three thousand men bearing arms. Much trading is done there. Each man brings different articles, according to the places over which he has wandered. Those who have frequented the St. Peter's [Minnesota] River and that of the Mohens [Des Moines River] furnish guns, kettles, red pipes, and bows of walnut. The [Lakȟóta] give in exchange horses, lodges of leather, buffalo robes, shirts and leggings of antelope skin.[25]

Grassland Empire: The Lakȟóta Move West

By the mid 1770s, and perhaps earlier, the western Lakȟóta had acquired sufficient horses to make forays into the bison country to the west of the Missouri River. A winter count for 1775-1776 presents a glyph of a man known as Tȟatȟáŋka nážiŋ (Standing Bull) holding a large cedar bough that represents his arrival in the Black Hills after a safe and successful passage through the territory of the Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne) and their Ka'igwu (Kiowa) allies. Recognition of this event in a winter count indicates that it was an important mnemonic device for recalling the significance of this particular year, which suggests that such a foray to the Black Hills was new at the time and significant for the expected future. In the mid 1770s, most Lakȟóta groups still lived to the east of the Missouri River. Like their Oglála and Sičháŋǧu relations to the west, they had also become equestrian bison hunters. However, they tended to focus on areas around their winter village sites near Lake Traverse and Big Stone Lake in present-day Minnesota, where they also hunted for beaver and other furbearing animals while their pelts were at their thickest.[26]

The recognition of Standing Bull's success in safely leading a hunting party to the Black Hills marks a tentative historical moment for the western Lakȟóta. At the time, there were powerful Indigenous groups on the plains and around the western Black Hills that had more horses. They also possessed a multi-generational understanding of the region, its various ecological niches, and the mix of opportunities and challenges it presented to human communities. Among these groups were northern bands of Tsétsêhéstâhese (who by this time were known as Ȯhméseestse; i.e. "Eaters," or Northern Cheyenne), northern bands of Só'taeo'o (Suhtai) who had long been allied with the Tsétsêhéstâhese, and northern bands of Hinono'eino (known as Nank'haanseine'nan; i.e., "Sage Brush People," or Northern Arapaho). Conflict between the Lakȟóta and the Ka'igwu (Kiowa) caused the latter to leave the Black Hills to live with former allies who had moved to the Southern Plains over past few decades. They were joined by

[25] Pierre-Antoine Tabeau, *Tabeau's Narrative of Loisel's Expedition to the Upper Missouri*, ed. Annie Heloise Abel, trans. Rose Abel Wright (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), 121-123.
[26] Garrick Mallery, *The Dakota and Corbusier Winter Counts* (Lincoln, NE: J & L Reprint Co., 1987), 130; Albers et al., *The Home of the Bison*, 45; White, "Winning of the West," 327; Hamlienen, *Lakota America*, 42-43. Tȟatȟáŋka nážiŋ translates to "Standing-Upright Bull," but the narrative follows the standard use of Standing Bull.

Heévâhetaneo'o ("Roped Together People" or Southern Cheyenne) and Nomsen'nat ("Southerners" or Southern Arapaho).[27]

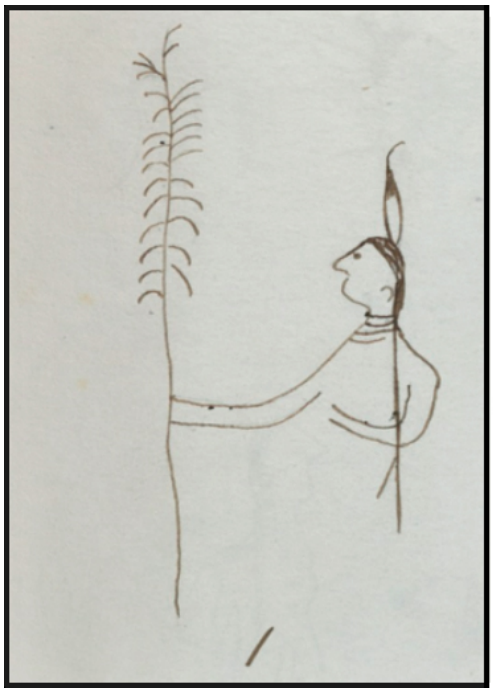


Figure 4.8: A glyph representing parts of the years 1775 and 1776 from a Winter Count that was maintained by Wašíčuŋ Tȟašúŋke (American Horse). It depicts the Oglála war leader Tȟatȟáŋka nážiŋ (Standing Bull) holding a cedar bough, to mark a successful foray to He Sapa (aka Black Hills). Source: Manuscript 2372, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

In association with the Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne), Só'taeo'o (Suhtai), and Hinono'eino (Arapaho), the Oglála, Sičháŋǧu and other Lakȟóta would become a dominant power on the Northern Plains by the early 18th century. Together, this loose, cross-cultural confederacy utilized wide swaths of the plains from the White River Basin to the south, the Cannonball River to the north, and westward from the Missouri River to the Black Hills and the upper reaches of the North Platte River. While most of these equestrian groups had affinities with specific locales that shaped their lives in the pre-equestrian era, the dynamic changes associated with the rise of equestrian nomadism, the bison trade, disease epidemics, and the incorporation of foreign goods and weapons shaped how they all lived in and utilized a common region. Even in a new era of dynamic accommodations and adaptations, ancient continuities within and between communities still shaped how particular areas were understood and experienced. Neither the Lakȟóta nor any other groups arrived on the Northern Plains as if it were a *tabula rasa*, to which they gave new names or invented new meanings for particular landscape features. Instead, they came to know these places as they were already known, through a process that Linea Sundstrom calls "cross-cultural transference." It was through encounters and

[27] Linea Sundstrom, "The Sacred Black Hills: An Ethnohistorical Review," *Great Plains Quarterly* 17, nos. 3-4 (Summer/Fall 1997): 185-212; Sundstrom and Richard Bradley, "Mirror of Heaven: Cross-Cultural Transference of the Sacred Geography of the Black Hills," *World Archaeology* 28, no. 2 (October 1996): 177-89; James Mooney, *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians* (Washington: GPO, 1901), 156-162; Albers et al., *The Home of the Bison*, 33-41.

relations with resident communities, or those long familiar with the place, that Lakȟóta, Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne), Só'taeo'o, Hinono'eino (Arapaho), and countless others before them learned of—and came to accommodate themselves to— the landscapes of the Northern Plains.[28]

Westering Trends and the Smallpox Epidemic of 1781-1782

Diminishing bison herds and declining beaver populations due to unsustainable hunting and trapping on the prairies to the east of the Mississippi River, along with pressure from westward expanding Anishanaabeg groups in the Upper Mississippi River area, caused several groups of Lakȟóta and Dakȟóta to move toward the Missouri River. As different elements of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ pushed into the area, the Sahnish presented a significant obstacle to any further expansion to the west. Occupying a key nexus in the larger plains trade network, and numbering as many as 24,000 people living in 32 villages along the Missouri, the Sahnish (Arikara) had more ready access to horses and guns than did the Lakȟóta or Dakȟóta. This situation suddenly and permanently changed with the smallpox epidemic of 1781, which first developed in the primary theaters of the American Revolutionary war. The Sahnish were quickly reduced to a population of 4,800 people living in just two villages. In time, the Sahnish nation divided, with most moving to a site on the Missouri River below the mouth of the Cheyenne River while a smaller choosing to reside among the Nueta (Mandan), who also suffered horribly from the epidemic, at the confluence of the Heart and Missouri rivers near present-day Mandan, North Dakota. When Dakȟóta warriors attacked these combined villages, the residents abandoned their homes and fled north to the confluence of the Knife and Missouri rivers. The Dakȟóta, Lakȟóta and other more nomadic equestrian groups also suffered from smallpox, but nowhere near as much as the peoples who lived in densely populated villages where disease transmission was more rampant. The equestrian Apsáalooke (Crow) who resided in substantial semi-mobile villages, and were known for their especially large bison-hide lodges that could shelter more people, suffered higher infection rates than did the Lakȟóta and Dakȟóta. The same was true of the Nakoda (Assiniboine) and Néhinaw (Cree) peoples on the far northern plains, where they had more frequent contact with Canadian-based traders and were thus more exposed to multiple disease vectors.[29]

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[28] Mark David Spence, *Passages through Many Worlds: A Historic Resource Study of Wind Cave National Park* (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2011), 81-90; Michael G. Michlovic et al, "The Cheyenne migration and the Biesterfeldt site revisited," *Plains Anthropologist*, 61 (April 2016): 1-20. Not all of these encounters were necessarily friendly or collaborative, but they all involved exchanges of information and some modelling of lifeways. See Sundstrom and Richard Bradley, "Mirror of Heaven," *passim*.

[29] This and the following paragraph are based on Adam R. Hodge, "Vectors of Colonialism: The Smallpox Epidemic of 1780-82 and Northern Great Plains Indian Life" (master's thesis, Kent State University, 2009), passim; Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2001) 8-25; Wendi Field Murray and Fern E. Swenson "Situational Sedentism: Post-Contact

For these and many other reasons, the arrival of smallpox on the northern Great Plains of America in 1780 was a truly cataclysmic event. Tens of thousands of people lost their lives as the vectors of empires and trade carried the virus to various groups through down-the line exchanges of foodstuffs, hides, pipestone, metal wares, horses, guns, and more. Those who survived the pandemic still had to contend with the loss of family and kin in an utterly broken community. Besides the profound loss of life and the collective trauma that plagued so many communities, the epidemic necessarily had historical consequences that extended well into the 19th century. When the United States purchased dominion over the region in 1803, the population of the Northern Plains was still only half of what it was just before the pandemic hit. Consequently, the exercise and administration of the Louisiana Territory proved less contentious than it might have been if the epidemic never occurred.

The generation that came of age after the pandemic lived in a world quite different from the one they had been born into. Every aspect of a community's external relations, from conflict to trade, and alliances to inter-group affiliations, had to be determined in the context of ensuring community survival. Initially, there seems to have been a heightened level of desperation that informed raids on other villages and horse herds, in which badly stricken groups sought to rebuild their resources and populations by taking horses and captives, as well as looting trade goods and food caches. Because alliances came with the essential virtue of adding strength to each constituent member, communities often made uneasy mergers to guard against a greater collective threat from more nomadic groups that were not as affected by the epidemic. The merger of the Nueta (Mandan), Hiraacá (Hidatsa), and Sahnish after the pandemic embodies most of these concerns, but also illustrates their overriding benefits. In time, they were often referred to by outsiders as a collective (eg. "the Missouri villages"), but still recognized themselves as distinct peoples who regarded alliance and collaboration as matters of paramount importance to their mutual and singular survival. This ethic would also inform their decisions about engaging in trade with non-Native traders from the Great Lakes, present-day Canada, and St. Louis, as well as making preparations for a mutual defense against raids from the Lakȟóta.[30]

Arikara settlement as social process in the Middle Missouri, North Dakota," *Plains Anthropologist*, 61 (November 2016): 341-343; Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 419; White, "Winning of the West," 325; Hoxie, *Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 75.

[30] Craig M. Johnson, "The Coalescent Tradition," in *Archaeology on the Great Plains*, ed. W. Raymond Wood (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 308-344; Johnson, *A Chronology of Middle Missouri Plains Village Sites* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2007), 191-92; Frank Henderson Stewart, "Hidatsa," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains,* vol. 13, pt. 1, 329-335; Wood & Lee Irwin, "Mandan" in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, vol. 13, pt. 1, 350-356; Douglas R. Parks, "Arikara," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains,* vol. 13, pt. 1, 366-372.

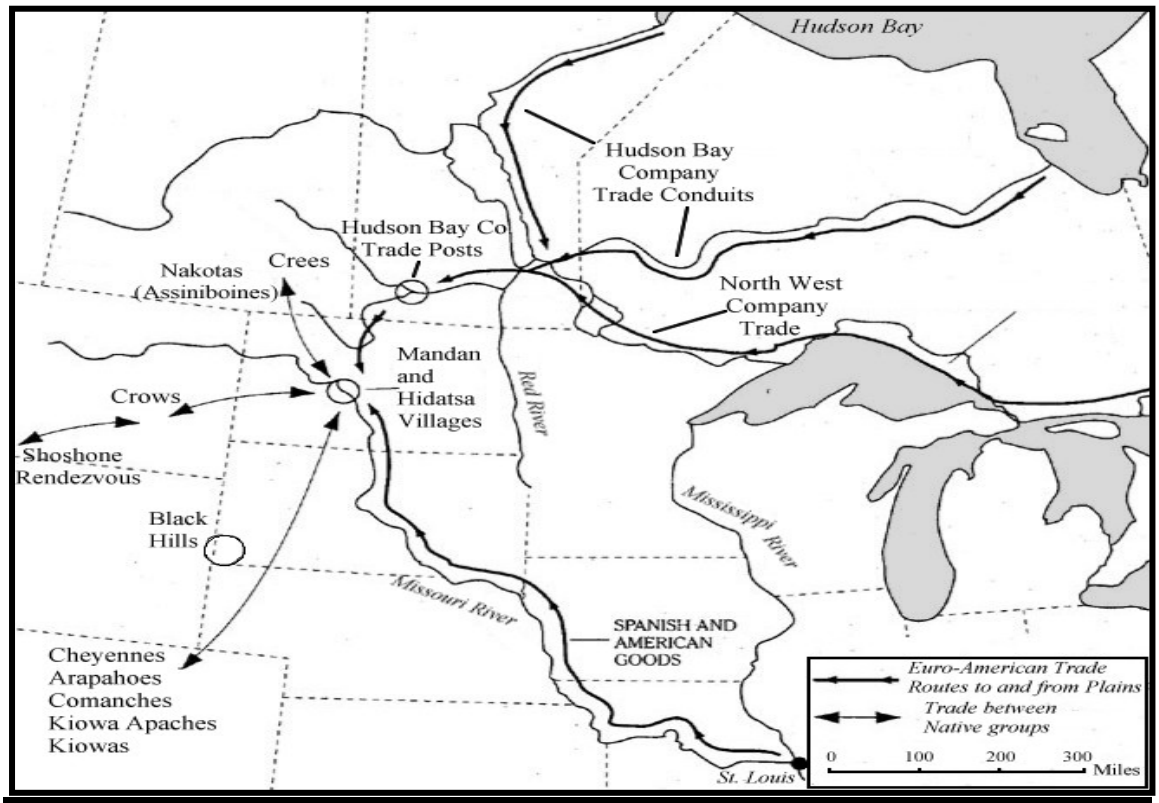


Image 4.9: Upper Missouri River Trade Networks and Disease Vectors, ca. 1780s. With surplus crops to trade and established connections within colonial trade networks, Upper Missouri River villages attracted much of the produce coming off of the Northern Plains, Eastern Plains, and northwestern prairies. As centers of trade, however, these villages also became the epicenters of deadly disease outbreaks. Consequently, the trade routes on this map exactly trace the course of the 1781-1782 smallpox epidemic. Source: National Park Service, Knife River Indian Villages NHS.

By the early 1800s, the Umoⁿhoⁿ (Omaha) population dropped from more than 3,000 to less than 300, and the Nueta, who had already been experiencing a steady population decline through most of the 19th century, fell from 3,600 to 1,600. Almost two generations later, another smallpox pandemic swept through the trade networks of the Northern Plains and wrought a new series of unimaginable horrors. As the historical demographer Russell Thornton notes,

> an outbreak in the summer of 1837 killed as many as 10,000 American Indians in a matter of weeks. By the time the epidemic had run its course, the total numbers of American Indians thought to have died are overwhelming: 6,000 to 8,000 Blackfoot, Piegans, and Bloods; 2,000 Pawnee; virtually all of several thousand Mandan; one-half the 4,5000 Arikara and [Hidatsa]; … one third of 3,000 Crow; 400 Yanktonai [Dakota]; and scores more across the Rocky Mountains.[31]

The extent of so many deaths in 1781 and 1837 shook whole world views to their core,

[31] Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 94-95.

caused decimated bands to combine their populations and interests, and forced a scramble among survivors to redefine and assume new leadership roles. Uneven rates of mortality also changed the relative strengths of the peoples contesting the plains, and tended to favor the most mobile, most widespread, and least densely populated groups of equestrian nomads.[32]

[32] This and the following paragraph are informed by Michael K. Trimble, "The 1837-1838 Smallpox Epidemic on the Upper Missouri," in *Skeletal Biology in the Great Plains: Migration, Warfare, Health, and Subsistence*, ed. Douglas W. Owsley and Richard L. Jantz (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 82-84; Loretta Fowler, "The Great Plains from the arrival of the horse to 1885," in *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, *Vol.I, Part II: North America*, ed. Bruce G. Trigger and Wilcomb E. Washburn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21; and Sundstrom, "Smallpox Used Them up: References to Epidemic Disease in Northern Plains Winter Counts, 1714-1920," *Ethnohistory*, 2 (Spring 1997): 315.

Chapter Five

Empire for Property:
The Upper Missouri Trade and the Jeffersonian Dream (1800-1830)

The Lewis and Clark expedition is a key part of the National Park Service's interpretation of the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. While the Corps of Discovery's presence at the Confluence in 1805 and 1806 predates the establishment of Fort Union by more than twenty years, the expedition and several of its members were key to the eventual establishment and operation of Fort Union. As Meriwether Lewis noted during his first sighting of the Confluence area, the location was ideal for challenging the Hudson's Bay Company and developing a prosperous American-based trade on the Northern Plains. Both Lewis and William Clark viewed the Confluence through Jefferson's eyes, and recognized the national, commercial, and geopolitical significance of the site in terms of undermining British interests in the region, establishing a lucrative fur trade within the United States, and eventually creating the framework for Native dispossession and the subsequent expansion of an agrarian "empire for liberty."[1]

The election of Thomas Jefferson in the fall of 1800, and the U.S. acquisition of the Louisiana Territory in the spring of 1803, marked the beginning of a profound departure from the imperial geopolitics that had shaped much of North America for more than two centuries. Using the young nation's recent history in the Ohio Valley as a model and counter example, Jefferson and Jeffersonian Republicans embraced mercantilism as a kind of state-sponsored economic system that could enrich individuals and expand the nation state. Instead of the fierce competition that consumed the British and French fur trades in the Ohio Valley and around the Great Lakes, however, Jeffersonians intended to fully exercise the constitutional primacy of federal authority in matters relating to territorial claims, formal relations with American Indians, land policy, and the framework of national expansion.[2]

Insofar as these matters applied to the Louisiana Territory, Jeffersonians viewed the fur trade as a critical component in a four-step process that would secure and protect U.S. authority within the Missouri River Basin against any challenges from Great Britain

[1] The phrase "empire for liberty" comes from Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 27 April 1809," *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series, vol. 1, 4 March 1809 to 15 November 1809*, ed. J. Jefferson Looney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 168-170. Several members of the Corps of Discovery entered the fur trade after their return to St. Louis. Among these were John Colder, George Drouillard, John Potts, and Thomas Howard. William Clark's long post-expedition career allowed him to play a determinative role in the Upper Missour River trade.

[2] See John R. Van Atta, *Securing the West: Politics, Public Lands, and the Fate of the Old Republic, 1785-1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 17-44; Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "Americans versus Indians: The Northwest Ordinance, Territory Making, and Native Americans," *Indiana Magazine of History* 84:1 (March 1988): 90-108; Robert S. Hill, "Federalism, Republicanism, and the Northwest Ordinance," *Publius* 18:4, No. 4 (Autumn, 1988): 41-52.

and Spain. The first step related to exercising the sole authority (as recognized in international law) of the United States to establish formal relations with Native nations in the Louisiana Purchase area. The second involved the licensing and promotion of an extensive fur trade that would enrich U.S. citizens as well as establish social and commercial relations with Native communities. The third and fourth steps essentially followed the model that played out in the Ohio Valley in the years that followed the series of conflicts known as the Northwest Indian Wars (1785-1795). Namely, the eviction of fur traders who remained subjects of Great Britain, and the implementation of coercive treaties against peoples undermined by disease and war to cede their territories to the United States. Quite unlike the fur trade policies of France, Great Britain, or Spain, the Jeffersonian conception of the U.S. fur trade in the Louisiana Territory was ultimately directed toward creating a vast, depopulated expanse of fertile soil that could then be transformed into an ever-expanding grid of farms, woodlots, pastures, roads, and towns.[3]

While the trade would enrich well-capitalized fur trade companies, and helped fill the coffers of the U.S. Treasury, the fur trade was conceived as a necessary and lucrative phase in realizing Jefferson's vision of an "empire for liberty;" a nation of agrarian free-holders expanding "without blot or mixture" across the continent.[4] Even as he dreamed of vast farmlands, Jefferson regarded the fur trade and any other commercial enterprises that might develop in the vast region, as providing the initial source of capital for the development of the market centers and infrastructures that agrarian communities would require. In short, he viewed the process of purchasing Louisiana (through presents to Native leaders, federal oversight, treaties, and potential warfare) as both an investment and a kind of slow-moving scorched earth policy that would undermine the material bases of Native societies. As game animals declined, so too would the power and numbers of Native peoples. Thus weakened, Native groups would have little to offer British traders in the north or Spanish traders to the southwest. Instead, they would be forced to sell their lands to the United States and become dependent on assistance from the federal government. In sum, Jefferson envisioned a process whereby resource extraction via the fur trade would necessarily destroy Native societies while it enriched a few large companies. The value of such a scenario, at least as Jefferson and his political

[3] This and the following paragraph are based on Richard R. John, "Governmental Institutions as Agents of Change: Rethinking American Political Development in the Early Republic, 1787-1835," *Studies in American Political Development* 11 (Fall 1997): 347-380; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 49-51; and Paul W. Gates, "Public Land Issues in the United States," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 2, (October 1971): 363-376. For a full embodiment of these ideas, see Meriwether Lewis to Thomas Jefferson, September 23, 1806, in *Thomas Jefferson and Early Western Explorers*; trans. and ed., Gerard W. Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/resource/mtj1.036_0912_0917> (accessed 21 March 2020).

[4] Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, November 24, 1801, in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York, 1984), 1117. Also see Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 49, 85-87.

fellows viewed matters, was the eventual development of an expansive and virtuous agrarian nation that had no need for the social inequities and endless conflicts that defined Europe.[5]

The Corps of Volunteers for North Western Discovery and "the Purposes of Commerce"

While awaiting news about diplomatic negotiations with France over the acquisition of the whole or part of the Louisiana Territory, Jefferson spent much of the winter and spring of 1803 conferring with trusted associates and members of his Cabinet on how best to direct and prepare the Corps of Discovery (aka Lewis and Clark Expedition) to initiate his long-term plans for the Louisiana Territory. In the midst of these preparations, Jefferson received the startling news that U.S. diplomats had managed to obtain the entire Louisiana Territory from Napoleon. The proposed treaty involved far more land than Jefferson had initially expected to acquire, but he had long operated under the assumption that U.S. control of the entire region was inevitable. Consequently, the news from Paris did not significantly change the goals of the expedition, only some of its emphases. The expedition would no longer be an instrument for testing future American claims on the region, but would instead serve as an initial exercise of U.S. sovereignty. Now that the United States seemed to possess "a chosen country with room enough for our descendants to the thousandth and thousandth generation," the agrarian vision that had long motivated Jefferson's westward concerns became an even more explicit aspect of the expedition.[6]

As Jefferson's brainchild, the Lewis and Clark Expedition fully embodied the President's ideas on Native relations, foreign policy, and the role of the federal government in shaping future national economic development.[7] Rooted in long-held expectations and shaped by immediate circumstances, these concerns all found expression in Jefferson's instructions to Lewis on 20 June 1803. "The object of your mission," he wrote, "is to explore the Missouri river, & such principal stream of it, as, by

[5] On the Jeffersonian vision of national expansion and development, also see Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 173-75, 285.

[6] Quote is from Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address," 4 March 1801, in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings: Autobiography, A Summary View of the Rights of British America, Notes on the State of Virginia, Public Papers, Addresses, Messages, and Replies, Miscellany, Letters*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1984), 493-94; hereafter cited as ed. Peterson, *Writings* and type of document (i.e., *Writings:Addresses*). While it is not exactly clear when Jefferson learned about the terms of the Louisiana Treaty, a letter from Meriwether Lewis to William Clark dated 19 June 1803 indicates the President was well aware of the final agreement before sending his instructions to Lewis. In Lewis' letter to Clark, he passed on confidential information about the full scope of the Louisiana Treaty, which would not be officially announced for several more weeks, and the new layer of meaning the treaty gave to the expedition. See "Lewis to Clark, 19 June 1803," in Donald Jackson, ed., *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854*, 2d ed. 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 57-60.

[7] Albert Furtwangler makes a similar observation in his book *Acts of Discovery: Visions of America in the Lewis and Clark Journals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 201-2.

it's course & communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean, … may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across this continent, for the purposes of commerce." The commercial purposes of the expedition, Jefferson stated several times, hinged on four basic objectives: determining the navigability of major river systems; evaluating the agricultural potential of the lands to be traversed; convincing Native leaders of the "peaceful and commercial dispositions of the United States;" and appraising the trade possibilities of the West Coast.[8] As Jefferson indicated in a confidential message to Congress announcing his plans for the expedition, these various approaches to "extending the external commerce of the U.S." ultimately depended on establishing a strong American presence in the western fur trade.[9]



Image 5.1: Corps of Discovery Expedition Route, 1804-06. Map presents the route of the expedition, and key locales that were part of the Lewis and Clark National Bicentennial Commemoration, 2003-2006. Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency.

The immediate interest in a transcontinental water route reflected a desire to make St. Louis the center of a global fur trade that extended to the Pacific and the markets of the Far East. Establishing diplomatic and commercial relations with Native leaders would also undermine the position of imperial rivals in North America's lucrative fur trade, help secure the presumed authority of the United States in the newly acquired Louisiana

[8] "Jefferson's instructions to Lewis, 20 June 1803," in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 61.
[9] "Jefferson's Message to Congress, 18 January 1803," in ibid., 13.

Territory, and bring much needed revenue into the fledgling nation.[10] Once the West had been skinned of its peltry, however, commercial ties with Native leaders would become irrelevant. As Jefferson wrote U.S. Superintendent of Indian Affairs Benjamin Hawkins in 1803, the period of the fur trade was the best time to "familiarize [American Indians] to the idea that it is for their interest to cede lands at times to the United States, and for us thus to procure gratifications to our citizens, from time to time, by new acquisitions of land."[11] "The obtaining [of] lands from the Indians … as fast as the expansion of our settlements," as Jefferson put it in a letter to Senator James Jackson of Georgia, was the ultimate goal of the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition.[12] The establishment of commercial and diplomatic relations with Native leaders was thus a necessary first step in Jefferson's program to convert tribal lands into American farms. Any failure in these matters could be catastrophic, and might even lead the French, Spanish, and British empires to rescind their recognition of U.S. sovereignty in the middle of the continent.[13]

Lewis and Clark would explain themselves somewhat differently in their efforts to communicate with the people they met, but "the purposes of commerce" were perhaps stated even more clearly. Directed by the "Great father the President of the U. States of America," the two captains related to various Native leaders that they were on a long journey to the head of "the Missourei and its waters quite to the great lake of the West [i.e., Pacific Ocean] where the land ends and the sun sets …; the length of this journey compelled us to load our boat and pirogues with provisions … [to] open the road and prepare the way" for future trade and the arrival of "white people who may come into your country under the protection of the Flag of your great father."[14] As they indicated to the communities they met in the fall of 1804, the objectives and route of the expedition, as well as the time and tools required to make it possible, were manifest in the burden of "provisions" they felt "compelled" to haul up the Missouri River. These had been divided into seven categories, and included "Mathematical Instruments," "Arms, Ammunition &

[10] "Jefferson's Instructions to Lewis," in ibid., 61-66.
[11] Jefferson to Benjamin Hawkins, February 18, 1803, in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 20 vols., ed. Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington, D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association of the United States, 1903-04), 9: 363-364; quoted in Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 223.
[12] Jefferson to Andrew Jackson, 16 February 1803, in Lipscomb and Bergh, eds., *Writings*, 10: 357; quoted in Anthony F. C. Wallace, "'The Obtaining Lands': Thomas Jefferson and the Native Americans," in *Thomas Jefferson and the Changing West*, ed. James P. Ronda (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press in Association with the Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997), 25, 30.
[13] Albert Furtwangler makes a similar observation in his book *Acts of Discovery: Visions of America in the Lewis and Clark Journals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 201-202.
[14] Quotations are from a speech by Lewis and Clark at a council with Jiwére (Oto) leaders on 4 August 1804; and from the text of an address that Clark prepared for a possible encounter with a group of Apsáalooke (Crow) in late July 1806. See "Lewis and Clark to the Oto Indians," in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 203-208; and William Clark, "[Speech to the Yellowstone Indians]," *The Definitive Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition,* 11 vols., ed. Gary Moulton (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983-1997), 8: 213-215.

Accoutrements," "Medicines &c.," "Clothing," "Provisions &c.," "Indian Presents," and "Camp Equipage."[15] Among the various stores, which totaled between 29 and 31 tons, by far the bulkiest, costliest and most elaborately packed cargo was the "21 Bales of Indian Goods," which included items as varied as "21 lbs. T[h]read assd.," "420 looking glasses," "8 Brass Kettles," "500 Broaches," "4600 Needles assd.," and "130 rolls of Tobacco."[16]

If physical strain and financial cost is any measure, then trying to convince Native peoples of the "peaceful and commercial dispositions of the United States" was the primary concern of the expedition.[17] Yet its "commercial dispositions" might best be described as initial investments in the broader Jeffersonian vision of agrarian expansion. This is evidenced not so much in what Lewis and Clark brought, but in what they managed to keep over the course of the entire journey. Nearly all of the "Indian Presents" ran out by the time the expedition reached the Pacific, leaving the Corps of Discovery empty handed for much of the return journey. However, the "8 Receipt Books," "6 Brass Ink Stands," "Papers Ink Powder" and "100 Quils" that Meriwether Lewis obtained at no charge from the United States Arsenal in Philadelphia were among the few items that lasted the entire journey.[18] Paper and ink did not represent weighty physical burdens, but their use and preservation required more time and care than any other aspect of the expedition. In many respects, the journals and not the journey were "the object of [the] mission," since their ultimate purpose was to guide future endeavors. Indeed, it might be said that the equipment of the expedition explains its initial purposes while the journals describe its intended consequences.

"the oeconomy of nature"

A total of nine people kept journals of varying lengths during the expedition, their combined output totaling more than a million words and including dozens of illustrations

[15] "Summary of Purchases [30 June 1803]," in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 93-99. Israel Whelan, who was the purveyor of public supplies for the federal government in Philadelphia, probably made this summary for Lewis in June 1803. Some of these items were depleted and replaced during the Winter of 1803-04 at Camp DuBois. "Provisions &c." accounted for almost a quarter of the tonnage that was loaded on to the expedition's keelboat. This included "30 half Barrels of flour" (3900 lbs.), "14 Bags of Parchmeal" (1200 lbs.), "7 Barrels of Salt" (870 lbs.) "50 kegs of Pork" (4500 lbs.), and "600 lb Grees [Grease];" [William Clark], "A Memorandum of Articles in readiness for the Voyage, [May 1804]," in Moulton, ed., *Journals*, 2: 217-218.

[16] The reference to "21 Bales of Indian Goods" comes from Clark's "Memorandum of Articles," in Moulton, ed., *Journals*, 2:218. The detailed list of items is from Lewis' "Summary of Purchases." In the summary document prepared for Lewis, "Indian Presents" cost $669.50, nearly a third of the total amount spent and significantly more than any other category. The keelboat carried a cargo of 12-14 tons, plus crew, while the two piroques carried 8 and 9 tons respectively, plus crew. See Richard C. Boss, "Keelboat, Pirogue, and Canoe: Vessels Used by the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery," *Nautical Research Journal*, 38 (June 1993), 68–87.

[17] Quote is from "Jefferson's instructions to Lewis," 62.

[18] "Summary of Purchases," 96. The 100 writing quills certainly ran out in due course, but were easily replaced during the expedition.

and nearly 140 maps. According to Jefferson's instructions, journal notes were "to be taken with great pains & accuracy, to be entered distinctly & intelligibly for others as well as your self [sic], to comprehend all the elements necessary." While much of this writing dealt with geography and river navigation, as well as information relating to the "commerce which may be carried on with the people inhabiting the line you will pursue," the bulk of the journals were largely devoted to descriptions of "the soil and face of the country, it's growth and vegetable productions, especially those not of the U.S.[,] the animals of the country generally, & especially those not known in the U.S. …; the mineral productions of every kind; but more particularly metals, limestone, pit coal, & saltpetre; salines & mineral waters," "volcanic appearances," and climate.[19]

The emphasis on plants and animals "not of the U.S." has largely been cited as an example of Jefferson's unique passion for natural history, and over the past few decades the journals have been celebrated as important scientific documents.[20] Both claims may be true, but to understand why the journals emphasized a particular subject they need to be understood in the utilitarian fashion in which they were intended. Jefferson's interest in exotic species, for instance, came from a reasonable expectation that Lewis and Clark might come across some plants in the interior of North America with the economic potential of tobacco, maize, or cotton. All native to the Americas, these crops had long been the economic backbone of commercial agriculture in eastern North America since the colonial era. Consequently, there was good reason to assume that some new plant might become equally significant for the nation.[21]

The President's hope that Lewis and Clark might find "the remains & accounts of any [animals] which may be deemed rare or extinct," including mammoths, mastodons, and other giant creatures that were only known through fossils, also needs to be interpreted in the same light. Because he believed "the oeconomy of nature … [would not permit] any one race of her animals to become extinct," Jefferson hoped the creatures could be found in "parts [that] still remain in their aboriginal state, unexplored and undisturbed by us."[22] Directing Lewis and Clark to look for the presence of mastodon bones, and hoping that living animals might still be found in the West, was not a simple

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[19] Jefferson to Lewis, 61-66.

[20] See especially, Paul Russell Cutright, *Lewis & Clark: Pioneering Naturalists* (University of Illinois Press, 1969), Gunther Barth, *Fleeting Moments: Nature and Culture in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), and Silvio A. Bedini, "The Scientific Instruments of the Lewis and Clark Expedition," in *Voyages of Discovery: Essays on the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, ed. James P. Ronda (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1998), 143-165.

[21] See Alan Taylor, "Jefferson's Pacific: The Geopolitics of Exploration," Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation Distinguished Lecture Series, 12 October 2001 <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~DRBR2/x_taylor.htm> (14 August 2019).

[22] Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia," in *Writings*, ed. Peterson, 176. Jefferson had long taken a keen interest in paleontology, and even paid William Clark to excavate a complete Mastodon skeleton in 1807 at Big Bone Lick, Kentucky; see Landon Y. Jones, *William Clark and the Shaping of the West* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 159-160.

reflection of what one writer has called the expedition's "main interest in a pure science." Rather, Jefferson believed the presence of such animals as a clear measure of the vitality and commercial potential of the environment. Much as large trees were considered a sign of soil fertility, the presence of these enormous animals would no doubt confirm the enormous productive energies of the West.[23]

The tendency to overplay the "pure science" of the expedition is far exceeded by the almost universal penchant to call the combined writings of Lewis, Clark and other expedition members a "national epic." Of course, the journals do not fit this genre at all; daily records of temperature, longitude, soils, Native markets, river courses, plants, minerals, and animals are not the stuff of epic poetry or prose. Rather, they more closely resemble the crude field notes of a land assessor or early 19th-century surveyor, and in that respect they are absolutely true to the original purpose of the expedition. Even the journal writers' frequent use of "beautiful" to describe the landscapes along the Missouri River betrays the more mundane aspects of the expedition. In American dictionaries of the early 19th century, the primary definition for "beautiful" was "fair arrangement" or "pleasing quality."[24] It is less a reference to scenic qualities than a description of how well various features of a place come together for a particular end or purpose. On some occasions the journals do make explicit reference to the purely aesthetic, but in the vast majority of the times that Lewis, Clark, or some other member of the expedition described an area as "beautiful" they meant something more practical –as in William Clark's description of modern-day Kansas City as "a butifull place for a fort, good landing place," (2: 327) or his use of "butifull Plain" and "handsom Countrey of Plains" to describe the agricultural potential of an area in what is now central South Dakota (3: 89).[25]

It is worth noting that Jefferson did famously refer to the expedition as a "literary pursuit," but he never applied this term to the journals or any of the other writings that resulted from the expedition. As he used the word in his message to Congress seeking authorization for the expedition, "literary" was associated with the efforts of "civilized nations … to enlarge the boundaries of knowledge by undertaking voyages of discovery." In this regard, Jefferson viewed the expedition on a par with, and as a challenge to, the scientific explorations of other imperial powers; namely, the recent endeavors of the

[23] Thomas O. Jewett, "Thomas Jefferson, Paleontologist," *The Early America Review,* 3 (Fall 2000): 12. Also see Paul Semonin, *American Monster: How the Nation's First Prehistoric Creature Became a Symbol of National Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 84-110.
[24] Thomas Sheridan, *A Complete Dictionary of the English Language* (Philadelphia: Printed for W. Young, Mills & Son, 1796), 28; John Entick, *Entick's New Spelling Dictionary*, ([Wilmington, Del.]: Printed and sold by Peter Brynberg, 1800), 24.
[25] These and all subsequent quotations from the *Journals* will be noted in the text with parenthetical references to the volume and page number from Moulton, ed., *Journals*.

French, Spanish and English along the Northwest Coast of North America.[26] For both European and American interests, as the historian Alan Taylor notes, the "systematic collection of data about new plants and animals helped to identify marketable commodities that would invite commercial exploitation for the external market. And new knowledge of distant peoples promised to facilitate their pacification as imperial subjects."[27] What distinguished this American venturfe in "discovery" from its European counterparts was a simple matter of emphasis; instead of searching out sea ports and oceanic trade networks, the Lewis and Clark Expedition was concerned with identifying the future sites of fur trade posts, forts, and farms.

Assessing the Future Cornerstone of Empire

Meriwether Lewis began his Journal on 31 August 1803, the day he departed Pittsburgh to head down the Ohio River with the expedition's newly constructed keelboat and a small crew. After joining up with William Clark, his slave York, and several men from Kentucky in mid-October at the Falls of the Ohio in Louisville, the enlarged group proceeded down to the Mississippi, then up that river to their winter encampment near present-day Hartford, Illinois. In the few weeks it took to travel upriver to winter quarters on the east bank of the Mississippi, he was often impressed and astounded by what he saw. Besides the abundance of animals and plants that he had never seen, or never experienced in such profusion, Lewis was especially taken with the quality of timber, the many potential mill sites along the streams flowing into the Mississippi, the number of mineral sources, and the remarkable fertility of the soil. These concerns would find echo in the first shipment of specimens that Lewis sent to Jefferson in May 1804, which included samples of Osage orange, lead ores, and an annotated chart of the Mississippi River below the mouth of the Missouri.[28]

William Clark was equally impressed with this stretch of the Mississippi, though he brought a level of familiarity to western conditions that Lewis did not possess. More a product of the Ohio frontiers than a child of Virginia, Clark was a veteran of the brutal wars that destroyed and dispossessed the tribes of the Old Northwest in the mid 1790s and a resident of the Indiana Territory when Lewis first contacted him about the expedition. His arrival on the eastern banks of the Mississippi reconnected him to the people and processes that had been scattered by the violence of the previous decade. At Camp Dubois, the expedition's winter quarters beside the *Rivière du Bois* (Wood River) and across from the mouth of the Missouri River, Clark recorded visits from what at

[26] Quote is from Jefferson, "Message to Congress," 12. Jefferson would later dissemble on this point in his communications with the Spanish; see "Carlos Martînez de Yrujo to Pedro Cevallos," in *Letters*, ed. Jackson, 4. For the North American explorations of other European empires at this time, see James R. Gibson, "The Exploration of the Pacific Coast," in *North American Exploration* Vol. 2: *A Continent Defined*, ed. John Logan Allen (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 328-396.
[27] Quotation from Alan Taylor, "Jefferson's Pacific: The Geopolitics of Exploration."
[28] Lewis to Jefferson, 18 May 1804, in *Letters*, ed. Jackson, 192-195.

times reads like a parade of the very same people he had come to know during his time in the Ohio Country. These included newly arrived Americans from Kentucky, Virginia, Ohio and Indiana, long established families of French and Native backgrounds with historic ties to the fur trade, and groups of Shawnee, Lunaapeew (Lenape, or Delaware), Kiikaapooi (Kickapoo), Bodéwadmi (Potawatomi), Myaamia (Miami) and others who had moved away from the growing numbers of Americans who had crowded into the ceded and unceded lands of these peoples were now becoming more reliant on the western edges of their old territories and pushing into the lands across the Mississippi.[29]

Clark's arrival on the Mississippi with Lewis was actually his second visit to the area since he had been sent on an intelligence gathering mission in the fall of 1795 to assess Spanish fortifications along the river. Much had changed in eight years, however, and both Lewis and Clark were witnessing the final collapse of what historian Richard White calls the "Middle Ground." Built on nearly two centuries of commercial and cultural alliances between Native villages and European colonial centers, the Middle Ground was a vast region that stretched from the western Great Lakes to the Ohio River and west to the Mississippi. It first started coming apart in the wake of the American Revolution, but several complicated factors were at play. These included the decline of fur bearing animals due to over hunting, the withdrawal of European imperial powers from eastern North America, social crises that accompanied disease epidemics, a cycle of devastating wars that lasted from the 1750s through the 1790s, and the constant encroachment of American farmers on Native lands. Unlike their British and French predecessors, the Americans had no interest in maintaining the Middle Ground, but instead sought to erase old imperial interests and their Native allies from the landscape. Nation building and private property, not colonization and the peltry trade, was the backbone of Jefferson's political vision.[30]

The American Bottom

Both Lewis and Clark's journals tended to look past the Native and Francophone inhabitants who lived on the east (Illinois Territory) side of the Mississippi River, but they were impressed with the growing presence of American settlers in the expanse of

[29] Moulton, ed., *Journals*, 2: 140. For an overview of Clark's military career in the Northwest Territory during the 1790s, see Jerome O. Steffen, *William Clark: Jeffersonian Man on the Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 20-25, Jones, *William Clark*, 49-90, and William E. Foley, *Wilderness Journey: The Life of William Clark* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press), 22-40. Among the more remarkable encounters at Camp Dubois was a Christmastime visit with a Lunaapeew (Lenape, or Delaware) leader that Clark knew from the Fort Greenville Treaty council in 1795, which ended five years of military conflict and forced a huge cession of lands that included most of present-day Ohio and portions of Indiana and Illinois. Both men were now heading in the same direction, across the Mississippi and into the Missouri River Valley –moved by the same processes but directed toward very different purposes and ends.

[30] White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 489-496.

lowlands known as the "American Bottom." Stretching along the eastern shore of the Mississippi from the mouth of the Illinois River south to the Kaskaskia River, the "Bottom" was a seemingly perfect template for the realization of Jefferson's agrarian ideal. An extraordinarily fertile area that had been built up through a series of glacial depositions and ancient river floods, the relatively level Bottom was a mosaic of seasonal wetlands, small lakes and meandering streams that supported a diverse array of plants, trees, shrubs and grasses that thrive in specific soil types and particular moisture contents. These included important food plants like goosefoot, pecans, pawpaw, persimmon, grape, sugar maples, and wild sweet potato, as well as rich foraging grounds for game animals and livestock.[31]

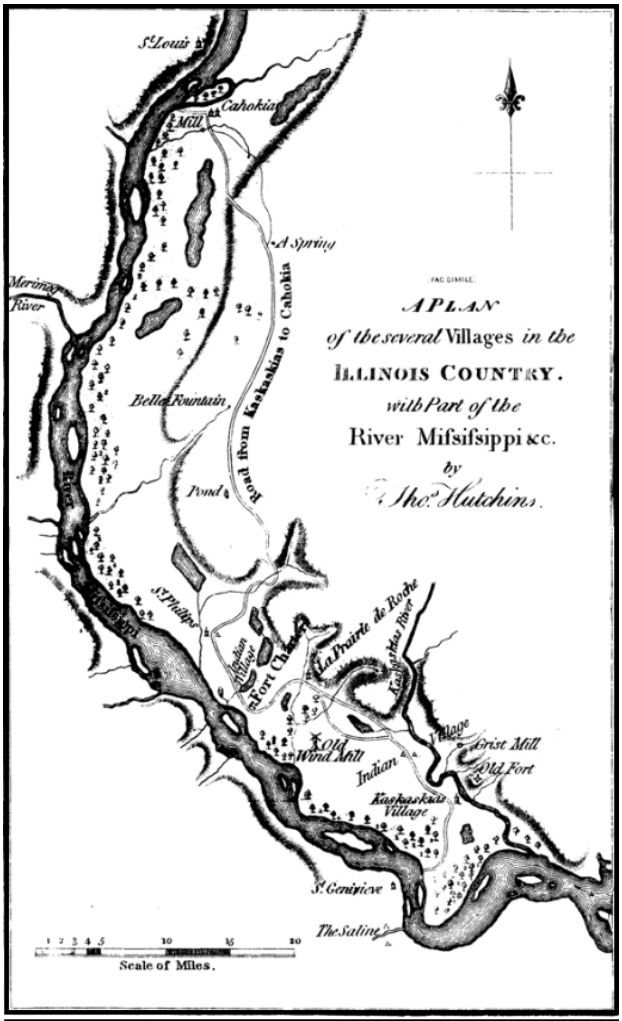


Figure 5.2: American Bottom, ca. 1778. Map shows the stretch of the American Bottom below Cahokia (in the top left of the image. Camp Dubois was located a few miles beyond the top margin of this map. Source: Thomas Hutchins, "A plan of the several villages in the Illinois country, with part of the river Mississippi &c."

The diversity of plants and trees in the American Bottom supported a similar abundance of animal life, a matter of particular importance to early American migrants who relied heavily on wild game and local forage to get them through their first seasons in a new country. When the Corps of Discovery wintered at Camp Dubois, they were never without ample supplies of game –whether killed by expedition members or purchased from Native hunters or local farmers.[32] The mix of forest, wetlands, prairie and riverside environments created numerous edge communities that not only supported large numbers of deer, rabbit and turkey, but attracted enormous populations of waterfowl during fall and spring migrations. Little wonder, then, that

[31] W. P. White, S. Johannessen, P.G. Cross, and L.S. Kelly, "Environmental Setting," in *American Bottom Archaeology: A Summary of the FAI-270 Project Contribution to the Culture History of the Mississippi River Valley*, ed. C.J. Bareis and J.W. Porter (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 15-33; Erin Ragsdale, "From the American Bottom to the Illinois Country, 1673-1830: The Struggle for Control of the North American Interior" (master's thesis, Murray State University, 2013), 88-94.
[32] See, for example, Clark's journal entry for 24 December 1803; Moulton, ed., *Journals*, 2:140.

Clark's first pronouncement on the site of his winter quarters was so positive: "The Countrey was butifull and had great appearance of Gaim" (2: 131). Visitors arriving during the spring and summer months were often astounded by the amount and variety of fish that could be taken from the shallow ponds left behind by receding flood waters. In some areas, species with very unique habitat needs could be found in different bodies of water that were sometimes just yards apart. These food sources tended to be more important to Native diets and culture, but were also utilized by non-Indians in times of pressing need.[33]

The Heart of the Continent

Even if all of this bounty was beyond the reckoning of Clark, Lewis, or any of the recruits for the Corps of Discovery, it was critical to the expected importance of St. Louis. Located in the center of the continent and at the juncture of two great biomes, the Eastern Broadleaf Forests and the Tallgrass Prairies, St. Louis and the American Bottom were situated within one of the most environmentally diverse regions on the continent. Because the Illinois, Lower Missouri and Middle Mississippi Rivers run through the intersection of several plant and animal habitat ranges, there was a higher concentration of species in the confluence area than almost anywhere else in North America. Such bounty would provide food and material resources for the next center of the North America fur trade, where refugees and migrants from other trade centers in the Southeast, the Ohio Valley, and Great Lakes were already working both sides of the Mississippi River, the Lower Missouri River, and some of its major tributaries.[34]

In the winter and spring of 1803-1804, when Meriwether Lewis spent his days in St. Louis to gather materials and information for the expedition, he encountered a cultural diversity that seemed to echo the environmental richness of the American Bottom and St. Louis. Every day he spent in St. Louis, he could hear three European languages (French, English and Spanish) and dozens of Indigenous languages in a small town that contained fewer than 200 houses. Consequently, his many conversations required the services of a translator, or depended on the multilingual abilities of the people with whom he spoke. Such towns and villages provided a measure of comfort for their residents, but they were not isolated communities that simply fed and housed their inhabitants. As adjuncts of a former colonial outpost, the primary purpose of these settlements still involved acquiring the furs of animals that lived hundreds of miles upriver and directing them back to the same markets and enterprises that had previously functioned under royal authority. The ease by which residents of St. Louis and other communities in the confluence area could

[33] Stephen Aron, *American Confluence*, 7-8.
[34] Patricia Cleary, "Contested Terrain: Environmental Agendas and Settlement Choices in Colonial St. Louis," in *Common Fields*, 58-72; Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999), 823-829; James Primm, *Lion of the Valley: St. Louis 1764-1980*, 3d ed. (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1998), 37-72.

support themselves with local resources was significant because it meant participation in imperial markets would be easier, more profitable, and more primary than just about any other pursuit.[35]



Image 5.3: Map of Missouri, Mississippi, and Illinois rivers Confluence area. Map shows the Site of the Expedition's winter encampment on Wood River, St. Louis, St. Charles, and the lower Osage River. Detail from William Clark's map of Lewis and Clark's track across the western portion of North America, from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean : by order of the executive of the United States in 1804, 5 & 6. Source: Library of Congress.

The Nature of Empire

Most of these dynamics were lost on both Lewis and Clark, who viewed the confluence area with Thomas Jefferson's eyes. To them, it seemed that the French, Spanish, and Native inhabitants of the region saw the future as if gazing through the wrong end of a spyglass. As Jefferson had expounded so many times, the laws of nature and nations determined that agriculture must be the pre-eminent commercial activity in North America, and not relegated to the mere support of imperial enterprises. If anything, capital from the lucrative fur trade should be devoted to supporting the development of agrarian settlements and market towns instead of sent away for the aggrandizement of metropolitan centers. Of course, these were idealistic views and they hardly prevented Lewis, Clark, or any other member of the expedition from profiting in the fur trade once they had returned from the Pacific. Yet such ideals profoundly shaped how they perceived the peoples and landscapes of the Missouri River throughout the spring and early summer of 1804. The future wealth and abundance of the Missouri-Mississippi confluence area was viewed almost entirely in terms of agricultural potential, as Clark made plain in a brief summary on the "Country about the mouth of the Missouri." "On the East Side of the Mississippi," he reported,

> a leavel rich bottom extends back about 3 miles, and rised by … elevations to the high Country, which is thinly timbered with Oake &. On the lower Side of the Missouri, at about 2 miles back the Country rises graduilly, to

[35] William E. Foley, *The First Chouteaus: River Barons of Early St. Louis* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 91-93; Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 81-82.

> a high plesent thinly timberd Country, the lands are generally fine on the River bottoms and well Calculating for farming on the upper Country.
>
> in the point [of land that separates the two rivers] the Bottom is extensive and emencly rich for 15 or 20 miles up each river, and about 2/3 of which is open leavel plains in which the inhabtents of St. Charles & potage de Scioux [Portage Des Sioux] had the crops of corn & wheat. On the upland is fine farming country partially timbered. (II: 218-219).

"to wander into futurity"

These general conditions, and their "Calculating" natures, persisted for several hundred miles up the Missouri River and along its many tributaries, garnering almost rapturous assessments of the whole Missouri Valley and its future in an expanding agrarian nation. The commitment to such an outcome was made all the easier when the "Praries" on the lower Missouri often had "much the appearance from the river of farms, Divided by narrow Strips of woods" (2: 355). Seeing imaginary farms on uncultivated bluffs near present-day Vermillion, South Dakota, for instance, was not the same as imagining mermaids during a voyage at sea, but the expectation that a simple act of "discovery" would make these visions come true eventually led to pronouncements that bordered on pure fantasy. Even the treeless landscapes of the plains, where the first snows arrived in early October, did little to diminish the Clark's enthusiasm about the land's agrarian potential. Confounded for weeks by the shallow and divided channels of the Missouri, and suffering from cold and physical strain, he still managed a positive assessment of the country where the expedition halted to make its winter camp: "A cloudy day Some little snow in the morning I am something better of the Rhumitism in my neck— A butifull countrey on both Sides of the river" (3: 195).[36]

Remarkably, five hard winter months in the middle of the continent only improved the assessment. On 31 March 1805, one week before the expedition departed from Fort Mandan, the conditions around St. Louis and the American Bottom seemed to inform Meriwether Lewis' assessment of the previous year's journey to present-day Washburn, North Dakota. In a letter to his mother, Lewis exclaimed that "This immence river so far as we have yet ascended, waters one of the fairest portions of the globe, nor do I believe that there is in the universe a similar extent of country, equally fertile, well watered, and intersected by such a number of navigable streams." Such a description might have applied to the Lower Missouri Valley below present-day Sioux City, Iowa, but Lewis meant the entire stretch from St. Louis nearly all the way to what is now central North Dakota. Even the lack of forests on the plains, a then commonly accepted measure of soil fertility, was construed as an extraordinary asset. Echoing Jefferson's theory that "Upper Louisiana … is one immense prairie [that] produces nothing but grass

[36] Irrigation and fertilizers eventually allowed for large monocrop agriculture on the Northern Plains, but the region is one of the least fertile landscapes on the entire expedition route. Even today rangeland exceeds cropland, which makes the Northern Plains the only large region in the U.S. where that is the case.

… [because] it is too rich for the growth of forest trees," Lewis found the plains to be "fertile in the extreem, the soil being from one to 20 feet in debth, consisting of a fine black loam, intermixed with a sufficient quantity of sand only to induce a luxuriant growth of grass and other vegitable productions."[37]

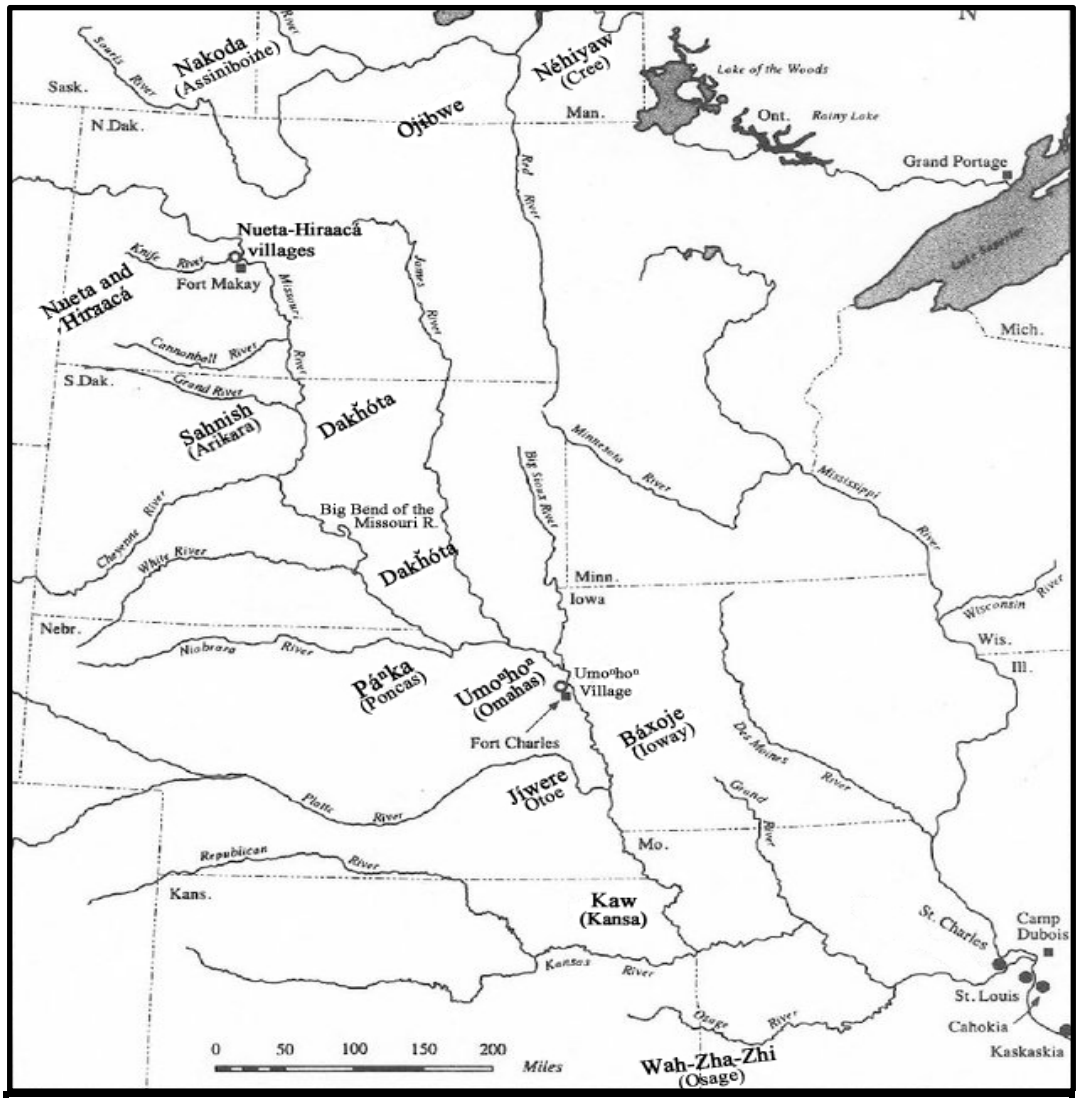


Image 5.4: Native Nations Encountered by the Corps of Discovery, ca. 1804. Thomas C. Danisis and W. Raymond Wood, "Lewis and Clark's Route Map: James MacKay's Map of the Missouri River," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 35 (Spring 2004), 55.

Such excessive enthusiasm, which often was "suffered to wander into futurity," was mirrored in the judgements that Lewis and Clark passed on the Native peoples they

[37] Jackson, ed., Letters, 223-224; Jefferson "Description of Louisiana," 8th Congress, 1st Session, November 14, 1803, American State Papers, Class X, Miscellaneous, vol. 1, p. 346). Lewis and Clark's depiction of the eastern plains as a "garden" is well covered in Allen, *Passage through the Garden: Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1991; reprint of *Passage through the Garden: Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest,* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 206-252.

encountered along the Missouri. (3: 9-10) In a region that seemed destined for agricultural use, communities were evaluated by how well their interests coincided with Nature's intentions. The Nueta (Mandan), who depended a great deal on crops for subsistence and trade, were singled out as "the most friendly, well disposed Indians inhabiting the Missouri. They are brave, humane and hospitable" (2: 402). Similar attributions were accorded other horticultural groups that lived further down the Missouri, including the Jiwére (Otoe), Niúachi (Missouri), Wah-Zha-Zhi (Osage), and Chatiks si Chatiks (Pawnee). The various bands of Lakȟóta (Lakota) and Dakhóta (Dakota), on the other hand, "ramble[d] from place to place during the greater part of the year" even though their country was "fertile, and well watered," and in many places "[lay] extremely well for cultivation." Not surprisingly, the expedition described "the best disposed" of these Indigenous peoples as little better than extortionists, while the worst were deemed "the vilest miscreants the savage race" (3: 410-418).

Louisiana Territory: Means and End

Shortly after penning his final instructions to Lewis, Jefferson proposed a constitutional amendment that would have made the Senate's acceptance of the Louisiana Purchase Treaty contingent on an "exchange [of] lands on the east side of the [Mississippi] river for those of the white inhabitants on the west side thereof."[38] A month later, when the Senate ratified the treaty without the proposed amendment, Jefferson still believed a racial land swap was still the "best use we can make of the [Louisiana Territory] for some time." As he told his friend Senator John Breckenridge, such a policy would provide "the means of filling up the Eastern side, instead of drawing off it's population. When we shall be full on this side, we may lay off a range of States on the Western bank from the head to the mouth, & so, range after range, advancing compactly as we multiply."[39]

Jefferson's desire to postpone the full incorporation of the Louisiana Territory into the United States might seem odd for someone so devoted to national expansion, but it makes sense when understood in terms of his penchant for order and careful measure. To Jefferson and many of his peers, rapid or unrestricted movement into the Trans-Applachian West had too often invited trouble and undermined the whole national community. Encroachments on Native lands brought war, land speculation brought

[38] Quote is from Jefferson's proposed amendment to the Constitution, dated July 1803; in *Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington, D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association of the United States, 1903-04), 4: 503. For Jefferson's population exchange program and proposed constitutional amendment, see Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indian*s, 254-260. Also see Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 35-53.

[39] Quotation from Jefferson to John C. Breckinridge, 12 August 1803, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 41, *11 July–15 November 1803*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 184–186.

unearned fortunes to some and financial disaster to many, and conflicts between squatters and absentee landlords led to civil discord and clogged the courts. Through an orderlay survey and federally administered land market, Jefferson hoped to temper these problems as well as stifle the tendency toward bad husbandry that came with an abundance of cheap land. Once the process of removal had been complete, and all the ceded lands in the East had been converted into private property, then the government would open "the Western bank" to individual buyers and, no doubt, restart the process of American Indian land cessions.[40]

Some of these developments did occur in one fashion or another, but none as Jefferson might have prescribed: Americans started moving into the Louisiana Territory at an unstoppable rate even before the treaty with France was ratified, the policy of implementing removal treaties was strongly resisted by most Eastern tribal nations and took more than three decades to implement, and few if any of the former subjects of France or Spain showed any inclination for swapping their lands and moving across the Mississippi River.[41] Jefferson would have viewed these developments as disappointments rather than failures, since it did not really matter how the Louisiana Territory was integrated into the United States: only that it was. For Jefferson and Lewis, it was never a question of ends, just a matter of pursuing the best means to a single end.

Trading on the Future

Purchasing the Louisiana Territory was not a one-way transaction, at least not in terms of payment without return. In time, and especially through the development of an American-based fur trade, the United States was made larger and wealthier through the acquisition of furs, pelts, skins, hides, robes, and the success of ancillary businesses associated with commerce along the Missouri River. Conversely, the "sellers" (i.e., the Native nations who engaged in the fur trade), became smaller and poorer as the U.S. government and fur trade companies appropriated sites and resources for the development of infrastructures for transportation, transshipment, and governance. Gaining wealth by impoverishing trading partners was more than a clever trick; it was the first purpose of commerce that inspired the Corps of Discovery and formed the basis of William Clark's subsequent career. As Clark had observed in the Ohio Valley, and President Jefferson clearly understood, a profitable and high-volume fur trade invariably led to "the decrease of game[,] rendering [Native] subsistence by hunting insufficient." This development in turn caused "good and influential [tribes to] … run in debt," which generally resulted in a "disposition to exchange lands, which they have to spare and we want, for necessaries, which we have to spare and they want." Jefferson was even willing

[40] Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire*, 117-119.
[41] In his letter to Jefferson, Lewis predicted this last goal might "be affected in the course of a few years." However, he gave a prescient warning that the "Canadian French" in places like St. Charles would be especially unwilling to leave their homes. Lewis to Jefferson, 28 December 1803, *Letters*, ed. Jackson, 153.

to see the trade push beyond what the market would bear and thus more rapidly force Native groups to "run in debt, because we observe that when these debts get beyond what [they] can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of lands."[42]

The Jeffersonian formula of acquiring land in the Ohio Valley usually occurred in the context of treaty violations by the U.S. government and its citizens, which generally involved the destruction of game and the de facto forfeiture of Native lands that had been recognized in a previous treaty. Consequently, what Jefferson referred to as debt was more akin to usury and appropriation. As such, it marked a novel departure from French and British approaches to the fur trade and the use of treaties as bonds of alliance as opposed to deeds of land transfer. The latter did occur in the colonial era, but generally applied to the site of a fort or town and very rarely to an expanse of territory. Because land and private property were essential pillars of the U.S. economy, and the Yeoman ideal served as Jefferson's touchstone for the American character, using treaties to build up a large reservoir of public lands was viewed as an essential condition of a republic. The use of the fur trade as an instrument for land acquisition and Native dispossession was unprecedented in its geopolitical nature and audacious in its application to a region as vast as the Upper Missouri River Basin. In many respects the trade on the Upper Missouri would serve as an early manifestation of the United States as an "Imperial Republic" that pursued territorial expansion without the consent or cooperation of its future subjects.[43]

The informal policy of expansion via the fur trade made no reference to how Native lands west of the Mississippi River –whether acquired for emigrant tribes from the East or still held by Indigenous residents –were supposed to make way for "range after range" of states. The answer ultimately hinged on a somewhat convoluted definition of sovereignty and property that was fundamental to Jeffersonian ideas about constitutional law. Jefferson made one of his fullest statements on these matters in 1812 when commenting on the Batture Case, which involved a dispute over the ownership of land in Louisiana along the shifting banks of the Mississippi River:

> That the lands within the limits assumed by a nation belong to the nation as a body, has probably been the law of every people on earth at some period of their history. A right of property in movable things is admitted before the establishment of government. A separate property in lands not till after that establishment. The right to movables is acknowledged by all the hordes of Indians surrounding us. Yet by no one of them has a separate

[42] Jefferson to William Henry Harrison, 27 February 1803, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, vol. 39, 13 November 1802–3 March 1803*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 589–593. Also see Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians*, 313.
[43] James G. Wilson, *The Imperial Republic: A Structural History of American Constitutionalism form the Colonial Era to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 91-115; Fred Anderson and Andrew R. L. Cayton, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500-2000* (New York: Viking, 2005), iii-xvi;

> property in lands been yielded to individuals. He who plants a field keeps possession till he has gathered the produce, after which one has as good a right as another to occupy it. Government must be established and laws provided, before lands can be separately appropriated, and their owner protected in his possession. [44]

As the legal historian George Dargo notes, the Batture Case proved extremely influential at both "the territorial and national levels of government." Yet the establishment of the governance that Jefferson described would still be a slow and costly business in Upper Louisiana. This was as much the result of the ongoing profitability of the trade in "moveable things" –namely peltry and hides –as the ability of powerful Native groups to deflect or avoid American authority. It is no accident that the end of both conditions and the environments that sustained them coincided with the separate appropriation of "property in lands." Before the vast region could be gridded out and owned as blocks of real estate, however, it first had to be dismantled. Government institutions, legal codes, and the property systems they made possible could not begin to develop until the peoples and landscapes that preceded them had been unmade and then reconstituted into square parcels of private property on a map.[45]

As deceptively simple and transformative as this vision sounds, it is really an expression of what James C. Scott calls the "heroic simplification of free-hold tenure." "The fiscal or administrative goal toward which all modern states aspire," he writes, "is to measure, codify, and simplify land tenure …. Accommodating the luxuriant variety of customary land tenure was simply inconceivable." Instead, land is divided by uniform bounds, and owned outright "by a legal individual who possesses wide powers of use, inheritance, or sale and whose ownership is represented by a uniform deed of title enforced through the judicial and police institutions of the state." At the heart of these matters were conceptions of citizenship, property and equality that derived entirely from the sovereignty of the nation state. In the United States, where economic independence was viewed as a requisite for the free exercise of citizenship, a man who owned the land he worked held a fundamental stake in the nation. Likewise, the nation's guarantee of individual property rights essentially defined what it meant to be equal before the law and thus equal to all other citizens. In such a formulation, which was so completely wedded to the virtues associated with commercial agriculture and fee simple title, people without

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[44] Ari Kelman, *A River and Its City: The Nature of Landscape in New Orleans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 19-33; Thomas Jefferson, "Thomas Jefferson's Statement of Facts in the Batture Case, [ca. 23 March 1811]," *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series, vol. 3, 12 August 1810 to 17 June 1811*, ed. J. Jefferson Looney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 489–499.
[45] George Dargo, *Jefferson's Louisiana: Politics and the Clash of Legal Traditions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 101; Martin Case, *The Relentless Business of Treaties: How Indigenous Land Became US Property* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2018), 42-47.

property had fewer rights than those who did. People who were property, or existed outside the state, had none.[46]

Dollars on the Penney

One of the more fanciful myths about the Louisiana Purchase describes it as the greatest real estate bargain of all time. For approximately $15 million, the story goes, the United States bought from France over 828,000 square miles of the richest land in North America at a cost of just 4¢ per acre.[47] For people who envy the good fortune of land speculators, and think of land in terms of property rights and boundaries, this is a powerful image. What could Napoleon have possibly been thinking? How amazingly shrewd and forward thinking of Thomas Jefferson. As both Jefferson and Napoleon were well aware, and as the leaders of all the great imperial powers understood quite clearly, the United States only took possession of a few hundred acres of definable real estate: namely, "the adjacent Islands belonging to Louisiana[,] all public lots and Squares, … and all public buildings, fortifications, barracks and other edifices which are not private property."[48] Beyond this, the United States purchased from France the exclusive right of commercial access to the vast territory that made up the western drainage of the Mississippi River. In contemporary terms the Louisiana Purchase might be called a licensing agreement, like an exclusive contract to sell only Coke, not Pepsi, in a particular region. All commercial activity would have to essentially be licensed by federal government, and thus take place under the guidelines and to the ultimate benefit of the United States and its citizens. Likewise, any future land acquisitions could only be contracted by recognized American Indian communities and federal officials, and could not involve any other private or imperial concern. As Jefferson stated quite plainly in a letter to Meriwether Lewis, the United States had "become sovereigns of the country, without however any diminution of the Indian rights of occupency we are authorised to propose to them in direct terms the institution of commerce with them."[49]

Like all transactions between imperial powers, the trade monopoly that the United States acquired in the Louisiana Territory was not necessarily permanent. It would only hold so long as Native peoples agreed to enter into and maintain commercial relations with American traders. Any failure in this regard, whether the result of Native resistance to American overtures or effective competition from traders based in British Canada or Spanish New Mexico, and the United States would forfeit its dearly bought commercial

[46] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 36; Jacqueline Stevens, *Reproducing the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 100.
[47] Like a fish story, the purchase size is often reported as larger, and the price per acre as less. The more commonly stated, but mathematically impossible figure is 3¢ per acre.
[48] Louisiana Purchase Treaty, April 30, 1803; General Records of the U.S. Government; Record Group 11; National Archives. <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=18> (19 November 2019).
[49] Thomas Jefferson to Meriwether Lewis, 22 January 1804, in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 165.

privileges along with the expectation that it would eventually acquire American Indian lands outright. No imperial power would politely abide American weakness in this regard any more than Native peoples would accord the United States a most favored nation trading status just because a piece of paper was signed in Paris. Though it is often overlooked, the most significant achievement of the Lewis and Clark Expedition was the effective establishment of American "institutions of commerce" in the Native trade networks of the Missouri River.[50]

Beyond the initial $15 million, putting a dollar figure on the full purchase price of Louisiana would first have to include the salary of all government and military personnel, and the price of construction and maintenance for every building, fort and outpost involved in the administration of the fur trade and relations with Native peoples. It would then have to include the cost of the more than three dozen treaties that William Clark and his agents conducted over his long tenure, the annuities paid out to tribes for the purchase of their lands along the lower Missouri River drainage, and the costs incurred when forcing eastern tribes to relocate west of the Mississippi River. As this brief ledger suggests, the ongoing purchase of Louisiana was neither a simple nor an inexorable task. Rather, it required tremendous political and ideological force as well as tact. Following the likely suicide of Meriwether Lewis, this responsibility fell to William Clark, who understood that bringing Jefferson's dream up the Missouri River required patience and time, as well as finding an effective balance between the success of the St. Louis-based fur trade and the dismantling of the Native worlds on which it was based. Finding that balance and tipping it in favor of America's long-term national interests, became the purpose and goal of William Clark's post-expedition career.[51]

Though substantial, all of that is just the first half of the bargain. The purchase price of Louisiana would also have to include substantial portions of the costs associated with the Civil War, since much of that conflict centered on (and was triggered by) the question of slavery's expansion into the West. Yet even then the accounting is not finished. Much of the Upper Missouri country was not acquired by treaty until 1868, which was not fully in force until the famous "Plains Wars" had ended a decade later. The treaties of the 1860s and the wars they spawned were themselves the result of congressional acts that authorized several transcontinental rail lines, all of which received substantial land grants for the routing, construction, and financing of these extremely capital-intensive projects. By 1871, when most federal revenues were still based on land sales, railroad corporations had received free title to more than 110 million acres of the most valuable portions of the public domain west of the Mississippi River. The largest of

[50] Robert Edward Lee, "Louisiana Purchases: The US-Indian Treaty System in the Missouri River Valley," (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2017), 44-63.
[51] Willam E. Foley, *Wilderness Journey: The Life of William Clark* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 160-195.

these was the 1864 Northern Pacific land grant, which contained nearly forty million acres in a 2,000 mile long swath, with approximately three-fourths of the granted lands encompassing most of the route of the Lewis and Clark Expedition within the boundaries of the original Louisiana Territory.[52]

While a good deal of sophisticated accounting might come up with a firm dollar value for the Louisiana Territory, it is important to note that the purchase of the regions Lewis and Clark traversed between St. Louis and the Rocky Mountains basically occurred in two phases. The first went through the 1830s and largely involved the costs associated with two things: "constructing a geography of extraction across the Upper Missouri" that funneled animal pelts and Native resources to Saint Louis; and working out the forced relocation of eastern tribes to what later became Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas.[53] The second phase built on the first and was characterized by further military exploration, a second wave of American Indian removals, and increased encroachments on Native territories along the Platte and Upper Missouri River drainages. Largely concerned with establishing permanent settlements and new infrastructures, this second phase might be said to have begun with the creation of Iowa Territory in 1838 and ended with the collapse of the fur trade in the late 1860s and construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad in the early 1870s.

It was in the first half of this long purchase that the legacies and memory of the Lewis and Clark Expedition were most immediate and concrete, finding their clearest expression in the long and prosperous career of William Clark. From 1807 until his death in 1838, Clark served variously as Brigadier General of the Territorial Militia, Governor of Missouri Territory, and Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis. Over the course of this time he was also a founding board member of the Missouri Fur Company, a successful trader in real estate, and the beneficiary of rich government contracts. In other words, he combined personal and private interests in ways that made him absolutely essential to the growth of the fur trade, the negotiation of American Indian treaties, the administration of American Indian Removal, the mapping and surveying of land acquisitions, and the prosecution of military campaigns against "recalcitrant" Native groups. It could easily be said that Clark was the man who handled the critical transactions that ultimately purchased the Upper Louisiana Territory.[54]

Making people disappear, or transforming the environments that sustained them and that they had a hand in creating, was no simple task. It required tremendous political

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[52] For an economistic overview see Lloyd J. Mercer, *Railroads and Land Grant Policy: A Study in Government Intervention* (New York: Academic Press, 1982). For the Northern Pacific case, see Derrick Jensen et al., *Railroads and Clearcuts: The Legacy of Congress's 1864 Northern Pacific Railroad Land Grant* (Spokane: Inland Empire Public Lands Council, 1995).
[53] Quote is from Robert Kelley Schneiders, *Big Sky Rivers: The Yellowstone and Upper Missouri* (University Press of Kansas, 2003), 166.
[54] On Clark's post-expedition career, see Foley, *Wilderness Journey,* 160-224.

and ideological force. It also required tact, which Lewis did not have. His poor performance as Governor of Upper Louisiana, his many debts, and his failures in land speculation were all symptoms of his inability to make his simple vision work –and no doubt contributed to his tragic but not unexpected suicide in 1809. William Clark, on the other hand, proved an able politician, diplomat, and businessman who understood that bringing Jefferson's agrarian dream up the Missouri River would require a great deal of patience and time to balance the success of a St. Louis-based fur trade against the dismantling of Native worlds. Finding that balance, and tipping it in favor of the United States' long-term national interests, would be the purpose and goal of William Clark's life for the next thirty years.

Quadfecta of Empire: The Missouri—Yellowstone Confluence, 1805

The imperial vision that inspired President Jefferson, and animated the Corps of Discovery, found one of its fullest affirmations at the Confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers. As noted above, the treeless expanse of prairie that extended out to the horizon in every direction, was confirmation that the Upper Missouri was the "fairest," most extensive, navigable, "fertile, [and] well watered," expanse "of country" in "the universe." As such, it seemed to represent the future seat of Jefferson's vision for an "empire for liberty" that would be based on "the four pillars of our prosperity[:] … Agriculture, manufactures, commerce and navigation." Commerce, in the form of the fur trade, would be the initial engine of prosperity as well as a basis for establishing peaceful relations with Indigenous nations. In time, however, U.S. policy would exploiting the toll that disease, conflict, and a growing dependence on trade had taken on Native communities, and thus require their "rights of occupancy" through treaty annuities (i.e. food, materials, cloth, and other goods as annual payments over a set period of time for the ceded lands.) In Jefferson's most optimistic imaginings, Native dispossession and the "empire for liberty" it fostered, might eventually "bring the North [British Canada] into our confederacy." From the comforts of Monticello and the inspiring vistas above the meeting of two great rivers, the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence held the promise of commercial prosperity, peaceful dispossession, agrarian expansion, and a unified continental empire.[55]

[55] Jefferson, "1st Annual Message to Congress, 8 December 1801," *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, vol 36, 1 December 1801-3 March 1802,* ed. Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Pres, 2010), 8; "Jefferson's Instructions to Lewis, 20 June 1803," in Jackson, ed., *Letters*, 61; "Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 27 April 1809," *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series, vol. 1, 4 March 1809 to 15 November 1809*, ed. Looney, 168–170.



Image 5.5: Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence. "I had a most pleasing view of the country, particularly of the wide and fertile vallies formed by the missouri and the yellowstone rivers … in their passage through these delightfull tracts of country." Meriwether Lewis, 25 April 1805.[56] Source: Image from Prince Maximilian zu Wied, *Travels in the Interior of North America*, trans. by H. Evans Lloyd (London, Ackermann and Co., 1843-44). Source: University of Utah Libraries.

[56] Lewis, journal entries for Thursday April 25th 1805 and Friday April 26th 1805, in *The Definitive Journals of Lewis and Clark, Volume 4: From Fort Mandan to Three Forks,* ed. Moulton (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 67, 69-70. Lewis' use of the term "redwood" might be a reference to red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*).

Chapter Six

Shifting the Axes of Empire and the Nature of Trade: The Rise of St. Louis and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade

The importance of the St. Louis-based fur trade derived from the early 17th century French trade that extended up the Lower Missouri River as far as present-day Iowa, and from the later efforts of Pierre Laclède and Auguste Chouteau to establish an extensive trade among the powerful Wah-Zha-Zhi (Osage) in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. While these regional legacies primed St. Louis to become an important center in the fur trade of the Louisiana Territory, it wasn't until the return of the Corps of Discovery (aka Lewis and Clark expedition) in 1806 that traders, merchants, and investors began to size-up the lucrative possibilities of the Upper Missouri River. As a series of fur trading expeditions and small enterprises developed in the 1810s, St. Louis was well-poised for growth. When the fur trade became concentrated in the borderlands of the Northern Plains in the 1820s, St. Louis and the Chouteau family became the dominant players in the U.S. based fur trade and served as a heavy counterweight to any southern aspirations the Hudson's Bay Company may have still harbored.

As the historian Stephen Aron notes, early 19th-century St. Louis was a borderland that fronted on and received people from multiple regions, where Native peoples from the Illinois country, former subjects of France and England, American settlers and peddlers, enslaved peoples of African descent, and still powerful Native nations like the (Osage) could be found within the town and around the confluence of several great rivers. As Washington Irving described an imagined scene on the riverfront,

> the population at St. Louis [was] even more motley than that at Mackinaw. Here were to be seen about the river banks, the hectoring, extravagant, bragging boatmen of the Mississippi, with the gay, grimacing, singing, good-humored Canadian voyageurs. Vagrant Indians, of various tribes, loitered about the streets. Now and then, a stark Kentucky hunter, in leathern hunting-dress, with rifle on shoulder and knife in belt, strode along. Here and there were new brick houses and shops, just set up by bustling, driving, and eager men of traffic from the Atlantic States; while, on the other hand, the old French mansions, with open casements, still retained the easy, indolent air of the original colonists.[1]

[1] Quotation from Washington Irving, *Astoria, or Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains* (New York: John B. Alden, Publisher, 1884), 107 *Astoria* was first published in 1836, about five years after his visit to St. Louis. Also see Irving, *A Tour on the Prairies* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1835).

Irving did not visit St. Louis until 1830, and so his vignette represents a blend of the place he experienced along with an imagined sense of the past. Nevertheless, it captures the diversity of prospects and interests that preceded his arrival by a decade-and a-half.[2]

A Son of the North American Fur Trade

One person who embodied the many facets of this diverse world and the people who would become involved in the fur trade, was a young man named George Drouillard a Métis (French-*Canadien* and Shawnee) whose father Pierre had been a private trapper and a Captain in the British Indian Department where he served as a Scout and an Interpreter. Pierre very likely met George's mother, Asoundechris (trans. Flat Head), during the Revolutionary War when he travelled to the Shawnee village at present-day Sandusky, Ohio, to ransom an American prisoner and escort him to Fort Lernault (Detroit) for interrogation. As an interpreter he worked out of Fort Malden (present-day Amherstbug, Ontario), which was built shortly after the end of the Northwest Indian War in 1795. Pierre's familiarity with the Shawnee and his language skills made him all the more valuable after 1795 when some Shawnee and allied Native communities moved to the Canadian side of the Detroit River to gain separation from the growing U.S. population in the Ohio Valley.[3]

Among these was a group of Shawnee from present-day northwestern Ohio who moved to what is now Trenton, Michigan. Led by the aging Shawnee war leader Weyapiersenwah (aka Blue Jacket), this community likely included a number of close relatives of Asoundechris and, because the Shawnee are matrilineal (i.e., descent runs through the mother), George would have been embraced by her kin as a full member of the Shawnee nation. This latter detail likely explains George Drouillard's presence on the lower Ohio River and the area around Cape Girardeau (Missouri Territory), on the Mississippi River from its confluence with the Ohio. It was there that his mother's community moved in the late 1790s after acquiring a land grant from the Governor of New Spain, and it is where Drouillard was living when he was recruited for the Corps of Volunteers for Northwest Discovery in 1803.[4] Like many of his fellow expedition members when they returned to St. Louis, Drouillard regaled his friends and acquaintances about the beaver-rich country of the Northwestern Plains. This information

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[2] Stephen Aron, *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 17-35

[3]Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds., *The Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1775-1777* (Madison, Wisconsin historical society, 1908), 127-128.

[4] M.O. Skarsten, *George Drouillard: Hunter and Interpreter for Lewis and Clark and Fur Trader, 1807-1810* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 17-20; Lawrence Barkwell, *The Metis Men of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806* (Winnipeg: Louis Riel Institute, 2009), 4-5; John Sugden, *Blue Jacket, Warrior of the Shawnees* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 173-175, 181-82, 185-90, 218-220, 257-260; Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors*, 14-24; On the move to Cape Girardeau, see John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 105-06.

created a great deal of excitement in St. Louis and inspired Manuel Lisa, who had previously traded with the Wah-Zha-Zhi (Osage), to lead a fur trapping expedition to the Upper Missouri and Upper Yellowstone rivers in present day Montana and Wyoming.[5]

A large group of 43 men set off from St. Louis in April of 1807, and included three other members of the Corps of Discovery who, upon their return to St. Louis the previous year, had also talked-up the prospects for the beaver trade. Anxious to be the first to tap this opportunity, Lisa pressed his men with an uncompromising leadership style that emphasized harsh discipline and frequent tongue lashings. All were apparently on display in the second week of May, as Lisa's brigade approached the mouth of the Osage River near present-day Jefferson City, Missouri. On May 14, Lisa received news that a man named Antoine Bissonnet had stolen some blankets and equipment then fled upriver. In a rage, Lisa directed Drouillard to go after Bissonnet and ordered him to shoot if necessary. While Drouillard had received the same order a few years earlier from Captain William Clark, that matter was resolved without the use of firearms and only resulted in harsh physical punishment of the deserter. This time Drouillard did fire his gun, and his action proved fatal.[6]

Drouillard was subsequently put on trial in September 1808, but ultimately benefitted from the testimony of a witness who stated that Drouillard had "shot Bazine [Bissonet] but he did not die. Mr. Drouillard said he was sorry for it, and he came back to camp to bring some more men with him to take the wounded man to the camp." The jury acquitted him on the ground that he was only following orders and placed most of the blame on Lisa: both for giving the order to fire on Bissonet, and for not providing sufficient care for the badly wounded man. Lisa's wealth and influence in St. Louis likely kept him from being arrested and tried. However Drouillard may have felt about this latter development, he needed money and joined up with Lisa's newly created Missouri Fur Company and a forthcoming expedition to establish a network of trading posts on the Upper Missouri and Yellowstone rivers. In 1810, Drouillard led the small group that established Fort Henry (aka Fort Three Forks) near the upper reaches of the Missouri River. Later that same year he was killed and brutally mutilated, most likely by Piikáni (Blackfeet) who had banned fur trappers from the region.[7]

Culturally, Drouillard represents the most common participants of the Upper Missouri trade; namely, Métis peoples from the Great Lakes and the Ohio Valley. Moreover, as a member of the Shawnee nation, Drouillard had also experienced the fur

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[5] Skarsten, *George Drouillard*, 300-305.
[6] William Clark field notes, August 6, 1804, in *The Definitive Journals of Lewis and Clark, Volume 2: From the Ohio to the Vermillion,* ed. Gary E. Moulton (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 2:452; and Clark's Journal for August 7, 1804, op. cit. 2:455. Also see Skarsten, *George Drouillard*, 274, 279.
[7] Skarsten, *George Drouillard*, 300-305.

trade along the lower Ohio River from the perspective of Native peoples who had traded with and confronted colonial powers since the early 17th century. His parents' family histories also carried the legacies of the imperial wars that swept the eastern half of the continent, and the fur trade enterprises that were variously destroyed and created in the process. Lastly, and perhaps most evocatively, the geographic arc of Drouillard's life spans the near entirety of the fur trade within the current bounds of the United States: from the Upper Ohio Valley and the lower Great Lakes to the Detroit River, across the continent along the entire length of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, the Snake River Basin, and the lower 330 miles of the Columbia River to present-day Astoria, and multiple passings through the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers.[8]

Drouillard's brief career also embodies the fluid identities that functioned best in the kaleidoscopic world of cultures, objectives, and outcomes that defined the fur trade as well as the Indigenous and imperial contexts in which it operated. Drouillard was at least trilingual (French, English, and Shawnee), and likely had a passing knowledge of the (Iroquoian) Wyandot language. Because the Shawnee speak an Algonquian language, he was probably able to decipher common terms and basic language structures of the Anishinaabeg who lived around the northern Great Lakes, as well as the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), Aaniiih (aka Gros Ventre), and Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree) the Corps of Discovery encountered on the Great Plains. Along with the complexities of his identity and the breadth of his adaptability, Drouillard was variously a subject of the British Empire, the Spanish Empire, the United States, and the son of a former subject of the French Empire. What makes these various facets of his relatively short life so remarkable is the simple fact that they were hardly unique to him. Instead of a historical anomaly, he is an archetype. Drouillard's violent death and dismemberment, and his participation in the actions directed by Manuel Lisa, also convey a harsh truth about the Upper Missouri fur trade. Namely, it was a physically taxing and almost inherently violent business controlled by strong personalities who indentured people for a relatively slim chance at a modest future.[9]

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[8] Sami Lakömaki, *Gathering Together: The Shawnee People through Diaspora and Nationhood, 1600-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 13-19; Stephen Warren, *The Worlds the Shawnees Made: Migration and Violence in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 28-33; Owen Dunbar Wheeler, *The Trail of Lewis and Clark, 1804-1904: A Story of the Great Exploration Across the Continent in 1804-6; with a Description of the Old Trail, Based Upon Actual Travel Over It, and of the Changes Found a Century Later*, 2 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 99-112.

[9] While Drouillard shows up in a variety of historical documents that include his baptismal document in the Mission des Hurons de la Pointe de Montréal du Détroit, (aka Assumption Church in present-day Windsor, Ontario), land deeds in the St. Louis area, and court records associated with the death of Antoine Bissonnet, his few biographers have generally used him as a cipher for presenting their admiration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. See, for example, James Alexander Thom, *Sign-Talker: The Adventures of George Drouillard on the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (New York: Random House Publishing, 2000). It is also important to note that he killing of Drouillard and John Potts (another veteran of the Corps of Discovery) confirmed the Piikáni threat. It also represented a message to any who came after. The search party that

While George Drouillard's life closely tracks the broad patterns of the North American fur trade, his disposition and talents were probably more suited to the smaller trading outfits and satellite posts that operated on the Northern Plains in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The latter were generally associated with a fort that received furs, pelts, and robes from more remote posts, then counted, sorted, packed, stored the items then shipped them to a market center. While direct trade also occurred at a large fort, the smaller post did not take on the sort of storage and accounting that occurred in the larger nodal points of the trade. Based on what little is known of Drouillard, it seems likely that he could have managed a small satellite post and would have enjoyed the social nature of visiting with Native peoples, the back-and-forth of trade, and the degree of responsibility he would have garnered. Manuel Lisa probably recognized some of these talents when he sent Andrew Henry, Drouillard, and John Potts (another veteran of the Corps of Discovery) to establish Fort Henry at the Three Forks of the Missouri River (near present-day Three Forks, MT). However, Lisa apparently viewed Drouillard as something less; namely, a hunter, trapper, laborer, and translator under contract. More significantly, in regards to his final fate, he was also a trespasser. The Piikáni had previously warned against hunting and trapping in the area, and made good on their threats to kill trespassers less than two months after Fort Henry was built.[10]

The Post System and the Early Carrying Trade on the Northern Plains

While Manuel Lisa's fur trade endeavors blended trapping brigades with small, strategically placed fur trade posts, the British generally operated within the post system of trade, which had been developed by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in the early 18th century, adopted by the North West Company in the late 18th century, and established on the Northern Plains by the American Fur Company in the first half of the 19th century. In general, the British post system involved the establishment of a main fort, often with a few satellite posts, where First Nations peoples would bring pelts, skins, robes, and other products of the hunt for trade. Beyond the posts, and especially when developing new trade opportunities, the fur trade companies generally carried their trade wares to a small or temporary facility that was erected near an important village or rendezvous area.[11]

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later found Drouillard's remains stated that he had been beheaded and disemboweled, and thus presented as a gruesome warning to any who might follow. See Lawrence Barkwell, *The Metis Men of the Lewis and Clark Expedition 1804-1806* (Winnipeg: Louis Riel Institute, 2004), 5.

[10] The killing of Drouillard and John Potts (another veteran of the Corps of Discovery), certainly confirmed the Piikáni threat. It also represented a message to any who came after. The search party that later found Drouillard's remains stated that he had been beheaded and disemboweled, and thus presented as a gruesome warning to any who might follow. See Lawrence Barkwell, *The Metis Men of the Lewis and Clark Expedition 1804-1806* (Winnipeg: Louis Riel Institute, 2004), 5.

[11] Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 4-5; David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West 1807-1840: A Geographical Synthesis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 41-43

A hybrid of the post system and the "carrying trade" developed in the 1780s and 1790s along the Assiniboine River in present day Manitoba, when the British North West Company (NWC) sought to undercut the trade that ran east along the river to the HBC's headquarters at Upper Fort Garry (present-day Winnipeg). Toward these ends, the NWC built Fort des Épinettes (Pine Fort) in 1785, just east of an important portage on the Assiniboine River and near the mouth of the Souris River. The HBC later countered in 1794 with the construction of Brandon House (near present-day Brandon Manitoba), a few miles to the west. The result of this competition, for Native peoples, was more convenient access to trade goods and wares that could be acquired for less furs, pelts, skins and other products of the hunt. For the better part of two decades, both companies used their facilities on the Assiniboine River as bases for carrying trade to the Nueta (Mandan) and Hiraacá (Hidatsa) villages on the Knife River.[12]

Given the remote location of these operations, and the difficulties associated with transport, W. Raymond Wood and Thomas P. Thiessen note that the trade was generally limited to "small items such as firearms and gun accessories, knives and other edged and pointed tools and weapons, personal vanities, tobacco, blankets and other woven goods, … glass beads" and, perhaps, alcohol. In return, the traders generally acquired "buffalo robes, wolf and fox pelts, beaver pelts, and a few otter pelts and bear skins …. Other important commodities were horses, mules, [sled] dogs, Indian corn, and female captives." While these efforts showed potential for long term commercial expansion, sustaining the trade came with inherent dangers that included harsh winter conditions and the threat of attack by Nakoda (Assiniboine) and Dakȟóta (Dakota), who could easily overtake a small group of traders on foot. Uncertainty and the possibility of attack seems to have made this trade more exploratory than a sure prospect to be pursued. Moreover, efforts to expand trade from the Assiniboine River Valley resulted in a new arena of competition between the HBC and the XY Company (a newer company made up of disgruntled, former NWC employees) competed for trade with the Nahkawininiwak (aka Plains Ojibwe, Bungi, or Manitoba Saulteaux) and others who hunted bison in the Souris River Valley and produced pemmican (a dense, protein rich food that preserved well) to be used as provender for voyageurs and fur company boatmen who worked the northern rivers. [13]

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[12] 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), 96-112.

[13] List of items come from post journals, which are presented in ibid., pp. 52-69. Also see Earla Elizabeth Croll, "The Influence of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Exploration and Settlement of the Red River Valley of the North" (masters' thesis, North Dakota State University, 2014), 43-51; and George Colpitts, *Pemmican Empire: Food, Trade, and the Last Bison Hunts in the British American West, 1780–1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 100-128.

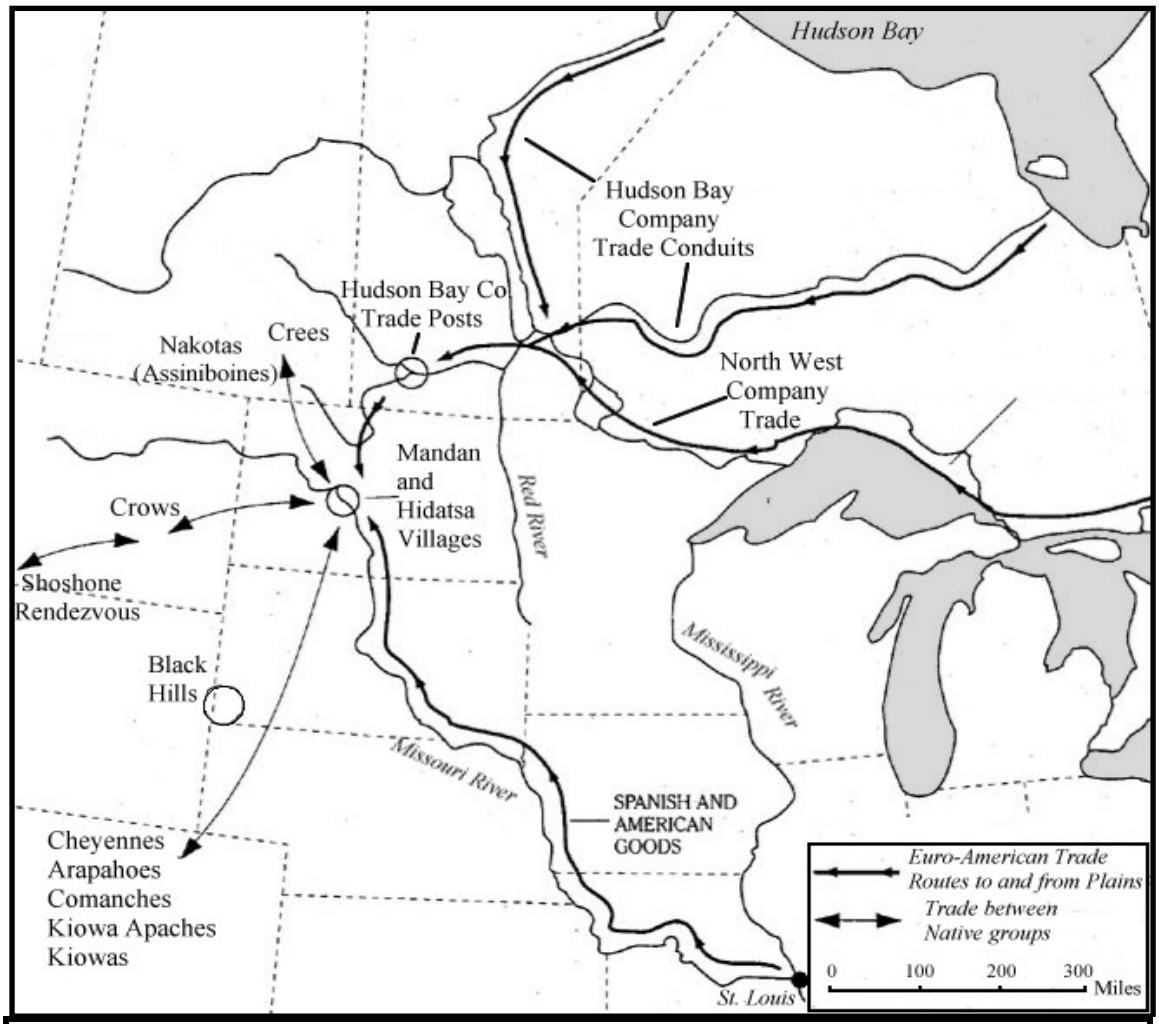


Image 6.1: Upper Missouri River Trade Networks, ca. 1800. With surplus crops to trade and established connections within colonial trade networks, Upper Missouri River villages attracted most of the trade coming off of the Northern and Northeastern Plains, as well as the prairie country to the east. The general location of the NWC and HBC forts along the Assiniboine River are encompassed by the circle to the north of the Upper Missouri Villages. As the map further indicates, NWC traders followed long-used routes from Grand Portage and the Upper Great Lakes to the Upper Missouri River. HBC traders followed Néhinaw (Cree and Swampy Cree) routes from Hudson Bay and James Bay. Source: Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site (NPS).

Besides the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company men who made seasonal journeys to the Missouri River villages, a few independent free traders lived among the Nueta and Hiraacá. Some had come down from British Canada, perhaps to escape an onerous contract or situation, but others did not seem to have a back story. One such person was Toussaint Charbonneau, who previously worked at Fort des Épinettes in the late 1780s before moving to the Upper Missouri. Best known as the French *Canadien* husband of the teen-aged Sacagawea, a Kutsundika (Buffalo Eater Shoshone) who had been taken captive by Hiraacá raiders a few years before the Corps of Discovery spent

the winter of 1804-05 at Fort Mandan. While Charbonneau married a young captive, most resident traders married women from their host community. In doing so, they, through their spouses and children, became integrated into the tight web of kinship networks that defined life in the villages as well as relations with other allied communities.[14]

The only semi-permanent trading post in the late 18th century was established by René Jusseaume, a North West Company trader who arrived with five assistants and a cache of trade goods in the late summer or the early fall of 1794. Soon after his arrival, Jusseaume divided about half of his cache of trade goods with Sieur Ménard (Old Menard), a resident trader living within the Nueta village. Jusseaume then directed his assistants to build a small trading fort and a hut, where he would reside and keep his trade goods through the fall and winter. In spring, Jusseaume returned north to Brandon House with the furs he obtained in trade, then returned to his post on the Missouri River in October. This pattern lasted until 1797, but was given up when Jusseaume caught word that the Spanish Governor of *Luisiana* (aka Louisiana) had dispatched a small expedition to close down his trading venture.[15]

A Polyglot Business: the Carrying Trade from St. Louis

While the fur trade employed people of various ethnic backgrounds with roots in the British Isles, Spanish North America, France, Quebec, New England, the Ohio Valley, the Gulf Coast, and a variety of Indigenous nations, the territories in which these peoples worked were invariably defined by imperial claimants with whom their employees or agents had few if any cultural associations. The man who led the expedition to expel Jusseaume from Spanish Louisiana, for instance, was James MacKay, a Scotsman by birth who had previously worked as a trader in British Canada. Jusseaume's post, which later become known as Fort Makay, is described in Spanish records as the "English fort located near the Mandan nation on the upper Missouri [that] was built by the English Company of the North [aka North West Company] in July of 1794."[16]

Manuel Lisa, for his part, was a Spanish citizen when he acquired a trade license from French officials in 1802, then later became an American citizen in compliance with U.S. regulations regarding the fur trade in the western territories. Conversely, Auguste Chouteau entered the fur trade when the Louisiana Territory was under Spanish jurisdiction. The fluid and ill-defined boundaries of imperial claims and cultural

[14] Wood and Thiessen, *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains*, 138-143.
[15] Thiesson, *The Phase I Archeologial Research Program for the Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Part II: Ethnohistorical Studies* (Lincoln: National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, 2000), 48-50; A.P. Nasatir, *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804* (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1952), 1:331.
[16] On MacKay's errand and the translation of the Spanish description of Jusseaume's Post, see bid., Thiesson, *The Phase I Archeologial Research Program*, 49.

associations were reflected in the movements of peoples and licensing of companies throughout the history of the fur trade in North America, but it became especially complex in the Upper Missouri River Basin. Consequently, no one seemed to find any irony in a Scotsman working for Spain to chase a Frenchman back to a British licensed trading company. In their own ways, MacKay and George Drouillard epitomized three centuries of imperial crosscurrents and continuities in the North American fur trade, which became especially pronounced in the last contested fur trade region of the former Louisiana Territory (aka *La Luisiana* [Spanish], or *La Louisiane* [French]).

The variety of people and nationalities who played cat-and-mouse on the Upper Missouri were even more fully reflected in the small but growing town of St. Louis. In the early 1800s, St. Louis functioned as the key exchange point in the Missouri River fur trade. Trappers and traders used pirogues, keelboats, rafts, and other makeshift watercraft to bring furs to the city, which they usually sold to a licensed buyer who in turn stored the items in a riverside warehouse. The furs and skins were subsequently processed by a small industry that involved sorting, grading, weighing, and pressing the furs into packs that were then loaded onto ships bound for New Orleans, and thence to New York, London, and Guanzhou (aka Canton). St. Louis also served as the depot for trade wares destined for upriver posts and rendezvous points. These trade goods included guns, woolens, fabrics, silks, jewelry, lead, European glass beads, needles and thread, metal wares bridles, gunpowder, kettles, axes, blades, awls, and more—all coming to St. Louis via the same shipping routes that had carried furs to East Asia, Europe, and the eastern seaboard of the United States. Once off-loaded from the ships, the cargo was stored in the warehouse district, which was almost entirely owned by the Chouteau family by the early 1820s. Depending on river levels, trade goods were then shipped upriver in late spring or mid-summer, to be organized again at fur trade posts in time for the fall and winter trade seasons.[17]

The movement of so much trade, the variety of ports it entailed, the complexity of waterborne shipments along rivers, coastlines and across oceans all required a great deal of planning—as well as insurance and back-up plans in case vessels were damaged and cargo was lost. Keeping track of the furs, pelts and skins that moved between St. Louis and upriver posts, as well as the trade items that arrived via the Mississippi River, also required a good deal of bureaucratic oversight. As William E. Foley and Charles David Rice note, Auguste Chouteau learned a hard lesson from his step-father's insufficient

[17] J. Thomas Scharf, *History of St. Louis and County, From the Earliest Periods to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Representative Men* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts & Co., 1883) 1: 288-91; Stephen Aron, *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, 171-72; Anne F. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 8. Scharf notes that as early as 1804, when the Lewis and Clark Expedition was just setting out, St. Louis-based fur trade companies pulled in $200,000 in profit, with $170,000 directly associated with the "pelts and skins of beaver, deer, and others," p. 274.

attention to the details of running a fur trade business, and the need to accurately account for all revenues and debts. "The cautious and conservative approach that characterized Auguste's later business operations was no accident. Laclède's casual sense of invoicing and accounting undermined the business and resulted in more than a few avoidable misfortunes. These proved to be important lessons that Auguste Chouteau would take to heart, and they clearly informed his sense that the fur trade was a lucrative and inherently "risky enterprise in which shrewd judgement and sound business practices were essential."[18] Not surprisingly, Auguste maintained a small army of clerks who kept careful records of outgoing and incoming shipments, losses, assets, the number of furs each Chouteau affiliated trader send down the river, and the amount of credit he used to buy trade goods.

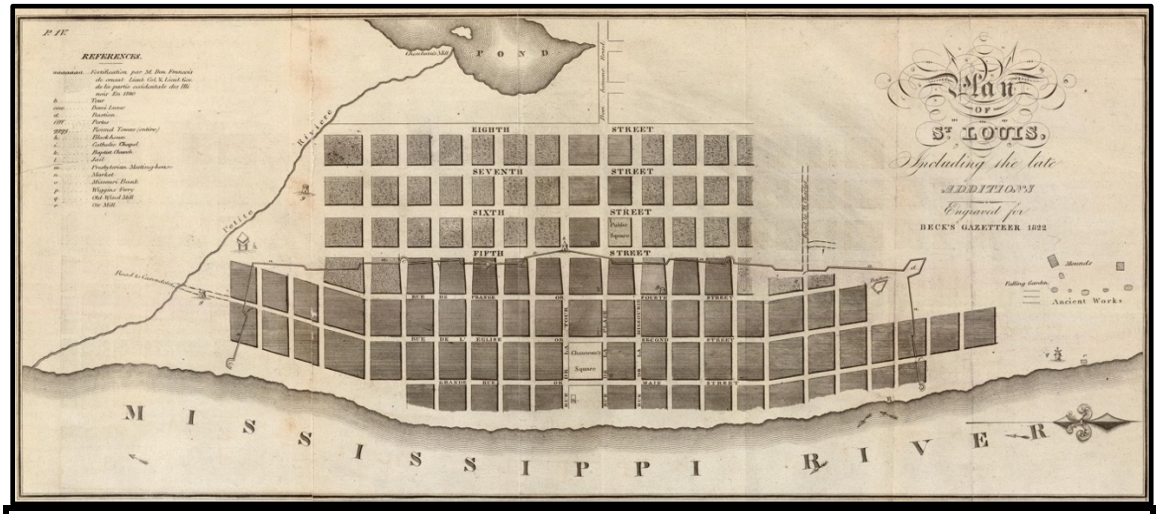


Image 6.2: Platted properties in St. Louis, ca. 1822. Most of the properties that have been gridded out on this map were part of large landholdings that were subdivided and sold by members of the Chouteau family. The blocks that front the Mississippi River in the lower-center position of the image comprised the warehouse district. Source: *Plan of St. Louis, Including the late Additions* (St. Louis: Beck's Gazetteer, 1823)

The Fabric of History and the Empire of Hats

Furs hardly seem like the stuff on which fortunes, let alone empires, are built. Yet furs, pelts, hides, and skins were transformed into a myriad of products from luxury items to modest, everyday materials like aprons, hats, furniture stuffing, footwear, medicine, and more. While these items are now produced from petroleum-based synthetic materials, it is important to note that fortunes have been made by garment manufacturers, athletic footwear companies, and a host of other global enterprises that create the furniture, appliances, and vehicles that shape how we live and move in the world. It is also worth reflecting on the economic and political power of the People's Republic of China, which

[18] William E. Foley and C. David Rice, *The First Chouteaus: River Barons of Early St. Louis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 21-25, quote on p. 24; Scharf, *History of St. Louis and County*, 1: 289.

initially developed through the mass production of everyday items. If our thoughts are limited to the mink coats and fox stoles of the early twentieth century, or the ermine robes of European royalty, then the notion that furs could sustain—let alone build—an entire industry seems preposterous. Yet the fur trade or, more accurately, the fur, skin, pelt and hide trade, was the basis for many fortunes from the 17th to the 19th centuries and largely shaped the political boundaries of present-day North America.

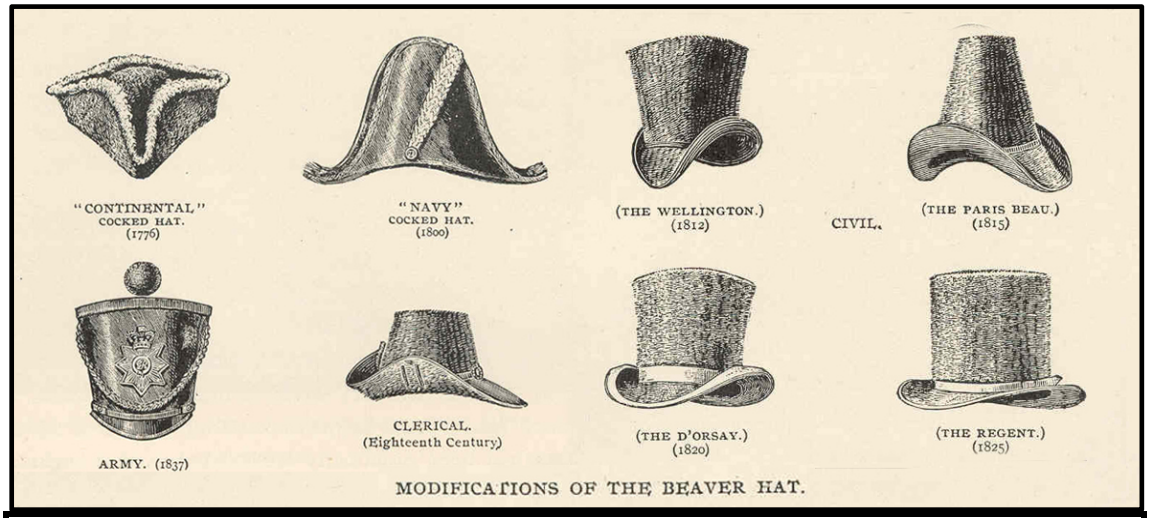


Image 6.3: Shapes and Styles of the Beaver Hat. Source: Minnesota Historical Society.

As Ann Farrar Hyde notes, it is important to recognize that, like the mass-produced materials of the present, "the market … was wide and broad;" even the least valuable products of the trade, [namely] deer skins, elk hides, and bison hides, were transformed into "leather [for] shoes, belts, clothing, bags, book covers, … straps, fasteners, and floor coverings," while bison wool became a valued resource for stuffing furniture and insulating coats. Of course, none of these products touch on the higher valued furs, which have been a prized clothing material since humans first migrated to northern latitudes. In areas where terrestrial fur bearing animals are more common and the climate is colder, furs have been used for coats, stoles, capes, shoe linings and trim, coverings, and more. Furs that are prized for their beauty as well as the comfort they provide have generally been used as luxury items –either as garments, trim, or ostentatious trappings. For centuries and perhaps millennium, beaver was one of the most prized furs in Europe and Northern Asia. While much of its appeal stems from the qualities of beauty and warmth, beaver pelts are especially durable and malleable—which also makes them highly desirable for felt production, a process that involves converting the soft undercoat or "wool" of a beaver pelt into a dense, waterproof material that can be shaped into a rigid and durable form. These qualities were perfect for an array of long-lasting hats from the mid 16th century to the mid 19th century. While beaver felt hats

provided ample protection from the elements, and were often used on a daily basis by the less well-off, they also served as markers of social status, wealth, and profession.[19]

Much as the forests of New England built the British Royal Navy, the North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) saved the hat making industry when European beaver (*Castor fiber*) stocks collapsed in the late 17th century. And because the animals were so distant from the markets where their pelts were destined, little attention was given to concerns about overtrapping. The solution was simply to move on to the next watershed. *Castor canadensis* also provided a new and seemingly limitless supply of castoreum, which was used as an important perfume ingredient, as well as a medicine that could reduce fever, ease pain, induce abortion, and relieve anxiety. As the resources of the Americas increased the fortunes of Europe, the market for beaver felt hats (along with the social status they communicated), and the promise of relief from pain and discomfort that Castorium provided, the amphibious rodent became a foundation of empires, personal fortunes, and wars for national expansion.[20]

From Pelts to Property: The U.S. Factory System Experiment

As an economic institution that held the attention of government authorities, the fur trade in the United States did not really begin to develop until after the series of conflicts in the Ohio Valley known as the Northwest Indian War (1785-1795), and the vast cessions of Native lands to the United States that came in subsequent years. To solidify U.S. authority in the region and establish a process for acquiring more Native lands, U.S. officials made a concerted effort to increase trade in the lower Great Lakes. This movement was partly triggered by Napoleon's acquisition of Spanish *Luisiana* in 1800 and the possibility that the French might block U.S. access to the Mississippi River as well as make inroads into the Ohio Valley. To thwart a possible resurgence of French imperial designs in North America, as well as undercut the expanding British fur trade in the Great Lakes region, President Jefferson sought to strengthen commercial and diplomatic relations with Native leaders through an expansion of the "factory system," a program first established by George Washington in 1796. The "system," as it was built out, involved the construction and oversight of a series of trading forts that employed a federally licensed trader, or "factor." Along with managing the trading fort, the factor also served as a representative of the U.S. government in his dealings with American Indian communities who lived near or traded at the factory. The factory system, much like the trade licensing that occurred under the French and British regimes, was intended

[19] Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 19-20; Murray G. Lawson, "The Beaver Hat and the Fur Trade," *People and Pelts: Selected Papers of the Second North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. Malvina Bolus (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1972), 27-38.
[20] Erik Wolf, "The Fur Trade," in *The People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 158-194; Andrew R. Graybill, "Introduction," in Mari Sandoz, *The Beaver Men: Spearheads of Empire*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), iv-vii; J. F. Crean, "Hats and the Fur Trade." *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 28 (August 1962): 373-386.

to ensure that quality materials would be sold at set prices. While the factories displaced and intentionally undersold private traders, federal officials wanted to avoid giving cause for resentments among American Indian communities that might lead to more conflict.[21]

There is some irony in the federal government's promotion of a quasi-imperial policy that undermined private traders, but President Jefferson embraced the program soon after he came into office in 1801. His concern was not so much the fate of fur traders as it was his realization that the factory system could serve as a key instrument for realizing his vision of an "empire for liberty;" a nation of agrarian free-holders expanding "without blot or mixture" across the continent.[22] As he noted in a letter to Indiana Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison in February 1803, the factory system was a valuable tool for acquiring land. "To promote this disposition to exchange lands," he wrote, "we shall push our trading houses, and be glad to see [American Indians] run in debt, because we observe that when these debts get beyond what the individuals can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of lands."[23] To acquire lands through this process was partly dependent upon taking trade away from the British, and thus the first factories in the Northwest Territory were established at Fort Wayne and Fort Detroit in 1802. When the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory negated the French threat in 1803, cutting into the British trade became a central policy concern and new factories were established at Sandusky, Chicago, Mackinac, and Green Bay to make inroads against Great Lakes traders and *engagés* from the Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company.[24]

Jefferson's expectations for the factory system were not met, except around Fort Wayne and, to a lesser extent, Fort Detroit. For the most part Native peoples in the northern tier of the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes continued to trade with people they knew, which included *Canadiens* in the Detroit River area, around western Lake Erie and southern Lake Michigan. A number of small posts to the west of Lake Michigan, as well

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[21] On the factory system, see Ora Brook Peake, *A History of the United States Indian Factory System, 1795-1822* (Denver: Sage Books, 1954), 6-14; Bergmann, *The American National State*, 185, 189-92; Stephen J. Rockwell, *Indian Affairs and the Administrative State in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 124-29; and David Andrew Nichols, *Engines of Diplomacy: Indian Trading Factories and the Negotiation of American Empire (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016)*..

[22] Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, November 24, 1801, in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York, 1984), 1117. Also see Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 49, 85-87.

[23] Jefferson to William Henry Harrison, February 27, 1803, in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, 1118. Also see Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 173-75, 285.

[24] Bergmann, *The American National State*, 186-87. In the Trans-Mississippi West, the Factory System only took hold at Fort Osage. Throughout the rest of the region, however, the fur trade was viewed as an important industry and an instrument for Native dispossession. While none of the Upper Missouri fur trade posts (including Fort Union) operated as if dispossession was an end goal, depletion of the resource-base and the weakening of Native communities was never doubted.

as some unlicensed U.S. traders in the Ohio Valley also handled this "unauthorized" trade. Further north and northwest, Native peoples retained their established trade relations with the HBC and NWC posts. The only area where the Factory system was an unmitigated success, in terms of private and federal revenues, Native dependency, indebtedness, and land cession, was Fort Stephens in present-day eastern Mississippi.[25] While the factory system failed to meet expectations in the North, it had emphatic support among Southern political leaders. Among these was U.S. Senator James Jackson of Georgia, with whom Jefferson had shared the full measure of his commitment to Native dispossession and relocation in early 1803. In addressing complaints from Jackson and others that a federal agent was too lenient with Mvskokvlke, or Muscogee (Creek) communities, Jefferson declared that he

> shall always be open to any proofs that [the agent] obstructs cessions of land which the Indians are willing to make: and of this, Sir, you may be assured that he shall be placed under as strong a pressure from the Executive to obtain cessions, as he can feel from any opposite quarter to obstruct. he shall be made sensible that his value will be estimated by me in proportion to the benefits he can obtain for us. I am myself alive to the obtaining lands from the Indians … as fast as the expansion of our settlements.[26]

Sixty Years War: Redux

Neither Jefferson nor his immediate successor, James Madison, were able to act on these ideas, in large part because the specter of a new war with Great Britain loomed. Maritime issues like British impressment of American sailors and restrictions on U.S. trade with Europe and European colonies inspired the call for war in Washington, DC, but the push for war in the western states and territories (especially Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, and Indiana) was rooted in regional concerns that extended back to the Seven Years' War. More than "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights," westerners railed about an ongoing "ANGLO-[NATIVE] WAR" and, like Representative Felix Grundy of Kentucky, wanted to "drive the British from our Continent" to finally stop their "intriguing with our Indian neighbors" and to bring more territory—as well as the proceeds of the Canadian fur trade—into the United States. Grundy was just one of the many so-called western War Hawks, who proved the most passionate supporters of the war resolution. A number of these War Hawks were appointed military officers during

[25] Ibid., 188-94. See Gary Coleman Cheek, Jr., ""We are Clay People': The Struggle against Choctaw Communal Dissolution, 1801-1861," (PhD diss., Mississippi State University, 2010), 10, 78-90, 106-112.
[26] Jefferson to James Jackson, 16 February 1803; quotation from Anthony F. C. Wallace, "'The Obtaining Lands': Thomas Jefferson and the Native Americans," in *Thomas Jefferson and the Changing West*, ed. James P. Ronda (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press in Association with the Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997), 30. Also see Robert J. Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, and Manifest Destiny* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 189-98

the war, and their constituencies provided a large number of the U.S. regulars, volunteers, and militias that served in 1812 and 1813.[27]

William Clark, who had strong familial connections to Kentucky and the Indiana Territory, and had served in various militia as well as the U.S. Army of the Northwest in the 1790s, could certainly appreciate these sentiments. In 1814, as Governor of the Missouri Territory (which then encompassed all of the former Louisiana Territory to the north of the State of Louisiana), Clark led a force of 60 regulars and 140 volunteer militia to Prairie du Chien at the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers, where they scattered a small force of mostly Thâkîwa (Sauk, or Sac) warriors and some British soldiers. Clark's forces then began work on the construction of what became Fort Shelby, before returning down the Mississippi. Though a relatively minor event during the war, and hardly remembered beyond the immediate area in which it occurred, the location and the military action had an undeniable significance to Clark. From his unique financial and political vantage, he valued the military action as an important success because it forced British-licensed traders from operating at a major crossroads within the Upper Mississippi River—Great Lakes fur trade.[28]

The Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812, was signed on December 24, 1814 and subsequently ratified by unanimous consent in the U.S. Senate. Its terms reflected the exhausting irresolution of the war, which, as the treaty's preamble stated, had made "His Britannic Majesty and the United States of America desirous of terminating the war which has unhappily subsisted between the two Countries, and of restoring upon principles of perfect reciprocity, Peace, Friendship, and good Understanding between them." With neither party admitting fault, nor addressing the primary issues of impressment and free maritime trade in the U.S. declaration of war, the signatories were ready to accept stalemate as the better part of valor. For the British negotiators and their government, a treaty of peace provided an escape from a costly and increasingly unpopular war that drew their attentions away from Continental Europe, while U.S. officials saw the treaty as a face-saving exit from a war that had come to threaten "our national existence."[29] Before the treaty was signed, however, British negotiators made one last push to support their erstwhile Native allies in the recent war by requiring a "barrier state" for Native peoples between British Canada and the United States. From the British perspective, the goal was to maintain trade with the Native

[27] Paul A. Gilje, *Free Trade and Sailors' Rights in the War of 1812* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Hickey, *War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict, Bicentennial Edition* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 26; Gundy quotation in *Annals of the Congress of the United States, 12th Congress, First Session* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1853), 426.
[28] Sandy Antal, *A Wampum Denied: Procter's War of 1812* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1998), 383, 386n.; Foley, *Wilderness Journey*, 199-200. A small group of British soldiers were subsequently dispatched from Fort Mackinac, retook and held the strategic site until it was surrendered to the United States in early 1815 by the terms of the Treaty of Ghent.
[29] Joseph H. Nicholson to William Jones, May 20, 1814, quoted in Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 182.

peoples of the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley, as well as preclude future regional conflicts with the United States. When Native peoples learned that the British negotiators did not fully advocate for this proposal, and that it was rejected outright by the United States, a small number of groups made a brief effort to restoke the flames of war in the western Great Lakes and the Upper Mississippi River.[30]

Clark, Auguste Chouteau, and Illinois governor Ninian Edwards fully recognized the growing instability and potential danger of the situation. Fearing the possible consequence of a new war expanding into the lower Missouri River Valley, they organized a peace treaty commission in the summer of 1815. On the specific orders of Secretary of State James Monroe, George Sibley (who was then serving as the U.S. "factor" at Fort Osage) carried $20,000 worth of gifts to be distributed before the negotiations began. Accompanied by a Native militia escort, Sibley traveled from St. Louis to meet with representatives from twenty-one tribal delegations at Portage des Sioux on the upper Mississippi in what is now Minnesota. As commissioners, Clark, Edwards, and Chouteau drew up separate treaties with each tribe basically stating that relationships and agreements that had existed before the war were still in force and would continue. Some nations were promised trading posts that would operate much as they did under the British, but many refused to entertain any such proposals on the basis that they had not surrendered to the United States.[31]

Regardless of these late-breaking developments, the War of 1812 reconfigured the future of trade along the Upper Missouri River in several important ways. First, and perhaps most important, the Treaty of Ghent seemed to confirm that the entire Missouri River Basin was U.S. territory much as the Red River Basin in present-day North Dakota and Minnesota was considered part of Rupert's Land, and thus British Canada. Second, the Treaty of 1818 (formally known as the "Convention Respecting Fisheries, Boundary and the Restoration of Slaves," designated a new international boundary between the United States and British Canada that ran in a straight line along the 49th parallel from the Lake of the Woods to the crest of the Rocky Mountains. While this set a clear, and mutually agreed upon border, it could not be discerned on the ground any more than a

[30] Charles M. Gates, "The West in American Diplomacy, 1812–1815," *Journal of American History*, 26 (March 1940): 499–510,"

[31] "Treaties with Twenty-One Tribes," U.S. Congress, *American State Papers*, class II: Indian Affairs, 5:1–25; Ted Binnema and William A. Dobak, "'Like the Greedy Wolf': The Blackfeet, the St. Louis Fur Trade, and War Fever, 1807-1831," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 29 (Fall, 2009): 421. Along with the U.S. representatives, the treaty council included delegates from various groups of Bodéwadmi (Potawatomi), Piankeshaw, Thâkîwa (Sauk, or Sac), Meskwaki (Fox), Wah-Zha-Zhi (Osage) Lakȟóta Oyáte (Lakota, aka Western Sioux), Dakhóta Oyáte (Dakota, aka eastern Sioux), Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo), Umo^{n}ho^{n} (Omaha), Bah-Kho-Je (Iowa). See "Treaty with the Potawatomi," 110-11; "Treaty with the Piankeshaw," 111-12; "Treaty with the Teton," 112-13; "Treaty with the Sioux of the Lakes," 113-14; "Treaty with the St. Peter's Sioux," 114-15; "Treaty with the Yankton Sioux," 115, "Treaty with the Kickapoo," 116-17; "Treaty with the Sauk," 120-21; and "Treaty with the Foxes," 121-22: all in Charles Kappler, ed. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* Vol. II (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904).

gentle knoll along the Missouri-Assiniboine river divide served to identify the pre-War of 1812 boundary. Nevertheless, the new treaty gave U.S.-based traders an opportunity to establish themselves in opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company on the Northern Plains.[32]

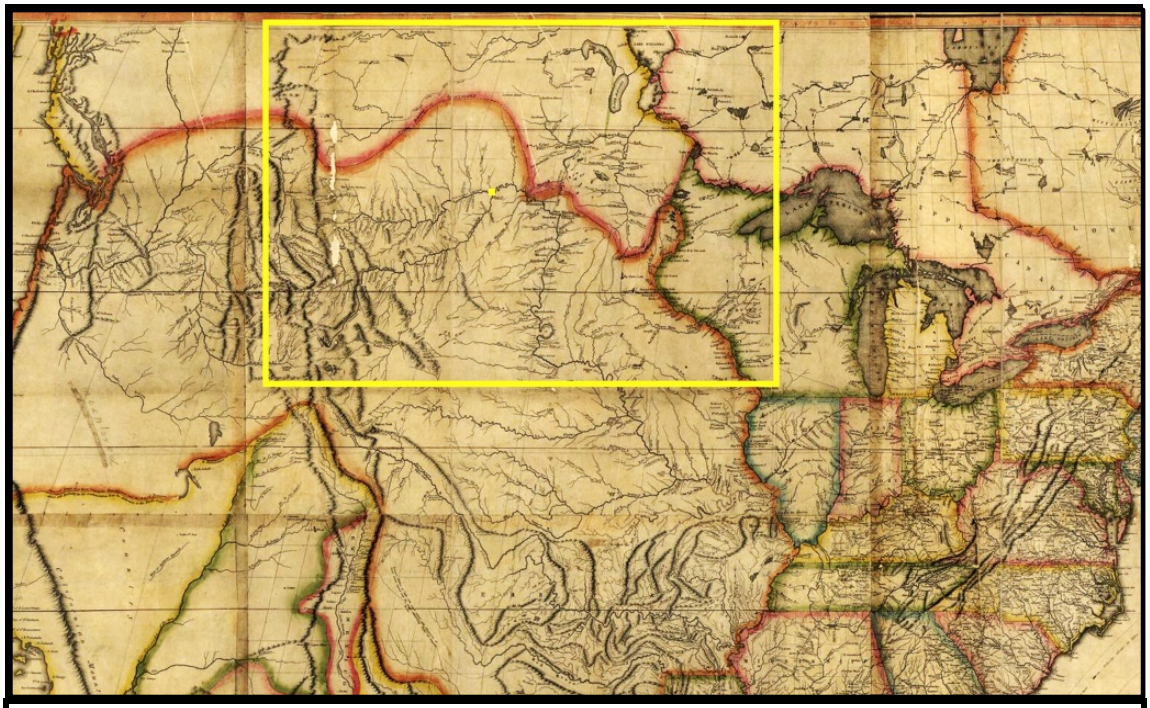


Image 6.4: Northern Boundary of the United States, ca. 1815. Map presents the geopolitical situation in North America after the War of 1812. The superimposed rectangle highlights the indeterminate boundary between northernmost reaches of U.S.-claimed territory and Rupert's Land (the vast domain of the Hudson's Bay Company). Detail from John Melish, *Map of the Unites States of America: with the contiguous British and Spanish possessions* (Philadelphia: J. Melish [1818]). Source: Library of Congress.

Reconfiguring the Missouri River Fur Trade after the War of 1812

Immediately prior to and during the War of 1812, all fur trade companies were subject to a fair degree of regulation. Because the trade operated at the intersection of geopolitics and commerce, and was conducted with peoples who were generally not subject to U.S. laws, American officials wanted to ensure that no trader or trading company gave a Native nation cause for complaint. These concerns also held in the years following the war's end, and no fur trading companies, government officials, or missionaries wanted a trader to cheat a Native community or individual, or to hunt and trap without permission in territories that a Native nation controlled. Any of these might touch off a series of conflicts that would stifle commerce and require a new round of

[32] "Convention of Commerce between His Majesty and the United States of America—Signed at London, 20th October 1818." Source: *Canado-American Treaties*, University of Montreal <http://www.lexum.umontreal.ca/ca_us/en/cus.1818.15.en.html> accessed 13 January 2020.

diplomacy and gift giving to assuage concerns and cover losses. Perhaps the biggest fear applied to a situation where an unlicensed, independent trader or uncouth greenhorn gave offense to a Native community, and then touched off or exacerbated a series of conflicts. The nightmare scenario, of course, would be multiple instances of such actions that required the intervention of British or U.S. troops.[33]

To prevent such troubles, U.S. officials borrowed from an older British system that licensed traders and made them subject to inspection. In 1806, Congress established a federal Office of Superintendent of Indian Trade within the Department of War, which endeavored (with mixed success) to make the fur trade subject to federal oversight. All traders who wanted to work in unceded Native territories needed a license from a designated district official and were subject to oversight and inspection. Anyone caught trading without a license would be required to forfeit all of their trade goods, with one half going to the federal government and the other half to the agent making the prosecution. While the system was vulnerable to corruption and abuse, it mostly amounted to a bothersome set of requirements that only a large outfit had sufficient time and personnel to satisfy. Consequently, well-structured companies like the Missouri Fur Company could skirt the regulations with a bit of finesse. The Chouteaus, who continued to operate out of St. Louis, made a point of doing favors for key employees of the federal government and were not shy about asking federal agents to assist some of the traders who worked for the French Fur Company. Manuel Lisa, for his part, served as an Indian agent (i.e., a federal representative to a particular Native nation or group nations) and a fur trader among the Umoⁿhoⁿ (Omaha) and Páⁿka (Ponca), for the duration of the war. In sum, Congress inadvertently created a program that favored large outfits and Indian agents, incentivized cheating by private traders, and provided a financial edge to traders from Canada who could take their trade goods back north if they got wind that a U.S. agent was near.[34]

Much as the War of 1812 impacted and even threatened the St. Louis-based fur trade, the aftermath of the war created a more chronic set of problems that lasted though the mid 1820s. A shortage of specie and the inflationary speculation in public lands that derived from a series of post-War of 1812 Native land cessions in the Ohio Valley and the Southeastern United States, along with a pile of government debts that resulted from prosecuting the War of 1812, triggered a two-year depression in the United States that

[33] Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 68-69.
[34] Royal B. Way, "The United States Factory System for Trading with the Indians, 1796-1822," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 6 (September 1919), 220-235. In the Missouri River Valley, the "factory" system described here did not function as an instrument for acquiring Native lands in the manner that President Jefferson prescribed for the Ohio Country and the Southeast. Its purpose was to prevent trading with British companies, foster neutrality among Native communities, and to provide material assistance to partly compensate for declining trade opportunities. For Lisa's time as an agent, see Richard E. Oglesby, *Manuel Lisa and the Opening of the Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 192, 120-21.

became known as the Panic of 1819. In St. Louis, where so much of the business of the fur trade was based on long credit terms, both the city and the trade experienced a slowdown in commerce that lasted for several years. One of the companies to suffer most from these circumstances was the Missouri Fur Company (MFC), which was acquired by Joshua Pilcher and Thomas Hempstead after Manuel Lisa's death in 1820. That same year they built Fort Recovery above the mouth of the White and Missouri rivers (near present-day Oacoma, South Dakota), established trade with the Lakȟóta trade, and then moved further up river to the Yellowstone country that had so captivated Lisa.[35]

At a site on the Yellowstone River, about a mile or two below the ruins of Fort Raymond, the Missouri Fur Company built Fort Benton to trade with the Absáalooke (Crow) and establish a new base for trapping in the mountains. While this plan developed like a near clone of Lisa's earlier approach to the fur trade, Pilcher and Hempstead were beset by chronic problems with their supplier and sales agent: Stone, Bostwick and Company, which had recently become a subsidiary of Astor's American Fur Company. Whether from a shortage of credit, lack of confidence in the Missouri Fur Company, or Astor's expressed interest in purchasing the Missouri Fur Company, Pilcher and Hempstead were unable to purchase a sufficient amount of supplies and trade goods to sustain their business. In the end, however, the Missouri Fur Company (MFC) was done in by Lisa's original folly and the desperate need to improve the company's financial situation. To those ends, the MFC sent trappers into Piikáni territory. In May 1823, five MFC trappers were killed, and four others wounded by Piikáni who also took their horses, pelts, and all of their gear. Within a year, after making a brief effort to retain Fort Recovery, where they conducted trade with Umoⁿhoⁿ (Omaha), Jiwére (Otoe), Niúachi (Missouria), and Chatiks si chatiks (Pawnee), the Missouri Fur Company was dissolved.

Even before this disaster unfolded, a number of rival firms were converging on the Central and Northern Plains trade and, in the process, collectively breaking down the foundations of Lisa's former company. The most immediate threat came from the French Fur Company, headed by Bartholomew Berthold, Bernard Pratte, Sr., and , Jr. and Company, Jr., which had already embarked on a challenge to the Missouri Fur Company's trade out of Fort Recovery. Having built Fort Lookout (aka Fort Kiowa) a short distance upriver from the MFC's Fort Recovery, the French Fur Company captured the bulk of the Lakȟóta and the Missouri River villagers' trade. The second blow came from the American Fur Company (AFC), which had recently established its Western Department at St. Louis after John Jacob Astor had successfully lobbied Congress and

[35] This and the following paragraph are based on Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, 3 vols. (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1902), 1: 143-151, 322, 325; Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 47-48; and John Denis Haeger, *John Jacob Astor: Business and Finance in the Early Republic* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 211-217.

Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton to end the factory system (and thus remove a government challenge to private trade). Moreover, Astor had recently formalized a partnership with Stone, Bostwick and Company that sent a clear signal to all would-be competitors that the AFC was strongly considering a push into the St. Louis-based trade.[36] The next two challenges, which will be discussed more fully in the next section, involved a new partnership between Andrew Henry and William H. Ashley that threatened the Missouri Fur Company from two different directions. Besides competing with Pilcher and Hempstead for boats, supplies, and trade goods out of St. Louis, Henry and Ashley subsequently embarked on a new approach to the beaver trade that would overwhelm competing outfits and deplete the Rocky Mountains of the last substantial population of beaver in North America.[37] Lastly, the Columbia Fur Company emerged as an aggressive a formidable competitor that was ready to challenge all-comers along the Missouri River from Council Bluffs to the Nueta villages, as well as eastward along the James, St. Peter's (Minnesota), and Red rivers.[38]

The Rocky Mountain Rendezvous

Soon after the United States declared war on Great Britain in 1812, Andrew Henry and Manuel Lisa dissolved their partnership and abandoned the Yellowstone River Valley. However, when Lisa, and then Pilcher and Hempstead, made returns to the region, Henry's friend and former commanding officer, William Ashley, felt the time was right to enter the beaver trade: economic conditions were rebounding after the Panic of 1819, the federal government was already considering an end to the Factory System, and beaver populations could only have increased after several years without trapping. Both men brought distinct, but complimentary life histories to the partnership. Ashley had considerable political connections as the Lieutenant Governor of the State of Missouri and service as a General in the state militia, while Henry was a successful businessman, an expert trapper and trader who had worked on the east and west sides of the Rocky Mountains, had served at the rank of Major in the recent war, and had been a partner in the first iteration of the Missouri Fur Company along with Lisa, Jean-Pierre Chouteau, and William Clark. By February of 1822, both Henry and Ashley had sorted their affairs and established the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. After famously advertising for "ONE

[36] Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade*, 1: 14-17, 313-323; Paul Chrisler Phillips, *The Fur Trade*, 2 vols.(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961) 2:399-403; Wishart, *Fur Trade of the American West*, 52-53.

[37] Sunder, *Joshua Pilcher*, 37; Wishart, *Fur Trade of the American West*, 48. and Linda Harper White and Fred R. Gowans, "Traders to Trappers: Andrew Henry and the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade: Part 2," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 43 (Summer 1993): 57.

[38] Linda Harper White and Fred R. Gowans, "Traders to Trappers: Andrew Henry and the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade," "Traders to Trappers: Andrew Henry and the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade, Part 1," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 43 (Winter 1993): 58–65; Michael M. Casler and W. Raymond Wood, "The Rise and Fall of the Columbia Fur Company: Rethinking the Fur Trade on the Northern Great Plains," unpublished mss. in the author's possession.

HUNDRED" "enterprising young men" to come work for the company, they set out for the Upper Missouri and Yellowstone in early April. The men who accompanied them included Jim Bridger and Jedediah Smith who, along with Henry, were some of the more famous personalities of the fur trapping era.[39]

While Henry's and Ashley's partnership would ultimately result in a whole new approach to the St. Louis-based fur trade, it initially followed the general patterns of Lisa's trading operations. Arriving at the Yellowstone and Missouri river confluence on October 1, 1822, which was then about 1.5 miles downriver from the future site of Fort Union, they built a stockade and christened it "Fort Henry." Henry managed the fort and Rocky Mountain Company (RMC) personnel for the better part of a year, but harassment by Piikáni –which Henry attributed to British chicanery—badly undermined his efforts.[40] The prospects of the RMC further diminished when Ashley attempted to lead a second brigade of about 90 young men and two large keelboats full of supplies past a Sahnish village that located on the Missouri River just above the mouth of the Grand River, which now lies beneath the waters of Lake Oahe. Concerned by the size of the brigade, and the abundance of trade goods it was bringing to native nations further upriver, the Sahnish attacked. What ensued became known as the "Arikara War," and eventually involved a combination of U.S. infantry, Lakȟóta warriors, and a few dozen fur trappers against all the people the Sahnish could muster. Casualties were slight on all sides, and the Sahnish managed to rebuild and return to their village the following year.[41]

Following a season of unforeseen setbacks, Ashley and Henry improvised a set of new plans that could be implemented from their current circumstances. Henry took a trapping brigade to the mouth of the Big Horn, near the former sites of Fort Raymond and Fort Benton, which served as a base for sending trappers into the tributaries of the Big Horn and Yellowstone rivers through the fall and winter. Further south, Ashley assembled his brigade at Fort Lookout, downriver from the Sahnish village, and divided them into two brigades. One was sent overland to meet up with Henry and commence trapping on the Yellowstone River, and another was sent to the Central Rockies. Jedediah Smith led his latter group through the Powder, Big Horn, and Wind river basins, where they wintered with one of the brigades that Henry had sent out as well as a group of Absáalooke who had previously traded at the mouth of the Big Horn river.[42]

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[39] Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West,* 119-121.
[40] Ted Binnema and William A. Dobak, "'Like the Greedy Wolf': The Blackfeet, the St. Louis Fur Trade, and War Fever, 1807–1831," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 29 Number (Fall 2009), 411-440.
[41] Roger Nichols, "Backdrop for Disaster: Causes of the Arikara War of 1823, *South Dakota History*, 14, (Summer 1984): 93–113; *Missouri Gazette & Public Advertiser*, St. Louis, February 13, 1822.; David Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 63-72; Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle University of Washington Press, 2003), 45-46. The Sahnish attack killed fourteen and wounding nine, forcing a retreat back down the Missouri.
[42] Wishart, *Fur Trade of the American West*, 121-122.



Image 6.5: Alfred Jacob Miller, *Cavalcade* (ca. 1858-1860). Painting depicts the arrival of a large delegation of Kutsundika (Buffalo Eater Shoshone) at the commencement of a fur trade Rendezvous in present-day Wyoming. The image depicts a scene that Miller first sketched in the late 1830s. Source: Courtesy of the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

From these impromptu responses to the previous year's setbacks, Ashley and Henry developed a different strategy in 1824. Drawing on the model of the Shoshone Rendezvous, they agreed to acquire and transport trade goods to a pre-arranged gathering place each summer where furs and other proceeds of the hunt could be exchanged for trade goods or the financial equivalent of what would otherwise be contracted wages. To access these locales and acquire pelts and furs at a pre-arranged trade fair sites, Ashley and Henry developed new routes to the Central Rocky Mountains where the company pioneered the brigade-rendezvous system. contracted employees would trap though most of the year, then congregate at a designate rendezvous point where they would receive provisions for the coming year (if they chose to remain in the mountains) as well as credits for the value of their furs that could be redeemed when they left the company or the trade.[43] Native peoples also participated in these events and generally traded with all

[43] Roger Nichols, "Backdrop for Disaster: Causes of the Arikara War of 1823, *South Dakota History*, 14, (Summer 1984): 93–113; *Missouri Gazette & Public Advertiser*, St. Louis, February 13, 1822.; David

comers while also exchanging furs and pelts for the Rocky Mountain Fur Company's trade goods. Unlike the exchanges that occurred at a trading post or fort, the European American men who had formerly engaged Native peoples on the company's grounds now traveled in parties and traded with Native communities in the more ancient context of the rendezvous. And like Native traders, the trappers worked independently to trap beaver and other fur bearing animals, along with the furs and pelts they acquired from Native peoples, also functioned as independent traders. Instead of *engagés* of a company, they were now known as "free trappers" or "mountain men."[44]

The American Fur Company and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade

As the effects of the Panic of 1819 still reverberated through the St. Louis-based fur trade, and contributed to the demise of the Missouri Fur Company as well as the precursor of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, John Jacob Astor began to consider a new venture in the Missouri River Valley. Based on what he knew about the region's trade, it struck him as grossly undervalued, with most of its fur companies poorly financed and badly over extended. Some of these notions were confirmed in late November 1821 in two letters from Ramsay Crooks, a longtime confidant and personal agent of Astor's. Crooks' first letter noted that

> preliminary arrangements [had been] made for the prosecuting of the trade of St. Louis and the Missouri next season. Berthold and Chouteau with all their advantages, have suffered the firm of Stone and Co. to get the better of them more effectually than could have been believed, and as there is no injunction to the contrary, we may as well come in for a share of the [region's] business …. You now do no business with them worth attending to, and any [concerns] we have heretofore entertained in regard to embarking in their portion of the trade ought not to be indulged in any longer. Besides, their apathy or bad management in opposing [S]tone begins to enlarge *his* views, and has already tempted him to commence a competition with our outposts on the lower Mississippi.

"My intention," Crooks added, "is merely to supply our lower Mississippi and Illinois river outfits from St. Louis, and tamper with the Missouri traders on a moderate scale, in order to secure them for the following year …. Without being [overly] sanguine," Crooks added that Astor could defend his interests, undermine these challengers, and open his

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Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 63-72; Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle University of Washington Press, 2003), 45-46.

[44] For approximately 15 years, the rendezvous was an annual event in the Northern Rockies, the exact locale shifting from year to year. Usually held in July, the rendezvous quickly grew in size, attracting free trappers and Indians in addition to company employees. By the early 1830s, the rendezvous drew several thousand Indians and hundreds of white trappers or "mountain men." Rival outfits initiated their own rendezvous, sometimes within a few miles of each other. There is a large literature on the rendezvous system. See, for example, Ray Allen Billington, *The Far Western Frontier, 1830-1860* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), 43-48; and Fred Gowans, *Rocky Mountain Rendezvous: A History of the Fur Trade Rendezvous* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2005), 17-39.

own trade on the Upper Missouri "with great confidence of success." The following April, Crooks again wrote Astor about the matter, expressing "regret beyond measure that our fastidiousness about interfering with our St. Louis friends induced us to postpone until the present time any attempt to participate in the Missouri trade."[45]

To address these misgivings, and ensure that the American Fur Company could operate out of St. Louis within a sound management system, Crooks was made the General Superintendent of Affairs for the Western Department of the American Fur Company. Aside from operating as Astor's representative in St. Louis, Crooks also took charge of financing the AFC's operations and addressing any regulatory concerns. In the familial world of the fur trade, Crooks also made the Western Department a partnership between the AFC and Bernard Pratte & Company, which was run by Crooks' new father-in-law. Pierre Chouteau, Jr. (who was also known as "Cadet"). With the AFC now directly invested in the St. Louis-based fur trade, the American Fur Company began to eliminate its competition by using either one of two time-tested methods. The first involved negotiating with a rival firm for the purpose of eventually incorporating it into the AFC, while the second required burning through cash reserves or credit to undercut an established competitor and drive it out of business or force it to move away. After 1823, the American Fur Company's competition on the upper Missouri involved three separate firms: Stone, Bostwick and Company, the Columbia Fur Company, and Berthold, Pratte and Chouteau (aka the French Fur Company).[46]

Stone, Bostwick and Company were the first to give way, and were incorporated into the AFC as the new managers of the Western Department at St. Louis, where they would be assisted by Pratte and Crooks for a period of three and a half year. Though Crooks sought to extend the firm's contract for an additional year, to October 1827, he was overruled by Astor, who transferred management of the Western Department to the French Fur Company of Berthold, Pratte, and Chouteau, with Chouteau as chief agent. Astor was apparently impressed with Chouteau's skill as a trader, who had used the financial support of Pratte to develop a successful trade with the Lakȟóta (Lakota) and Jiwére (Oto) on the Middle Missouri River. Chouteau was so successful that he obtained approximately half of all the beaver pelts and bison robes that moved through St. Louis in 1826 and 1827. Because most of this success derived from Chouteau, Jr.'s ability to eliminate or incorporate his rivals, Crooks and Astor probably recognized a kindred spirit who, in the coming years, would force other rivals to drop out of the business to come to work for the Western Department.[47]

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[45] Crooks to Astor, 30 November 1821 and 23 April 1822; both in Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West.* 3 vols. (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1902), 1: 320-321.
[46] Chittenden, *American Fur Trade*, 1: 324-325; Phillips, *The Fur Trade*, 2: 402; Wishart, *Fur Trade of the American West*; 52-53; Morgan, *Jedediah Smith*, 27-28, 318, 374; Schuler, *Fort Pierre*, 12; Oglesby, "The Fur Trade as Business," 119-127.
[47] Phillips, *The Fur Trade*, 2: 402-406; Wishart, *Fur Trade of the American West*, 53; Stan Hoig, *The Chouteaus: First Family of the Fur Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 164-166.

Columbia Fur Company (1821-1827)

In the midst of their planning, Astor and Crook also learned about the Columbia Fur Company, which had been founded in the wake of the 1821 merger of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and North West Company (NWC). Mostly composed of former NWC traders who resented the HBC "takeover" of the NWC, as well as the larger company's more cautious and bureaucratic approach to the trade. The primary stakeholders of this small outfit were Joseph Renville, Kenneth McKenzie, William Laidlaw and Daniel Lamont. Though all were of French and Scottish descent, they did not express any particular ethnic or national affinities. More importantly, in terms of the fur trade in the United States, they were British citizens by law. Consequently, they were prohibited from operating in the United States. Nevertheless, they continued to build out the Columbia Fur Company (CFC) within U.S. territory, beyond the bounds of HBC trading areas and even beyond the southern boundaries of Rupert's Land. Any jeopardy this situation may have brought on was eventually addressed by bringing on two more partners, William Tilton and S.S. Dudley. They were both U.S. citizens, and when McKenzie became a U.S. citizen during a trip to St. Louis, the Columbia Fur Company had three American owners. While this gave the company a more secure foothold in the American market, having so many veterans of the British trade eased efforts to find outlets for furs and skins in British Canada. In fairly short order, the CFC established three trading posts on the Minnesota River and one at Leaf Lake near the upper reaches of the Red River Basin. While this allowed the CFC men to trade with Anishinaabeg and Dakhóta peoples in the region, the location of these posts also traced the route of what would become the Red River Trail, by which traders carried some "American" furs north and brought trade wares back to U.S. Similarly, Métis bison hunters transported hides to sell in St. Paul, where they in turn acquired American trade goods that they brought back to their own trade center in the Lower Red River Valley.[48]

Much like the North West Company before, the Columbia Fur Company continued to expand at a rapid pace. By 1826 the partners had established a total of thirteen posts along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Six of these were set up in direct opposition to nearby posts that were associated with the AFC's operations in present-day Minnesota: Fort Adams (Lac Qui Parle), Fort Washington (Lake Traverse), Fort Union (Traverse des Sioux), Fort Bolivar (Leaf Lake), Fort Barbour (Falls of the Saint Croix), and Lands' End, at the mouth of the Saint Peters. A seventh post was also established at present-day Des Moines, Iowa. Another six were located along the Missouri, from Council Bluffs to the Knife River villages: these were Big Sioux River post (present-day Sioux City, Iowa), Ponca Post on the lower Niobrara, Dickson's Post

[48] Peter C. Newman et al., *Empire of the Bay* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 436-442; Lucius Frederick Hubbard et al., *Minnesota in Three Centuries, 1655-1908: Early History* (Mankato: The Publishing Society of Minnesota, 1908), 2: 53-55; Casler and Wood, "The Rise and Fall of the Columbia Fur Company," 22-24.

on the James River (near present-day Yankton, South Dakota), Fort Tecumseh near the mouth of the Bad River (present-day Pierre, South Dakota), and Fort Clark near Mih-tutta-hang-kush, the Nueta (Mandan) village on the west bank of the Missouri River to the south of present-day Stanton, North Dakota. James Kipp, another former Nor'Wester who joined the CFC by this time, became the Company's agent at Fort Clark.[49]

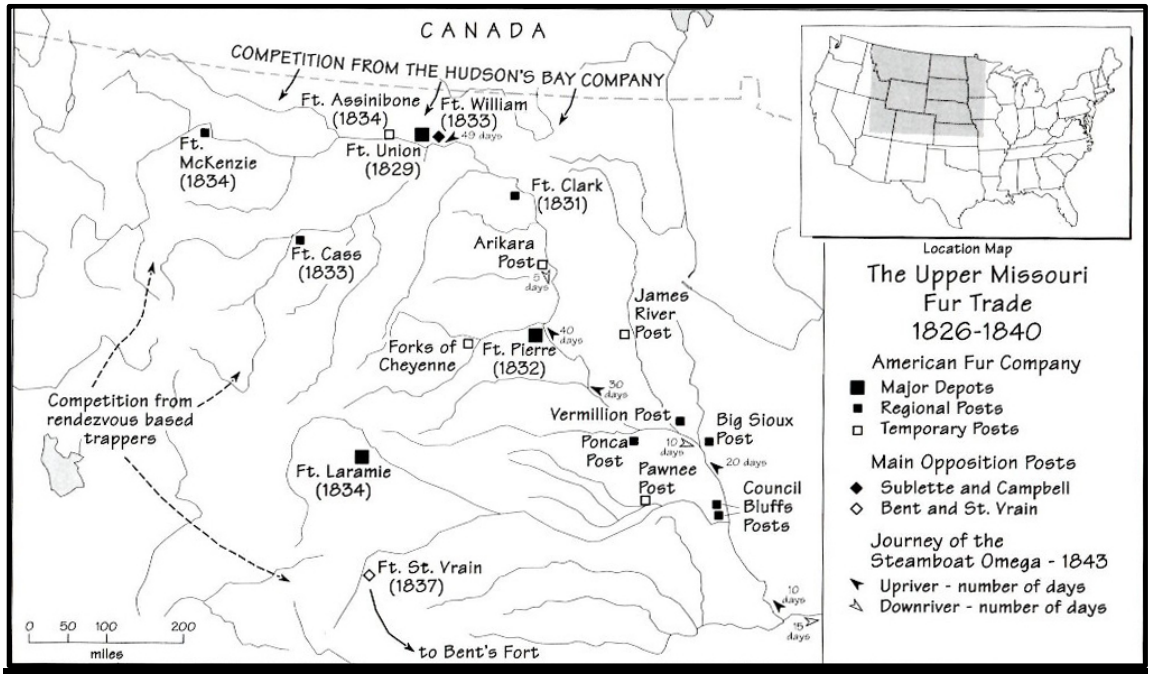


Image 6.6: The Upper Missouri Fur Trade, 1826-1840. Source: David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807-1840: A Geographical Synthesis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 55.

By the time Kipp had joined the Columbia Fur Company, Astor and Crooks were already in negotiations with McKenzie and the other partners to buy out and incorporate the CFC. As Astor and Crooks had done several times before, they followed a simple maxim that might be described as "if you can't beat 'em, buy 'em." While these final negotiations were under way, the CFC built its last post at the request of the Nakoda (Assiniboine). Known as Fort Floyd, it was built near the mouth of the White River where it enters the north side of the Missouri, about 80 miles downriver from the Yellowstone-Missouri Confluence. With so many posts, and so few personnel, the Columbia Fur Company was hardly poised to create a large and lasting enterprise, nor did its owners endeavor to create one. Rather, they pursued a strategy of gaining market share by overwhelming the competition. They succeeded for a while against the American Fur

[49] Casler and Wood, "The Rise and Fall of the Columbia Fur Company," 24-26; Wood, William J. Hunt, Jr., and Randy H. Williams, *Fort Clark and Its Indian Neighbors: A Trading Post on the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 32-33, 46.

Company, but Astor was cash-rich in a cash-poor business, which meant he was prepared to wait out the competition and absorb it.[50]

Astor bought the Columbia Fur Company in 1827 and reorganized it as the Upper Missouri Outfit (UMO) of the Western Department of the American Fur Company. The AFC's existing operations in the Upper Mississippi River Valley (i.e., the South West Company) were reorganized and merged with Astor's operations in the Great Lakes region to become the Northern Department of the American Fur Company, with its headquarters at Mackinac. In 1830, one last key addition was made to the AFC suite of companies on the Northern Plains, when the Astor bought out the French Fur Company, which was established by Honore Picotte in 1827. A key partner in the Columbia Fur Company, Picotte opposed the CFC's sale to Astor and wished to continue as an independent trader. His outlook changed by 1830, however, when an effort to develop a viable opposition company on the Middle Missouri was plagued by mishaps. The worst of these involved the loss of a barge and all of its cargo in the spring of 1829, and the subsequent loss of pack animals, trade goods, and employees' lives to a raid by Sahnish (Arikara) warriors. The attack was not directed against the French Fur Company so much as it stemmed from a deep resentment against the movement of U.S. trade goods through Sahnish territory that were destined for their more powerful enemies upriver. For Picotte, however, this was the final straw and he soon joined his former comrades in the Upper Missouri Outfit. He would spend the rest of his career with the AFC, eventually rising to the position of *Bourgeois* at Fort Pierre in 1851.[51]

Though not yet built out to its fullest extent, the interlocking components of the Upper Missouri Outfit (UMO) were fully in place by 1828 when Fort Union was first constructed. The Western Department of the AFC, of which the UMO was a major component, would take care of warehousing in St. Louis, transportation of trade wares upriver and the proceeds of the hunt downriver, as well as arranging for the loading and unloading of large vessels bound for—or coming from—New Orleans. This part of the combined business would be entirely managed by Bernard Pratte & Company, with Pierre Chouteau, Jr. as the principle agent. In sum, this side of the arrangement effectively brought all the experience and connections that the Chouteau family had accumulated in St. Louis and the Missouri River Valley over several generations. When combined with Astor's ability to market and deliver his merchandise to trading centers in North America and Europe, as well as acquire trade goods at bulk pricing, the Upper

[50] Wood and Casler. "A Revised History of Fort Floyd." *North Dakota History* 80 (Winter, 2015), 3-13.
[51] Roger L. Nichols, "The Arikara Indians and The Missouri River Trade: A Quest For Survival," *Great Plains Quarterly*, 2 (Spring 1982): 88-90; Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2012), 63-66; John S. Gray, "Honore Picotte, Fur Trader," *South Dakota History*, 6 (Spring 1976), 187-192.

Missouri Outfit had a significant advantage over its competitors (with the lone exception of the Hudson's Bay Company to the north).[52]

Astor's and the Chouteau's acumen and political connections in St. Louis, New York, and Washington, DC, also meant their joint enterprise could call on the assistance of important political players; namely, Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton, and perhaps most important of all, Lewis Cass—who served as U.S. Secretary of War (1831-1836) with direct responsibilities for the implementation of American Indian policy and the regulation of the fur trade, and later as a U.S. Senator from Michigan (1849-1857). The Chouteaus and Prattes, for their part, were also able to call on Missouri Governor William Clark when needed. Besides being well run, well financed, and protected by powerful political patrons, the Upper Missouri Outfit also had the advantage of employing some of the most experienced and energetic fur traders on the Northern Plains. Moreover, these traders had generally learned their skills in the British fur trade, against which they were especially keen to compete.

The combination of companies and personalities that led to the building of Fort Union and other fur trade posts on the Upper Missouri and Lower Yellowstone river is complex, especially when accounting for the ancillary businesses related to shipments, government contracts, the acquisition of trade goods, and the warehousing of furs, hides, pelts and robes. Consequently, it is worth noting at this juncture that subsequent iterations of the original partnership between Astor, the Chouteaus and Prattes, and the principals of the Columbia Fur Company would change by the mid 1830s, when Astor chose to retire from the fur trade and transferred his interest to Pratt & Company, which reconstituted as Chouteau & Company in 1839. Even as the names changed, and Astor had retired from most of his business interests, the American Fur Company (of AFC) remained a common shorthand reference to the Upper Missouri River posts associated with the Chouteau family.

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[52] This and the following two paragraphs are based on Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 15-18; Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 58-59; Chittenden, *American Fur Trade*, 1:318–25; and Annie Heloise Abel (ed.), *Chardon's Journal at Fort Clark, 1834-1839* (Pierre, S.D.: Privately printed, 1932), xxxvi-xxxvii. The American Fur Company and, later, Pratte, Chouteau and Company, also sent shipments up the Ohio River and through the Erie Canal; see Michael Casler, "Economics and Transshipments of the American Fur Company in the West," p. 4; paper presented at the *Missouri River History Conference: Steamers, Sandbars, and Snags – Reflections of the Steamboat Era on the Missouri River*, at Ponca State Park, Ponca, Nebraska September 4-7, 2008.

Chapter Seven

A Confluence of Culture and Commerce

> *It is neither coincidence nor vision that made the American Fur Company choose this place to build a fort. The Indians had known for a long time that this was a meeting place for many tribes. The traders just took advantage of it.*[1]
>
> Nakoda (Assiniboine) Elder on the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Area
>
> *The trappers, the traders, the explorers, the military, they all came through here, they passed through here. But we lived here. We had names for places around here, for the river and the hills and the mountains that are often ignored.*[2]
>
> Apsáalooke (Crow) Consultant on the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Area

In many respects, the plan for the Upper Missouri Outfit of the Western Department of the American Fur Company met the criteria of a "best laid plan." Yet, its application would occur in a dynamic world composed of many cultures, varied landscapes and resources, dramatic weather shifts, personal violence, and cultural misunderstandings. The principal employees of the UMO, as well as their fellows in St. Louis, were certainly aware of this basic truth—and all of them had experience with the unforeseen consequences that could arise from—or overwhelm—the most commonplace actions. Transporting cargo up the Missouri River by keelboat could involve a host of dangers, from sawyers (an uprooted tree that has become stuck in the river, with heavy limbs undulating at the surface), collapsing banks, sudden shifts in the current, or violent opposition from Native communities that were overlooked by the trade or expected tribute for allowing safe passage. Even bathing on the edge of the river could prove fatal if a poor swimmer stepped into a pothole and was swept downstream. Freezing winters and scorching summers came with specific challenges for those caught out in the open. Though not necessarily a threat to life and limb, an entire season's accumulation of furs, pelts, skins and hides could disappear in a fire, be spoiled by a leaky roof, or lost in a boating mishap while heading downriver, thus wiping out a large expenditure of capital and countless hours of labor.[3]

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[1] Quoted in Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study*, 216.

[2] Ibid., 225. The Yellowstone River (first referred to as Roche Jaune by French trappers) has always been known to the Apsáalooke (Crow) as Iichíilikaashaashe Aliakáate (Elk River).

[3] On the precarious conditions, mishaps and violence that were intrinsic to the Upper Missouri River fur trade in the mid 18th century, see Hiram Martin Chittenden, "Report on Steamboat Wrecks on Missouri River," *Nebraska History* 51 (1970): 16-23; Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur*

The Native communities that fur trade companies engaged with also had their own sense of well-laid plans. When these did not comport with the motives of a Chouteau, a Chief Factor, a boatman, or an *engagé*, misunderstandings could arise that spoiled an established trade relationship. If diplomacy failed to correct a sense of unfair dealing, its collapse might lead to conflict and a cessation of trade. When such crises arose, Native leaders had to adjust their plans to the unforeseen dangers, and potential benefits, of pursuing or continuing a trade relationship. Such a calculus usually had less to do with the disposition of a trader or trading post, than it did with the relative needs of a particular Native community and its relations with allies and extended kin. Native leaders also needed to take into account the decisions that other Native groups might make to protect or enlarge their own resource base, and thus determine if conflict or a formal peace would best advance the prospects of their people. In short, the history of Fort Union is largely about how the best laid plans of different peoples were shaped by environmental processes, commerce, competition, resource depletion, and a host of other conditions that either shaped or were shaped by a combination of distinct interests.[4]

Whether measured in terms of ecological damage or economic production, the nearly four-decade history of Fort Union was always subject to variable and often extreme environmental conditions: from the shifting course of the Missouri River, the abundance or scarcity of bison and other animals across the Northern Plains, regional droughts, annual floods, and the severity of winter conditions. The networks of ancient travel routes and peoples that had long intersected in the Confluence Area, as well as the ecological diversity that sustained their large encampments, were also crucial to the siting and relative longevity of Fort Union. Enriched by sediments from periodic floods, the Confluence Area was interlaced with small channels, wetlands, and backwaters that sustained riparian forests, wet and dry prairies, a host of mammals, fish, ground birds, reptiles, amphibians, mollusks and a throbbing array of insects and avian life. Shifts in river levels, new meanders, and flood deposition were the primary drivers of species diversity, since they triggered an ever changing mosaic of old and young forests, river islands, cutbanks, wet and dry prairies, short-grass uplands, and an array of

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Trade (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 21, 50-51, 128-29; John E. Sunder, *The Fur Trade of the Upper Missouri, 1840-1865* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 59, 67, 102-03, 133-35, 162, 227, David Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West 1807-1840: A Geographical Synthesis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 87; Michael Casler, "Fur Traders as Undertakers on the Upper Missouri," A Paper Presented at the Third National Fur Trade Symposium, Chadron, Nebraska, October 12-14, 2006, 6-9.

[4] Charles Larpenteur, *The Original Journal of Charles Larpenteur: My Travels to the Rocky Mountains Between 1834 and 1872,* transcribed and annotated by Erwin N. Thompson, ed. Casler (Chadron, Nebraska, The Fur Press, 2007.), 49.

environmental niches that sustained an almost unrivaled concentration of plant and animal life on the Northern Plains.[5]

More than an ecological "hot spot," the Confluence was—and is—a cultural landscape that attracted and sustained peoples for countless generations. As present-day citizens of Northern Plains tribal nations have noted, reliable quantities of edible plants included artichokes, chokecherries, rose hips, bull berries, gooseberries, service berries, red plums, currants, sour grapes, rhubarb, and a variety of "bulbs and roots—turnip, black potato, wild carrot, [and] wild turnip, that were boiled or roasted and eaten." Sage, chokecherry, sweetgrass, juniper, bear root, and other plants of cultural significance were gathered, dried, and used during prayers, sweat lodges, and larger ceremonies. Antelope, deer, elk and bison were also found in the area at various times of the year. Along with the variety of animals noted in the preceding paragraph, the Confluence Area also provided a good deal of the sustenance that large groups of people needed while spending time in the area—particularly during large summer congregations, which at times included sun dances. The bluffs and ridge lines above the Confluence were also prized areas for trapping eagles.[6]

The historical, cultural, and environmental significance of the Confluence Area is reflected in the number of First Nations and American Indian peoples that are associated with the area. The National Parks Service (NPS) recognizes nine federally recognized tribal nations with whom NPS administrators and staff must formally consult regarding management programs, interpretation, archeological investigations, and other related matters in accordance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA), and President William J. Clinton's 1990 *Memorandum on Government-to-Government Relations With Native American Tribal Governments*. These include the Nakoda (Assiniboine), Apsáalooke (Crow), Piikáni (Blackfeet), Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree), Nahkawininiwak (Plains Ojibwe), Nueta (Mandan), Sahnish (Arikara), Hiraacá (Hidatsa), and nations within the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Seven Council Fires). All of these peoples retain strong cultural and historical associations with the Confluence Area and historical Fort Union, in large part because both were located at the intersection of multiple homelands that both sustained and were shaped by many peoples over thousands of years. While all of these Indigenous peoples are noted throughout this text, the Nakoda (Assiniboine) have a particularly close association with the Confluence area and also

[5] Richard White, "Creative Misunderstandings and New Understandings," in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in the Atlantic World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 305-314; Committee on Missouri River Ecosystem Science et al., *The Missouri River Ecosystem: Exploring the Prospects for Recovery* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2002), 57-83; and Robert Kelley Schneiders, *Big Sky Rivers: The Yellowstone and Upper Missouri* (University Press of Kansas, 2003), 36-39, 41, 59-63.
[6] Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement*, 221, 223-224.

have a broad historical overlap with the Northern Plains fur trade, from the beginning of the Hudson's Bay Company in the 17th century to the demise of Fort Union two centuries later. Consequently, the following discussion of Native peoples and the fur trade will begin with an emphasis on the Nakoda.[7]



Image 7.1: The Upper Missouri Fur Trade and Indigenous Nations, ca. mid 19th century. Source: National Park Service.

The Nakoda and the Contours of Indigenous Trade on the Northern Plains

As noted in Chapter Two, significant and wide-ranging exchange networks interlaced North America long before Europeans first crossed the Atlantic Ocean. In the time before the arrival of Europeans, key trade centers included The Dalles Rendezvous on the Middle Columbia River, the Shoshone Rendezvous along the Green River in present-day southwestern Wyoming, the Taos Pueblos, the Sahnish (Arikara), Nueta (Mandan), and Hiraacá (Hidatsa) villages on the Middle Missouri River, and the Dakhóta Rendezvous in the Upper Mississippi River Valley. A tremendous variety of materials, foods, and craft goods moved through these centers: including decorative and utilitarian seashells, packs of dried and pounded salmon, pemmican, bison hides, prized lithics and

[7] Memorandum on Government-to-Government Relations With Native American Tribal Governments April 29, 1994; Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies," in *Federal Register*, Volume 59, Number 85 (Wednesday, May 4, 1994) [Presidential Documents]: 22951-22952; and The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, Pub. L. 101-601—Nov. 16, 1990, 25 U.S.C. 3001 et seq., 104 Stat. 3048.

metals, animal pelts and skins, dried botanicals, and a host of other items, resources, and materials.[8]

The movement of resources across long distances, and through multiple populations, broached three broad concerns: resource diversification, diplomacy (between groups and within a confederated community), and manifestations of status. The relative abundance that came with trade helped to even-out periods of seasonal abundance and scarcity within a specific locale or territory. Such consistency and security also provided an opportunity for associated groups to specialize in the procurement of particular resources—thus diversifying the common resource base and increasing each group's participation in a broader exchange network. Diplomacy, which affirmed and formalized relations through gifts and peaceful exchange, was the political component of a trade relationship that fostered peace and cooperation between groups with overlapping or concurrent needs. Prestige goods, which were often incorporated into rituals or publicly displayed on specific occasions, were central to the ceremonial life that defined a community and affirmed the leadership status of the person or family that possessed the items. This last dynamic became increasingly important when leaders were responsible for navigating periods of crisis or conflict, or when they were expected to assist specific members of the broader community.[9]

Oral histories, ongoing traditions, and scholarly studies confirm that the Nakoda (Assiniboine) sustained similar networks of exchange, and lived for countless generations within a vast territory that extended southwestward from Hudson Bay and Lake Nipigon, to Lake Winnipeg, the Upper Missouri River, and the Yellowstone River. Prior to contact with Jesuit missionaries in the mid 17th century, the Nakoda people were comprised of sixty self-governing bands. A division seems to have occurred after the establishment and early expansion of the Hudson's Bay Company in the last third of the 17th century. The Isáŋyathi Dakȟóta (Santee Dakota) have a story from the early post-contact period that speaks of a Nakoda migration to the south. The Siouan speaking Nakoda and Dakhóta were once a union of two peoples who, in the early post-contact period, experienced increased conflict with Anishinaabeg peoples to the east. A large battle against their common foe ultimately caused a split among the early Nakota and Dakhóta, with the former moving south toward Qu'Appelle, Souris, and Missouri River basins in present-day North Dakota, Montana, and Manitoba. By the time the U.S.-based fur trade became

[8] This and the following paragraph are based on Susan C. Vehik, "Conflict, Trade, and Political Development on the Southern Plains," *American Antiquity*, 67 (January 2002):37-64; Vehik and Timothy G. Baugh, "Prehistoric Plains Trade," in *Prehistoric Exchange Systems in North America*, ed. Baugh and Jonathon E. Ericson (New York: Springer Science, 1994), 49-274; W. Raymond Wood, "Northern Plains Villages Cultures: Internal Stability and External Relationships," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 1-17, 155.

[9] Ann M. Carlos and Frank D. Lewis, "Native Americans and Exchange," *The Cambridge History of Capitalism*, ed. Larry Neal and Jeffrey G. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 454-460.

established around the Confluence area, the Nakoda would have been intimately familiar with the region for many generations.[10]

By the time the Upper Missouri Outfit of the American Fur Company committed to establishing a substantial fur trade post at the Confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, Native communities on the Northern Plains had long experience with European-American trade goods and trade centers. Because this trade coincided with two other momentous developments—the acquisition of horses and firearms—it tended to affirm and exacerbate changes in the social geographies of Indigenous groups, the nature and extent of their resource bases, and the significance of trade. Horses and guns altered dynamics within Native societies, reconfigured alliances, expanded territorial ranges, and became essential to trade, conflict, travel, hunting, and personal status. Guns only further compounded the equation, since they also became necessary for hunting, conflict, trade with other Indigenous groups, and personal status. Horses and guns also conflated prestige items with necessities, which in turn altered subsistence practices and long-standing relations with groups that had not yet acquired either. This scenario is well illustrated by the rise of the Lakhóta and Dakhóta on the Great Plains and the prairies to the east, and their varied relations with French traders near the Great Lakes, Indigenous nations on the Central Plains, Missouri River horticulturalists, and other plains peoples around the Black Hills.[11]

The Nakoda (Assiniboine) offer a good illustration of how circumstances and outcomes were different for groups that traded with the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. Equestrianism and horticulture were less viable while firearms were often more readily available, and thus peoples from the north tended to trade guns for horses to the south. While this expanded the geography of trade on the northern plains, it also led to specific concentrations of European trade goods among an alliance of groups that was known as the Nehiyaw-Pwat (Iron Confederacy), which included Nakoda, Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree), and Nahkawininiwak (aka Plains Ojibwe, Bungi, and Manitoba Saulteaux). In the 18th century, the Nakoda pushed south into Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) and Aaniiih (aka Atsina, Gros Ventre) territory to hunt bison and trap fur bearing animals. These incursions were not necessarily belligerent, however, and the Nakoda established a trade with the Niitsitapi that involved second-hand British

[10] James Larpenteur Long, *The Assiniboines: From the Accounts of the Old Ones Told to First Boy (James Larpentuer Long),* ed. M.S. Kennedy (University of Oklahoma Press, 1961); Robert Four Star, "History of the Assiniboine People from the Oral Tradition," *Nakodabi—The Assiniboine People,* 1 (October 1992): 4-5; Douglas R. Parks and Raymond J. DeMallie "Sioux, Assiniboine, and Stoney Dialects: A Classification," *Anthropological Linguistics* 34 (Spring-Winter 1992): 233-255; Joshua Ben Horowitz, "Nakona Wasnonyya Yuhabi/Assniboine Knowledge Keepers: Indigenous Archiving from the 19th to the 20th Centuries" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2014), 182-214.

[11] Patricia Albers et al., *The Home of the Bison: An Ethnographic and Ethnohistorical Study of Traditional Cultural Affiliations to Wind Cave National Park* (Washington, DC: U.S. National Park Service Publications and Papers, 2003), 46-50.

trade goods including wool coats and leggings, glass beads, metal pots, tools and weapons, and possibly some guns and ammunition.[12]

By the second half of the 18th century, most Nakoda bands had acquired enough horses from the Niitsitapi and Aaniiih to be nominally equestrian. For the most part, the Nakoda tended to use them as pack animals (in place of the canoes that they traditionally used to move about the waterways of the prairies) rather than for personal transportation or raiding. They continued to hunt and trap on the plains of southern Saskatchewan and southeastern Alberta, but they no longer carried European trade goods to either of those communities to the south. The reasons were essentially three-fold. A growing number of Métis peoples became intermediaries between the fur trade companies and various First Nations communities to the southwest of Hudson's Bay and west of the Great Lakes—and thus displaced the various constituents of the Nehiyaw-Pwat (Iron Confederacy) from their former roles as traders for—rather than procurers of—skins, pelts and hides. The Nakoda were also hard hit by the smallpox epidemic of 1780-81, and were further diminished when a substantial part of the Nakoda nation split off and migrated to the Rocky Mountains to escape the disease and subsequently became the Îyârhe Nakoda (Rocky Mountain People, or Stoney).[13]

The Nakoda position within the prairie trade was further undermined by aggressive competition between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company. While this triggered an inflationary cycle where rival companies sought to outdo their rivals by giving more to obtain the proceeds of the hunt, it also increased the number of First Nations groups that hunted on the prairies. The NWC traders followed with large amounts of alcohol, both to encourage trapping and to compensate for not having the kinds or quality of wares (guns, kettles, ammunition, and various forms of metal ware) that could be acquired at the HBC's York Factory on the shores of Hudson Bay. The NWC push eventually caused the HBC to abandon its policy of directing trade to a central locale like York Factory—and instead developed a slew of smaller posts on the Assiniboine, Qu'Appelle, and South Saskatchewan rivers. While this revitalized the

[12] This and the following paragraph are based on DeMallie and David Reed Miller, "Assiniboine," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, 13, ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 572-583; Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 57-61; Colin Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 112-113; Ian A. L. Getty and Erik D. Gooding, "Stoney," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, 596-602.

[13] This and the following paragraph are based on DeMallie and Miller, "Assiniboine," 574; Getty and Gooding, "Stony," 597; Thomas F. Schilz, "Brandy and Beaver Pelts: Assiniboine-European Trading Patterns, 1695–1805," *Saskatchewan History,* 37 (Autumn 1984): 95-102; Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 127-135; Ray, D. Wayne Moodie, Connrad E. Hedenreich, "Rupert's Land," in *Historical Atlas of Canada: From the beginning to 1800,* ed. R. Cole Harris (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 143-148.

HBC's share of the trade, it brought more First Nations communities into competition with the Nakoda.

By the late 18th century, however, most Nakoda had migrated south to the area between the Souris and Qu'Appelle rivers, where they were well positioned to tap into the Nueta (Mandan) and Hiraacá (Hidatsa) trade center. Horses were more readily acquired there, as well as agricultural produce. Traders from St. Louis also brought guns and other European wares. Through this period the Nakoda and their Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree) allies had become increasingly focused on bison hunting. The animals that lived to the north put on more fat to last through the winter, had thicker and woolier hides, and generally congregated in large draws where they could be surrounded or driven into a buffalo pound where they could be dispatched and processed in fairly compact area. The same could not be said of bison to the south, yet those animals produced the kinds of hides that St. Louis-based traders preferred. With less fat and hair, they were more easily processed into pliable leather, durable robes, and floor coverings. The Nakoda moved north in winter and south in summer to better satisfy the northern and southern markets. In the case of the latter, they also timed their hunts so they could be on hand when traders came up the Missouri while the river was still high.[14]

Eyeing the Confluence

In the mid 1820s, when the Columbia Fur Company and the American Fur Company were establishing competing posts on the Missouri River, both companies recognized the lasting potential of the Confluence Area. Because the Yellowstone River was only been briefly tapped for beaver during Manuel Lisa's expeditions to the Rocky Mountains, Kenneth McKenzie believed the river had considerable potential for enriching the Columbia Fur Company if it could secure a dominant position at the Confluence. His calculus received additional affirmation in 1825, when the U.S. Army sent General Henry Atkinson and Indian Commissioner Benjamin O'Fallon on a diplomatic show-of-force tour with an escort of nearly 500 soldiers from Council Bluffs to the mouth of the Yellowstone River. Travelling in keelboats propelled by hand-driven paddle wheels of his own design, Atkinson stopped at several villages along the way to negotiate treaties that affirmed peace, friendship and the continuation—or restoration—of trade with each Indigenous nation.[15]

In many respects, the river tour was intended to clean up the mess that Ashley and Henry had created a few years before as well as demonstrate the military strength of the

[14] George Colpitts, "A Métis View of the Summer Market Hunt on the Northern Plains," *Bison and People on the North American Plains*, ed. Geoff Cunfer and Bill Waiser (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2016), 201-206; François Antone Larocque, *Journal of Larocque from the Assiniboine to the Yellowstone, 1805*, ed. L.J. Burpee (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1910), 26, 32-37.
[15] This and the following paragraph is based on Nichols, "General Henry Atkinson's Report of the Yellowstone Expedition of 1825," *Nebraska History* 44 (1963): 65-82.

U.S. Army and its ability to move at will along the river. A certain degree of theater was used to get across these two points, with each engagement including a gift-giving ceremony, a parading of troops and a formal treaty ceremony that promised "perpetual friendship," affirmed U.S. suzerainty over the regulation of trade, and obliged Native peoples to only deal with licensed traders. On the way upriver, the expedition met with Sahnish (Arikara), Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne), Apsáalooke (Crow), Nueta (Mandan), Páⁿka (Ponca), Lakȟóta, and Dakȟóta communities. When the expedition arrived at the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence, most of the force encamped at the site of Fort Henry, which they christened Camp Barbour while General Atkinson, Commissioner O'Fallon, and a small escort travelled a short ways up the Missouri to see if they could find a group of Nakoda (Assiniboine) or Piikáni (Blackfeet).

At the very least, Atkinsons' and O'Fallon's tour indicated that the movement of trade goods and furs up and down the river from St. Louis to the Confluence would be less of a problem than McKenzie might have feared. The likelihood of more competition for the Columbia Fur Company was also a live possibility, but that was more manageable than the losses that might occur from a wrecked boat and its cargo. In either case, the 1825 trading season seemed to confirm that the largely untapped Yellowstone River would promise years of large harvests. This presumption no doubt encouraged McKenzie to push a harder bargain with Astor, and it certainly added to his sense that the Confluence should become the terminus and the headquarters of the Upper Missouri Outfit, both for its access to the beaver country and the northern bison herds, as well as to the Indigenous nations to the north (in British Canada) and to the east where he and his business partners had the best understanding of the fur trade.[16]

Building Toward the Confluence

As the men who would build and outfit Fort Union made their way up the Missouri River in 1828, they moved through Native homelands that were largely controlled by most of the groups that would trade at Fort Union. At the time, the southernmost of these nations was composed of various bands within the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Seven Council Fires, aka Great Sioux Nation). The first post they passed along the route north was Fort Tecumseh, which had been built by the Columbia Fur Company in 1822. Ten years later, the Upper Missouri Outfit of the American Fur Company would build a new and more expansive post named Fort Pierre Chouteau. Fort Tecumseh and its successor were situated on the Missouri near the mouth of the Bad River, and between the Iháŋkthuŋwaŋ (Yankton Dakota) to the east and the Lakȟóta (Lakota) to the west. At the time, and through the rest of the decade, the Lakȟóta were shifting their population center to a broad area that encompassed the forks of the Cheyenne and Belle Fourche rivers that flowed out of the Black Hills and southward into the Platte River Basin. Both

[16] David Lavender, *The Fist in the Wilderness*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1964), 335-36.

areas were excellent for bison hunting, and the Lakȟóta continued to travel to Fort Tecumseh to trade bison robes and other proceeds of the hunt. The Iháŋktȟuŋwaŋ, for their part, remained in the vast prairie country to the east and northeast of the Missouri River and were as likely to take their trade to the James, Minnesota, and Red rivers as the Missouri River.[17]

Lakȟóta (Lakota) and Fort Pierre

From 1832 until 1855, when it was sold to the U.S. Army, Fort Pierre Chouteau was second only to Fort Union in terms of physical scale, volume of trade, and strategic positioning vis a vis its relative proximity to St. Louis. As George Catlin described it, Fort Pierre was

> undoubtedly one of the most important and productive of the American Fur Company's posts, being in the centre of the great Sioux country, drawing from all quarters an immense and almost incredible number of buffalo robes, which are carried to the New York and other Eastern markets, and sold at a great profit.[18]

In many respects the southern anchor of the UMO, Fort Pierre Chouteau received trade goods from St. Louis that were distributed to satellite posts, and was a collection point for robes, furs, and pelts from these same posts, which were generally located in the vicinity of a winter village where traders acquired the proceeds of the hunt from late fall to early spring. As Catlin's description indicates, Fort Pierre was also used as a public relations venue, where esteemed guests and public officials were introduced to the fur trade in a fairly high style. However, these virtues faltered in the late 1840s and early 1850s when severe droughts and the movement of overland migrants in the Platte River Valley caused bison herds to decline precipitously. The diminished herds were especially affected by the loss of critical wintering sites that were overtaxed and ruined each summer by large encampments of migrants. Consequently, the bison migrated from the Central Plains to the Northwestern Great Plains. The same was true of the Lakȟóta, who made a similar northward move in the 1850s that included shifting their trade to Fort Union and other posts on the Upper Missouri.[19]

The Sahnish (Arikara) and life after "the Arikara War"

Further up the river, as the small brigade would have encountered the Sahnish (Arikara). In the 1810s, after several years of disease outbreaks and conflict with

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[17] Raymond J. DeMallie, "Yankton and Yanktonai," 777-778, DeMallie, "Teton," both in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, vol. 13, pt. 2, ed. DeMallie (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 777-778, 794-795,

[18] George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Conditions of the North American Indians*, 2 vols. (1844; reprint, New York, 1973), 209.

[19] Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 116-118. Also see Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Gold Seekers, and the Rush to* Colorado (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 64-93.

powerful equestrian groups, the Sahnish had consolidated their diminished nation into two villages on the Missouri River. Situated just above the mouth of the Grand River (near the present-day border of South Dakota and North Dakota, the Sahnish had good access to resources and traders, but the necessary consolidation of distinctive groups from decimated communities led to unavoidable strife. As multiple leaders strove for authority, and the remnants of their former communities navigated the differences between the specific rituals and collective actions that had defined their former villages, the Sahnish struggled to find a productive comity amongst themselves. Given this weakened and disordered state, the Sahnish were increasingly bypassed as traders, fur trappers, military expeditions, and fort builders made their way to the Upper Missouri River. In short, the Sahnish were on the brink of losing the "middleman" position they previously held between the St. Louis traders and Native groups to the north. [20]

Confounded by a large and well-armed fur trapping brigade that came marching through their villages in the late spring of 1823, and worried that it might usurp the reduced trade that still moved through their village, the Sahnish attacked and killed 15 men before forcing the brigade to retreat downriver. By early summer, however, a punitive expedition led by General Henry Leavenworth from Fort Atkinson, along with the fur trapping brigade, and 750 Lakȟóta (Lakota) and Iháŋktȟuŋwaŋ (Yankton) warriors, attacked the Sahnish and forced them to temporarily leave their villages. With the so-called "Arikara War" over, the self-styled "Missouri Legion" victorious, the Sahnish agreed to not block trappers from heading to the Rocky Mountains nor any other commerce that might move along the river.[21]

Two years after these events, in August of 1825, the Sahnish took part in a peace treaty with U.S. representatives, the Nueta (Mandan), and Hiraacá. While the terms of the treaty mostly applied to the Sahnish, all three groups gave promises that they would not trade with people from British Canada or try to block the movement of people and goods along the Missouri River. By the time of the treaty, the Sahnish had already returned to their villages near the Grand River. After several years of harassment by the Lakȟóta, who undermined Sahnish efforts to conduct bison hunts and damaged their crops, the Sahnish moved south to live near the Ickariˀ Chatiks si chatiks (Skidi Pawnee) with whom they were related. Following that sojourn, the Sahnish spent a few years as

[20] This and the following paragraph are based on Douglas R. Parks, "Arikara," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, vol. 13, pt. 1, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 367-369; Roger Nichols, "Backdrop for Disaster: Causes of the Arikara War of 1823, *South Dakota History*, 14, (Summer 1984): 93–113; *Missouri Gazette & Public Advertiser*, St. Louis, February 13, 1822; David Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West*, 63-72; and Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle University of Washington Press, 2003), 45-46. These events are described in a slightly different context in Chapter Seven.

[21] This and the following paragraph are based on Roger L. Nichols, "Backdrop for Disaster: Causes of the Arikara War of 1823," *South Dakota History*, 14 (Summer 1984), 93–113.

nomadic hunters and then settled near Fort Clark and the Nueta and Hiraacá villages to the north in 1838, the year after smallpox epidemic. From this site, the Sahnish had direct access to the traders at Fort Clark, and also travelled to Fort Union where trading opportunities were more extensive.

Fort Clark: Tapping the Nueta and Hiraacá Trade

Before arriving at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, the men who travelled up the river to work on the construction of Fort Union would have passed through the Hiraacá (Hidatsa) and Nueta (Mandan) villages near the mouth of the Heart River and the future site of American Fur Company's Fort Clark. Because the construction of Fort Union was a priority, the building of Fort Clark did not commence until 1830, and required the better part of two years to finish the much smaller fort. While fur traders had lived among the Nueta and Hiraacá in the past, the establishment of the American Fur Company post made Native trade an adjunct of Fort Clark's more extensive trade with groups that came from the west and southwest. While these people also traded with the Nueta and Hiraacá for crops and other items, the overall trade between Native peoples was less than if it had occurred without Fort Clark. On the other side of the ledger, however, marriages between Nueta or Hiraacá women and fur traders brought trade goods into the two communities and, since a number of fur trade employees received occasional appointments to transport and distribute trade goods that were promised in a treaty with the United States, relatives of these men's spouses had additional ways of obtaining trade goods. Lastly, it is worth noting that Nueta, Hiraacá, and Sahnish women often traded harvested crops, moccasins, leather goods and other items to the clerks at Fort Clark and Fort Union for credit in the trade store.[22]

In the 1820s and early 1830s, the Nueta and Hiraacá continued to live much as they had in the late 18th century. Their earth lodges were owned by women, who derived their identities from matrilineal clans rather than specific ancestries. Families moved to smaller lodges in the timbered bottom land in the winter, then returned to the village on the river bluffs in spring, where women planted crops that included several varieties of corn, beans, squash, and sunflowers. Men primarily focused on the acquisition of animal protein, and left the village area to hunt bison and other animals in spring and summer, and caught fish in the river and its side channels through most of the year. Buffalo carcasses were also retrieved from the river in the spring. Metal technology obtained from traders was no longer novel, and had been adopted for everyday purposes. However, pre-trade era materials like wood, bone, shell, feathers, hides, skins, robes, and lithics

[22] Roy W. Meyer, *The Village Indians of the Upper Missouri: The Mandans, Hidatsas, and Arikaras* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 39, 42, 43, 50–54, 83–89, 90–100; and Edward M. Bruner, "Mandan," in *Perspectives in American Indian Culture Change*, ed. Edward H. Spicer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 207–218, 229–233.

were used in sacred rituals. In the case of first plantings, for instance, a hoe made with a bison shoulder blade was used instead of one with a metal blade.[23]

Bringing the North and the West to the Upper Missouri Villages

Beginning with Manuel Lisa in 1809, American fur traders began to move beyond the Mandan and Hidatsa villages to trap and trade directly on the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers beyond the Confluence area. While these efforts stopped during the War of 1812, they resumed after the war's formal end in 1815 and benefitted from restrictions on British-based trade in the region. With the fur and peltry trade focused on the Yellowstone River basin, the Mandan and Hidatsa became the primary providers of American goods to groups from the north; namely the Nehiyaw-Pwat (aka Iron Confederacy) which was composed of the Nakoda (Assiniboine), Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree), and Nahkawininiwak (aka Plains Ojibwe, Bungi, and Manitoba Saulteaux). Unlike British traders, these peoples could move freely throughout their collective territory, which included extensive areas on both sides of the U.S. and British-Canadian border. While the Nehiyaw-Pwat (aka Iron Confederacy) maintained long-standing connections to the fur trade in present-day Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, the recently ended war had slowed down trade and the members of the Nehiyaw-Pwat were anxious to restore and increase their former trading ventures. [24]

Through the late 18th century and the decade that preceded the War of 1812, the members of the Nehiyaw-Pwat, and especially the Nakoda, had frequently carried manufactured items, including fire arms, that they had acquired from the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, and traded them for corn, horses, and other items that they took back north. Now, it seemed, they were ready to invert this long-standing trade, by acquiring American made goods from Fort Lisa and subsequent trading posts and carrying them to the north where they intended to improve their position in the trade. Like the Nakoda, the Ohmésêhese (Northern Cheyenne) and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho) also functioned as bridge between the trade at the Upper Missouri villages and the equestrian peoples of the Southern Plains, where the northerners exchanged manufactured goods, fabrics, beads, and other items for horses that they brought back to the north for trade.

The Apsáalooke (Crow) conducted a very similar trade, but on an east-west axis between the Shoshone Rendezvous near the Rocky Mountains and the Upper Missouri villages. In the process, the various groups that came to the Upper Missouri to trade had

[23] Meyer, *The Village Indians*, 48-54, 83-89.
[24] This and the following paragraph are based on Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," Journal of American History, 90 (December 2003), 833–862; William R. Swagerty, "Indian Trade in the Trans-Mississippi West to 1870," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, 4, ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 351–74; and Jennifer S. H. Brown, "History of the Canadian Plains until 1870," *Handbook of North American Indians,* 13, 304-308.

inherited and maintained ancient networks of exchange that American and Canadian traders had been especially keen to exploit and control. These were the dynamics that brought Manuel Lisa to establish a new fort near the Hiraacá, and they were absolutely central to the establishment of Fort Union, which provided direct access via the Yellowstone River to the Apsáalooke (Crow), Ohmésêhese (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho), by way of the Missouri River to the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), their close relatives the Aaniiih (Gros Ventre), and the Nehiyaw-Pwat (aka Iron Confederacy), the trade at Fort Union was also designed to undermine the Hudsons' Bay Company's operations on the Northern Plains while further enriching the American owners and traders to the south.[25]

Rising from the Confluence

While it is not known for certain who designed the first iteration of Fort Union, the most likely candidate is James Kipp. Kipp was an original partner in the Columbia Fur Company (CFC) and the builder of Fort Floyd in 1827. Located at the mouth of the of the White Earth River on the north bank of the Missouri, about 183 miles downriver from the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence, Fort Floyd was the CFC's last post before the merger with Astor, Crooks and the Chouteaus. After Kipp fell ill, he travelled down the Missouri to recuperate on his farm near present-day Kansas City. When he returned upriver in the spring of 1828, he did so as a partner in the newly christened Upper Missouri Outfit of the Western Department of the American Fur Company. He spent the better part of the year working on a new fort at the Nueta (Mandan) village of Mih-tutta-hang-kusch, which at the time was the most important locale within the company's operations. Work on the new post went slowly, however, which may have been the result of two or three factors. First off, the existing post, identified by archeologists and historians as "Fort Clark I," remained in use and its replacement was not urgent. Second, Kipp was consumed with designing and planning the construction of Fort Union, which was ultimately overseen by Francis Chardon. Lastly, the lion's share of available lumber that could have been used for the construction of the second Fort Clark was designated for the new fort at the Confluence.[26]

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[25] Hoxie, *Parading Through History*, 54-60, 67 70; Loretta Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings: Gros Ventre Culture and History, 1778-1984* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 24-38; Fowler, "Arapaho," in *Handbook of North American Indians,* 13, 840-842; John S. Millroy, *The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy, and War, 1780 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988), 41-59; David Miller et al, *The History of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, 1600* 2012 (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2012), 47-61.

[26] W. Raymond Wood, "James Kipp: Upper Missouri River Fur Trader and Missouri Farmer," *North Dakota History,* 77 (Nos. 1 & 2, 2005): 5-7; Wood and Michael M. Casler, "A Revised History of Fort Floyd," *North Dakota History*, 80 (Winter 2015): 3-13. Wood and Casler suggest that Francis Chardon may be the designer of Fort Union. Until recently, Fort Floyd had been associated with a site at the Confluence, but that is the site of Fort William which was subsequently moved to Fort Union to be repurposed as employee housing, storage space, and covered stalls for horses.

The construction of Fort Union began in earnest during the winter of 1828-29, when a crew of laborers on the keelboat *Otter* was sent upriver from Mih-tutta-hang-kusch to work on the new fort. McKenzie had initially wanted to send brigades to the Rocky Mountains, to compete with Ashley's Rocky Mountain Company, but Pratte and the other directors of the Western Department of the AFC encouraged him to "first establish a permanent post at the mouth of the Yellowstone, which would afford a safe and convenient base for the operations of the upper country."[27] McKenzie concurred, and wrote back to Chouteau to report that "the Otter arrived at the Yellowstone in sufficient time to build a fort and have all necessary preparations made for security."[28] National Park Service Archeologist William J. Hunt, Jr. described the first iteration of Fort Union as a modest and fairly crude structure, especially when compared to the rebuilding that occurred in the 1830s. The first tasks of the builders involved digging pits to store trade goods and constructing crude shelters for shelter against the elements and a possible raid. "The first post was small," he writes, "and its palisade was built in the traditional manner by digging a trench and inserting 'pickets' or posts of split timber" that barely withstood the strong winds on the Northern Plains. In short, the fort was rushed "to completion by taking shortcuts in construction. As a result, the new trading post was poorly built and had to be replaced within a few years."[29] Fort Union's final design conformed to that of other fur trading posts and reflected its service as a collection and distribution point for furs, trade goods and supplies. It included the typical warehouses, employee quarters, and residences and office space for the post clerk and post manager. These were all arranged along the inner perimeters of a square palisade.[30]

As work on the first iteration of Fort Union came to completion in early 1830, McKenzie lobbied the Western Department to purchase a steamboat, arguing that it would halve the six-months it took a large keelboat to travel from St. Louis to Fort Union, and it could transport more cargo and personnel. The Directors in St. Louis obliged, and commissioned the construction of the Steamboat *Yellow Stone*, which was built in Louisville, Kentucky over the winter of 1830-31. The *Yellow Stone* arrived in St. Louis in time to catch the spring rise, when the snow melts off of the plains and prairies and deepens the channel of the Missouri. The first upriver voyage only went as far as the AFC's Fort Tecumseh, in the vicinity of present-day Pierre, South Dakota. Though disappointing, the *Yellow Stone* traveled 500 river miles further than any steamboat

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[27] Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, 3 vols. (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1902), 1:327. Also see Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 42-43.
[28] McKenzie to Chouteau, December 26, 1828; quoted in Chittenden, *American Fur Trade*, 3:958.
[29] William J. Hunt, Jr., "Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Montana—North Dakota Border Historic Trading in the Rocky Mountains," in *Archaeology in America: An Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, ed. Linda S. Cordell, Kent Lightfoot, Francis McManamon, and George Milner (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009), 265.
[30] Alicia Caporaso, "Six Upper Missouri River Fur Trading Posts: Trends in Organization," *South Dakota History* 38, no. 4, 2008.

before. The following year, with the artist George Catlin as a passenger, the *Yellow Stone* made it all the way to Fort Union in less than three months, including multi-day stops at downriver posts.[31]



Image 7.2: ***Fort Union from the Missouri River***. Source: Isaac Sprague, "Fort Union of the Missouri, 1843," Courtesy of the New York Historical Society. This image depicts Fort Union shortly after a period of reconstruction and the first installation of the tall, central flagpole.

The Upper Missouri Outfit: Commerce and Labor in Context

Fort Union stood like a lone wooden Citadel on the Upper Missouri River, but it functioned within several geographical contexts. All of these, in one form or another were defined by rivers, which served as the main arteries of transportation, communication, and commerce between the Northern Plains and St. Louis. The second might be described as corporate and governmental, which involved the communications and transportation of materials and personnel between the various posts associated with the Upper Missouri Outfit and Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company (the successor to Bernard Pratte & Company). The third was quasi-governmental, especially by the early 1850s when steamboats that were owned or leased by the AFC held contracts to deliver treaty annuities, mail, government officials, and military supplies to fur trade posts or government installations. A fourth context might be described as "imperial." The AFC partners and some of Fort Union's Bourgeois (the head administrator of a post) viewed the fort as the bastion of a little "fur trade empire," that ruled the trade of the Northern Plains. Bourgeois Kenneth McKenzie was often regarded as the "King of the Missouri," both for his sense of ostentatious style, his willful dominance of a wide-ranging and highly profitable trade with various Native groups. Besides his royal moniker, imperial implications of Fort Union and the AFC were also geopolitical in so far as the American

[31] Michael Casler, *Steamboats of the Fort Union Fur Trade*, 8-14.

Fur Company presented a significant challenge to the Hudson's Bay Company. If successful, the challenge could draw powerful tribal nations away from British Canada and could, through treaty making and alliances, eventually bend the international boundary line in favor of the United States.[32]

In addition to Bourgeois or Factors (who were generally share-holding partners in the Company), every American Fur Company post employed clerks, interpreters, hunters and *engagés*. Besides literacy and an ability to maintain ledgers, some clerks also took charge of a small post or smaller wintering house. At Fort Union, which employed the most people on the Upper Missouri and served as a headquarters for the Upper Missouri Outfit, several clerks could be employed at the same time. Interpreters were usually drawn from individuals with long experience in the Upper Missouri country, and had often married a Native woman and lived among her people for parts of each year. Other interpreters included Métis people, the offspring of Native and non-Native peoples who generally had a good deal of experience with different Native communities as well as with French or English-speaking parents. Hunters were generally brought in on seasonal or annual contracts to supply meat for employees at a particular post. *Engagés* is a term that applied to a variety of contract employees who were "engaged" for a set period of time to work at any number of skilled and unskilled jobs. These included working as carpenters, blacksmiths, in construction, tending and herding horses, handling boats, putting up hay, transporting goods between posts by boat, pack horse, or dog sled (in winter), and helping facilitate trade when it involved large groups. For the most part, *engagés* and hunters tended to be Métis from the Red River settlement near present-day Winnipeg.[33] While personal relations between employees and with Native peoples certainly varied, work and socialization was fairly common at all of the Upper Missouri posts. Much of this was built on familiarity, since short-term and long-term employees, as well as some Native peoples, often worked at or traded with more than one post.[34]

While racial categories and nationality often corresponded with these positions, a fur trade post was a kind of intimate company town whose society functioned in a cultural island where people lived, and often assumed a personae, that would have startled people in the places they hailed from. McKenzie and James Kipp, for instance, were married to Anglo women and Indigenous women at the same time, a practice common with the fur trade for centuries. While these situations did not raise an eyebrow on the Upper Missouri, they likely triggered a good deal of disdainful whispers when

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[32] The "imperial" qualities of Fort Union are most celebrated in Erwin N. Thompson, *Fort Union Trading Post: Fur Trade Empire on the Upper Missouri* (Medora, N.D.: Theodore Roosevelt Nature and History Association, 1986).
[33] Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur* Trade, 141-44.
[34] William R. Swagerty, "A View from the Bottom Up: The Work Force of the American Fur Company on the Upper Missouri in the 1830s," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 43 (Spring 1993): 18-33; Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 117-120.

they visited their "legal" families. "Country marriages" with Native women were also typical, especially among those from communities where polygynous marriages were common. More importantly, they also served as important political and diplomatic institutions that facilitated cooperation, alliance, kinship, and trade. As Michael Lansing notes,

> Native women involved in these unions were … active[, …] strong willed, … [and able] to assert themselves. Influenced by the fluid social dynamics of trade, the nature of relationships between Native women and Euro-American men on the Upper Missouri varied widely. Through their roles as mediators, economic informants, cultural transmitters, companions, producers, and consumers—all in the context of liaisons and intermarriage—Native women gained status in [Native] and [non-Native] eyes. As these women recouped and redefined older positions of power on a margin defined by [American] Indian-white contact, collusion, and exchange, they acted as agents of change in their Plains societies.[35]

More often than any other group of fur trade employees, *engagés* (contracted employees) who spent long periods in the fur trade usually married Native women and jointly raised families at fur trade posts and Native villages. Many of these people and their children would remain in the Upper Missouri after the fur trade ended, often joining established Métis communities or becoming part of First Nations and American Indians groups.[36]

Though it paled in comparison to some of the larger posts of the Hudson's Bay Company, namely Fort Garry, York Factory, and Fort Vancouver, Fort Union was the largest and most significant commercial center on the Northern Plains for almost forty years. Dominance and profitability brought challenges from rival companies that built small opposition posts near the Confluence, but from the perspective of the AFC these challenges were generally short-lived nuisances. One such opposition post was Fort William, established in 1833 by William Sublette, one of the partners of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Sublette had formed a company with a Scots-Irishman from St. Louis named Robert Campbell the previous year. Their short-lived plan to build rival posts wherever the AFC had a presence began with the construction of Fort William, about two and a half miles downriver from Fort Union. When Pierre Chouteau, Jr. bought Sublette's company in 1834, he dismantled the stockade surrounding Fort William and brought to Fort Union where it was erected and provided a protected horse corral and hay storage area, and overflow housing. Eight years later, the Union Fur Company and Fox, Livingston and Company constructed a fur trade fort near the site of

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[35] Quotation from Michael Lansing, "Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage in the Upper Missouri Trade, 1804-1868," *The Western Historical Quarterly,* 31 (Winter 2000), 414-415. Also see John C. Ewers, *Indian Life on the Upper Missouri* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1968). 20.

[36] Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 75-94; Bruce M. White, "The Woman Who Married a Beaver: Trade Patterns and Gender Roles in the Ojibwa Fur Trade," *Ethnohistory*,4 6 (Winter 1998): 130–138.

the old Fort William. It was named Fort Mortimer although it was often called Fort William. In 1845, the Union Fur Company sold its holdings to Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company.[37]

Competition did result in a useful reorientation of the trade between Fort Union and its long-standing trading partners. Because opposition posts were bent on trying to undersell the trade at Fort Union, they provided leverage for Native leaders to negotiate better terms for the pelts, skins, hides, furs, and robes they brought to Fort Union. Success in these matters, which was common enough but usually short-lived, moved trade from the transactional to the relational. The alliances that fostered the original trading relationship were brought to the fore and tested, and usually resolved in a manner that was acceptable to both sides. When multiple Native groups came to Fort Union to trade at the same time, traders had to discard the values for particular trade items they had established for different communities. To avoid giving offense to anyone, all were offered the same price scale for similar products and trade goods. Even the most hard-nosed trader recognized that any other option would break trust, create animosity, and possibly undermine future trade.[38]

Sustaining trade on a scale that was greater than any other U.S. based competitor, was a foundational concern of the Upper Missouri Outfit and its various partners. A fair sense of this approach to business of the fur trade, and the manner in which Fort Union could attract and impress Native communities with the arrival of every steamboat, is neatly presented in a description from the artist George Catlin in 1832.

> The Fort in which I am residing was built by Mr. M`Kenzie, who now occupies it. It is the largest and best-built establishment of the kind on the river, being the great or principal head-quarters and depôt of the [American] Fur Company's business in this region. A vast stock of goods is kept on hand at this place; and at certain times of the year the numerous out-posts concentrate here with the returns of their season's trade, and refit out with a fresh supply of goods to trade with the Indians…. This post is the general rendezvous of a great number of Indian tribes in these regions, who are continually concentrating here for the purpose of trade; sometimes coming, the whole tribe together, in a mass. There are now here, and encamped about the Fort, a great many, and I am continually at work with my [paint] brush; we have around us at this time the Knisteneaux [Nēhiyawēwin] (Plains Cree), Crows, Assinneboins and Blackfeet, and in a few days are to have large accessions.[39]

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[37] Details on this opposition post have been provided by Fort Union Trading Post NHS Museum Curator, review comments on draft HRS, April 30, 2020.

[38] On opposition posts and their effect on trading at Fort Union, see Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade (*Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 183-193.

[39] George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Conditions of the North American Indians*, 2 vols. (1844; reprint, New York, 1973)*,* 20-21.

Shifting Markets

From the beginning, Fort Union intended to focus mostly on the beaver trade, with secondary markets related to the pelts of other fur bearing animals, skins from deer, antelope, and elk, bison robes, bear and other products of value. With the exception of the beaver trade, which would largely derive from the brigades and private trappers that used the Yellowstone to access the Rockies, the trade at Fort Union mostly depended on the hunting and trapping efforts of American Indians, who brought the proceeds of the hunt to trade with the Americans as well as the Nueta and Hiraacá to the south. The post's name, "Fort Union," was a metaphor for the resources and the peoples that would constitute the expected trade at the Confluence. One interpretation of the word certainly represented the confluence or "union" of two great rivers: with the Missouri draining the Northern Plains and providing access to peoples who were then trading with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), and the Yellowstone, which provided access to the rich beaver trapping regions of the Northern Rocky Mountains. Theodore Catton notes that "union" also represented spheres of resource extraction and trade (namely, bison and beaver). To extend the metaphor further, the Confluence also provided access to the north, and thus a fourth avenue of trade. Namely, the Nakoda (who had a long history of hunting, residing, and trading near the Confluence area), as well as Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree), Ojibwe, and Métis peoples in what is now southwestern Ontario and southern Manitoba.[40]

Along with a direct trade relationship with the Nakoda and, by extension, their relatives and allies who lived further north and west, Fort Union also provided a strategic gateway to the Northern Plains in present day Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the American Indian nations that lived near the Rocky Mountains. Among the latter, the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) was by far the most powerful. Composed of three closely related nations that included, from south to north, the Piikáni (aka Piegan), Káínaa (aka Kainah or "Bloods"), and the Siksiká (aka "Blackfoot"), they had long opposed the presence of American trappers and traders within their southern territory since the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Through the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Niitsitapi defended their collective resource base from all comers and enjoyed privileged access to HBC trading posts in the Saskatchewan and Athabascan river basins.[41]

As early as 1830-1831, however, some elements of the Niitsitapi were enticed to trade at Fort Union. Encouraged by this development, McKenzie sought to bring the U.S.-based trade to the Niitsitapi by establishing a new trading post, Fort Piegan, on the

[40] Theodore Catton et al, [Amended and Updated] National Historic Landmark nomination of Fort Union National Historic Landmark, USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev 8-86), April 15, 2015, p. 38; Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 40-45.

[41] This and the following paragraph are based on Lesley Wischmann, *Frontier Diplomats: Alexander Culbertson and Natoyist-Siksina' among the Blackfeet* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 36-38, 45, 60.

Upper Missouri River in the fall of 1831. Built by James Kipp, about six miles above its confluence with the Marias River, the fort did not long survive and was burned by the . Nakoda when Kipp and other post employees returned to Fort Union in early 1832. Undeterred, McKenzie then dispatched David Dawson Mitchell later that year to oversee construction of a replacement post near the site of Fort Piegan, called Fort McKenzie, and to develop close ties with the Piikáni and their relations in the Niitsitapi. Establishing firm ties with the Piikani occurred in 1833 when AFC trader Alexander Culbertson, who had arrived at Fort Union that summer, was sent upriver to Fort McKenzie to replace Mitchell as Bourgeois. Within a month of his arrival at Fort McKenzie, Culbertson married a Piikáni woman whose name is not recorded. The marriage transformed Culbertson from a stranger to a relative, connecting him to his wife's familial relations and the networks of reciprocity they entailed. While trade relations with the American Fur Company were subject to a wide array of outside factors, including the needs and priorities of the other elements of the Niitsitapi, the social and commercial relationship largely held after his wife died, or Culbertson divorced her, sometime in the 1830s.[42]

Around 1840, Culbertson strengthened relations with the Niitsitapi when he married Natoyist-Siksina', a young Káínaa (Kainah) woman from a highly esteemed family. Strong personal, diplomatic, and trade relations with the Piikáni, Káínaa, and the Niitsitapi more broadly, allowed the AFC to maintain a dominant position in the uppermost reaches of the Missouri River country. A somewhat different scenario played out with similar results in the Yellowstone River Basin, where independent trappers and sometime traders like James Beckwourth and Robert Meldrum lived among the Apsáalooke (Crow). Both men preferred to trade at historic Fort Union and other AFC posts for a series of connected reasons: they could more easily move pelts and trade goods along the Yellowstone to the confluence area, AFC prices for pelts were competitive, the choice of trade wares was extensive, and there were ample opportunities to associate with people pursuing the same kind of livelihood. These connections also served as an entre for groups of Apsáalooke, who were inveterate rivals of the Niitsitapi, to also engage with the remote marketplace at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers.[43]

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[42] There is discrepancy about whether the first wife died or if Culbertson divorced her. One source states that Natawista's family made Alexander divorce is first wife before allowing him to marry Natawista. See Wischmann,

[43] Joe Medicine Crow, *From the Heart of Crow Country* (New York: Orion Books, 1992), x-xi; James P. Beckwourth, *The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth*, ed. T. D. Bonner (University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 198-204; Keith Alger, "Robert Meldrum and the Crow Peltry Trade," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 36 (Summer, 1986): 36-47; 69-70; Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 76, 80-81.



Image 7.3: Karl Bodmer, "Encampment of Piekann Indians near Fort McKenzie on the Miscleshell River" [sic]. Hand colored lithograph in Thomas L. McKenney & James Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (Philadelphia: F.W. Greenough, 1842).

By the late 1830s, the Chouteau-controlled interests in the American Fur Company maintained virtually uncontested commercial control of the Northern Plains from the Confluence area to the Continental Divide. From that period to about 1850, Fort Union served as a focus of American economic power and wealth in the borderlands of the Northern Plains. The opening of Fort Union and similar posts on the Missouri river contributed to the demise of the Rocky Mountain rendezvous trade system, which ended in 1840. ,Construction of a fort in Piikáni (aka Blackfeet) territory also allowed the AFC to maintain a favorable position near the Rocky Mountains. The advent of the steamboat navigation proved crucial to this western dominance, since it allowed the AFC to transport the heavy bison robes the Piikáni (Blackfeet) had previously sought to move down the Saskatchewan River for trade with the HBC.[44]

Even after the collapse of the beaver trade in the late 1830s, which ruined all potential competitors, the AFC was well positioned to dominate the bison robe trade as well. Unlike beaver pelts, the bison robes that came through Fort Union were almost exclusively obtained from Native equestrian hunters who lived and hunted in the Red

[44] Ray M. Mattison, "Fort Union: Its Role in the Upper Missouri Fur Trade," *North Dakota History*, 29 (1962): 189; Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1946-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 28-29.

River Basin to northeast of Fort Union, the Upper Missouri River Basin to the northwest, the Yellowstone River Basin to the southwest, and areas around the northern Black Hills and Powder River Basin to the south of the trading post. Fort Union was ideally situated for accessing this growing trade, in large part because the confluence area was an ancient and important intersection on the plains that provided an excellent intersection for American Indian, First Nations, Métis, and European Americans who were prepared to trade with the AFC and the other peoples who came to trade there.[45]

The Social Rituals of Trade

In the summer of 1832, shortly after arriving at Fort Union on the Steamboat *Yellow Stone*, George Catlin made a series of observations on his new surroundings and the people who planned their visit around the arrival of the Yellow Stone and its trove a trade goods. "The Fort in which I am residing," Catlin wrote,

> was built by Mr. M`Kenzie, who now occupies it. It is the largest and best-built establishment of the kind on the river, being the great or principal head-quarters and depôt of the Fur Company's business in this region. A vast stock of goods is kept on hand at this place; and at certain times of the year the numerous out-posts concentrate here with the returns of their season's trade, and refit out with a fresh supply of goods to trade with the Indians… This post is the general rendezvous of a great number of Indian tribes in these regions, who are continually concentrating here for the purpose of trade; sometimes coming, the whole tribe together, in a mass. There are now here, and encamped about the Fort, a great many, and I am continually at work with my brush; we have around us at this time the Knisteneaux [Nēhiyawēwin] (Plains Cree), Crows, Assinneboins and Blackfeet, and in a few days are to have large accessions.[46]

[45] The long-term processes behind the collapse of beaver populations stemmed from years of unregulated trapping and relatively high prices. The growing fashion of silk hats in the early 1830s caused prices for beaver pelts and fur to drop, as did the farming of nutria—a beaver-like rodent from South America that was used in place of beaver. While these latter developments depressed the market, the underlying cause of its collapse must be pinned on overharvesting. See Eric Jay Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 282-284; Eugene D. Fleharty, *Wild Animals and Settlers on the Great Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 299; John E. Sunder, *The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri, 1840-1855* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 17; Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 95-104.

[46] Catlin, *Letters and Notes,* vol. 1, 20-21.



Image 7.4: George Catlin, *Fort Union, Mouth of the Yellowstone River, 2000 Miles above St. Louis, 1832*. Source: Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The people who established their large encampments on the level ground outside the palisades, had come for an extended period of trading, visiting, and perhaps some intertribal diplomacy. As such, the trading post and the Confluence area were part of their shared territory and a place where they could access goods and materials from distant places. The fact that the groups were so large indicates that this gathering was either part of an annual round or a particularly important trade event that would involve a large transfer of goods and a fair amount of socializing. In either case trade was an event and a performance of need and generosity. Influenced by cultural norms and expectations from both parties, a sort of middle ground was established through a set of expected rituals. These included an announcement from both parties that they had come together to seek an honest trade, a gift exchange to show generosity and good intentions, a reception on the part of the host (AFC traders) that included the smoking of a pipe, followed by a feast, and speeches. In the case of the large gathering that Catlin described, this would then lead to long period of trading that would ultimately end with a final gift exchange.[47]

[47] Maria Nieves Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study for Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, and*

The performance of trade could also begin with an announcement from a messenger that a group was enroute to trade at the fort. This likely would have occurred with the events that Catlin witnessed, but it was more a formality than a necessity since the trade coincided with the arrival of the steam boat, and all parties were aware of its location before reaching Fort Union. At the very least, however, an announcement would give employees time to organize stocks and prepare a room any Native leaders who expected to stay within the fort. Smaller parties that were passing through or trading separate from other groups might simply show up without sending a messenger. A formal announcement was still preferred, since foreknowledge could provide a sense of any ease or tension that might characterize the trade encounter. This was more of a concern during the first years of Fort Union, when employees and company officers were still getting a feel for their trading partners and vice versa. Sending a messenger ahead may have helped to allay fear of an ambush or unannounced siege, which occurred in attempted ambush of the trading post by the Assiniboine leader Le Gauche (Left-Handed). A second purpose of sending a messenger might have been to allow time for employees to make preparations for trading with a large group. This may have allowed some time to organize stocks and prepare a room for some of the Native leaders who might be staying within the fort.[48]

Alternatively, sending a messenger ahead of the trading party allowed Native groups to gauge how they might be received at the Fort Union. A messenger would usually return with some tokens of good will on the part of the traders, such as tobacco or vermillion. This gift was meant to secure trade with that party, and marked the beginning of a ceremonial exchange between trading parties that represented hospitality and respect. As Denig noted, "When within a mile or two of the [fort], they stop and send a few persons to the trader with an account of how many persons their party is composed of, how many skins, etc., they have, and all general news. These are furnished with tobacco and sent back with an invitation for the party to come to the house or fort."[49]

Once a trading party had been greeted with the initial gifts, an interpreter employed by the trading company invited the leaders into the fort for a formal reception. Once the loads of bison robes and furs had been unpacked from the dog and horse travois, the group settled into the reception room where they would

> then smoke (the pipe) feasted on coffee, bread, corn, etc., after which the principal men and chiefs are called into the public office, when they are counciled with by the gentlemen in charge. Speeches on both sides are

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Theodore Roosevelt national Park: Final Report—December 8, 2006 (Task Agreement No. J606804112, DSCESU Cooperative Agreement CA-1248-00-002), 229.

[48] Edwin T. Denig, *The Assiniboine*, ed. J. N. B. Hewitt (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2006), 6; Erwin N. Thompson, *Fort Union Trading Post: Fur Trade Empire on the Upper Missouri* (Williston, ND: Fort Union Association, 1994), 16-17.

[49] Denig, *Assiniboine*, 10.

made, and if the Indians have any complaints to make they now state them. The general situation of the camp and trade is adverted to, prospects mentioned, and prices of goods stated, with all other matters relating to their affairs.[50]

As Denig noted, "The pipe is the principal of all ceremonies, and its motions vary with the occasions." Smoking a pipe showed goodwill and cemented an agreement, but it also drew on a wellspring of deeper associations. Pipe bowls have been found in the Plains archeological record dating back thousands of years. Such continuity suggests that pipes and their use were a regular and important part of life. Some pipes were accorded special respect, and included in sacred bundles that were used for specific ceremonies of deep import. Lastly, sharing a pipe was long associated with ceremonies that fostered peace and collaboration between groups, and thus smoking a pipe in Fort Union's trade house sanctified the trade and placed it within the realm of an ongoing relationship defined by material exchange and social bonds.[51]

In addition to sharing food and smoking the pipe, the trade reception furnished an opportunity for both parties to discuss current news, their intentions for the trade, and trade terms, as well as affirmation to sustain or strengthen their trade relationship with each other. These trading occasions generally proceeded as a running conversation between trading parties, in which trade as an important social occasion rather than bargaining session over prices and trade terms. Native traders had longstanding traditions and expectations attached to how trading transactions could be appropriately conducted. Skilled traders like Denig understood this dynamic, and worked to ensure that trading remained a social occasion rather than a straightforward economic exchange. For the most part, the principal traders at Fort Union and the leaders of the Native trading parties endeavored to maintain enough flexibility that both parties could operate within a common ground for creating a fair trade. However, at times when an opposition post was operating in the vicinity, the disposition of both parties shifted, with each trying to gain bargaining leverage that they could use to influence the outcomes of trade. In these instances, the initial reception before trading began was a time for speeches rather than conversation, where the principals on both sides tried to sway price points or negotiate on the amount and quality of gifts. These encounters were not so much a refutation of an existing trade relationship as a recalibration, since it

[50] Ibid., 458.
[51] Ibid., 52. Also Zedeño et al, "From Path to Myth: Journeys and the Naturalization of Nation along the Missouri River," in *Landscapes of Movement: Trails Paths, and Roads in Anthropological Perspective*, ed. James E. Snead et al (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 106-114; Steven L. De Vore and William J. Hunt Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Cultural Reports, Part IX: Personal, Domestic, and Architectural Artifacts* (Lincoln, NE: Midwest Archeological Center Report National Park Service, 1993), 87-88.

was in neither party's interest to abandon an established trading relationship that would be difficult to replace in such a tethered American outpost.[52]

The Bison Trade

While the beaver trade was the central motivation for the establishment of Fort Union and other American Fur Company trading forts on the Upper Missouri River, Fort Union was ideally situated for the new trading regime. McKenzie was already familiar with the business of acquiring, grading, storing, and packing bison robes, which had been the focus of his business with the Columbia Fur Company posts in the 1820s. Besides McKenzie's ready skill set, the shift to bison robes also fit within the well-established procurement strategies of Northern Plains tribal nations. However, the great advantage that the AFC possessed in this new and rapidly growing trade were steamboats, the *Yellow Stone* and the *Assiniboin*, which the Upper Missouri Outfit acquired respectively in 1831 and 1833. Bison hides could be transported overland or by flatboats, and still were as late as the 1860s, but steamboats were able to carry enormous quantities of bison robes, weighing thousands of pounds, from the Confluence to St. Louis within ten days. This gave the AFC a tremendous advantage over its competition, and provided a consistent resource that Native peoples could bring in for trade.[53]

The decline of the beaver trade, attributed to various causes including overexploitation of the animal, changes in European fashion, the substitution of the South American nutria pelt in place of beaver pelt, Euro-American settlement, and American Indian dislocation, was replaced by the 1840s with the trade in bison robes.[54] While beaver skins dropped half their value by the 1840s, the rapidly expanding St. Louis market saw western fur dealers more than double their bison robe (the winter coat) sales. Dried bison meat, bison tongues, and pemmican also found growing markets in St. Louis and points east. The sheer bulk of the bison robes, however, posed a challenge to fur traders. Transporting heavy loads of bison robes down the rivers risked loss through collisions with snags, bars, or shoals. The difficulty of transporting such a bulky item down the Missouri River was remedied in part by the advent of steamboats. By the early 1850s, bison robes accounted for a significant amount of the cargo aboard the

[52] Denig, *Assiniboine*, 53-56. Also see Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 35-37

[53] Sunder, *Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri*, 16-18. Richard White, "Animals and Enterprise," in *The Oxford History of the American West*, ed. Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A. O'Connor, and Martha Sandweis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 243-249. Catlin, *Letters and Notes,* vol. 1, 14; Thompson, *Fort Union Trading Post*, 18-19.

[54] David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807-1840: A Geographical Synthesis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 31-33, 65-66, 141-143.

steamboats. At the same time, immense quantities of bison hides were floated down the river on flat boats and rafts of various kinds.[55]

By the mid 19th century, the fur trade on the Upper Missouri almost exclusively centered on the bison. As transportation improved, and as eastern industries demanded a greater volume of leather, the large fur trading companies increasingly competed with small outfits and individual hunters. Whereas the large companies traded mostly in robes, the new competitors entered the plains in the summer months and harvested the resource for the hides. Hunting the bison in summer spared the hunter much of the hardship of exposure, preparation, and delay until the steamboats could come up the river to take the stored hides. Hides were individually less valuable than robes, but quantity trumped quality as exploitation of the bison intensified. Subsequent migrations of European Americans to the Far West further undermined bison numbers on the Central Plains by degrading the low-lying riparian areas where bison overwintered. These movements across the plains, and a gold rush to Montana Territory in the mid 1860s, further undermined bison populations and altered the axis of authority in the region. With declining trade, and the martialing of military expeditions, the U.S. Army became the main institution in the region. The fur trade persisted through this period, but weakened Native communities in diminished homelands (in terms of scale and resources) had less to offer in trade. By the early 1880s, the number of bison in all of North America had declined to 324 animals. The hide trade certainly contributed to this decline, but a severe mid-century drought, growing horse herds, habitat destruction by overland migrants and miners, and post-Civil War market hunters in the United States all had a pronounced effect on the rapid decline of the bison and near-extinction of the species.[56]

Little Empire of the North

Between the late 1830s and late 1850s, Fort Union embodied the growing commercial reach of pre-Civil War America. Aided by steam power and tethered to global networks of trade, it was a remote but important nexus of trade—where pelts, hides, dried bison meat, tongues and other products of the "Indian trade" were counted and packed for shipment to St. Louis, and then on to markets in eastern North America, Europe, and Asia. By the same channels, large quantities of metal implements, fabrics, ribbons, blankets, cookware, glass beads, firearms, alcohol, and various other trade goods were carried by steamboat to Fort Union the following spring. All of these steps were

[55] With so much product stored together, and then transported on a single vessel, the advent of steamboat transportation could also prove disastrous. Bison robes stored at Fort Union were often at risk from moulds, ticks, and fire. The latter danger was especially worrisome for steamboat shipments. While moored at Fort Union on June 1, 1835, the *Assiniboin* burned with all its cargo on June 1, 1835. On February 2, 1832, a fire inside the fort destroyed "1000 dried bison tongues." Merrill G. Berlingame, "The Buffalo in Trade and Commerce," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 3 (July 1929), 269, 276-277; and Maximilian, Prince of Wied, Travels in the Interior of North America, trans. H. Evans Lloyd (London: Ackerman and Co. 1843), 299.

[56] Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison*, 117-122.

subject to environmental conditions, from the shifting course of the Missouri River, the abundance or scarcity of bison and other animals, droughts, floods, and the severity of winter conditions. The networks of ancient travel routes and peoples that long intersected in the confluence area were also crucial elements of the trade, as were the social, cultural, and diplomatic relationships that sustained cross-cultural exchanges between traders and Native peoples. In other words, Fort Union provided a forum where national and global markets interfaced with regional conditions, and where different peoples pursued their interests by variously accommodating or contesting the actions and motives of others.[57]

During these halcyon days, the people who worked at Fort Union represented a variety of socioeconomic groups divided by ethnicity and occupation. The American Fur Company was organized under four tiers of personnel, with wages and living conditions reflective of ranking. The top level was occupied by owners, partners, and officers, including the post's head clerk (aka *bourgeois*). Second were those in mid-level management including clerks, traders, interpreters, and guides. Third were skilled and unskilled employees who manned the boats or worked about the forts tending livestock, hunting, and performing tasks at the trade shops (blacksmiths, coopers, carpenters, and shipwrights). At the bottom tier were those who supplied goods or services on a non-contractual basis. By 1851, a craftsman could expect to receive $250 per year; a workman's assistant $120 or less. A hunter could receive $400, in addition to his harvested hides and horn. An interpreter earned $500, while clerks or traders who spoke Native languages could demand up to $1000.[58]

The older history of the fur trade, and multi-cultural and multi-lingual borderlands in which it developed, was clearly present at Fort Union in the family histories of its directorship as well as its various employees. All three owners of the American Fur Company's Western Department were of French-North American backgrounds. The three partners of the Upper Missouri Outfit were Scottish. The same was true of Fort Union's first Bourgeois Kenneth McKenzie, who served from 1829 to 1836. Alexander Culbertson (1827-1847) and Edwin Denig (1848-1856) both hailed from Pennsylvania, but their wives were Native and their children Métis. The latter was also true of James Kipp (1856-1865) and Charles Larpenteur (1865-1867). Below these officers, employees were predominantly French *Canadien* or Métis, from a broad region of North America extending from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi Delta. Boat operators were generally *Canadien*, tradesmen were from a mix of French and Anglo-Scot backgrounds, and the

[57] Richard White, "Creative Misunderstandings and New Understandings," in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in the Atlantic World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 305-314; Wilcomb E. Washburn, "Symbol, Utility, and Aesthetics in the Indian Fur Trade," *Minnesota History*, 40 (Winter, 1966): 198-202; Mary K. Whelan, "Dakota Indian Economics and the Nineteenth-Century Fur Trade," *Ethnohistory* 40 (Spring, 1993): 246-276; James L. Clayton, "The Growth and Economic Significance of the American Fur Trade, 1790-1890," *Minnesota History* 40 (Winter, 1966), 210-220; Sunder, *Fur Trade of the Upper Missouri*, 131-152.
[58] Thompson, *Fur Trade Empire*, 62.

majority of the voyageur class had French surnames though several from New Mexico had Spanish names. The servant class included African Americans, none of whom are listed as wage earners. The number of men employed fluctuated dramatically as demanded by the amount and profitability of trade. In 1833, when the peltry trade as at its peak, staff was reported to be 100, while 15 years later, during a year of diminished bison herds and poor trade, paid fort staff numbered just ten.[59]

While all employees received free board and lodging, the quality varied by status. For example, the living conditions of clerks, officers, and visitors in 1847 included breakfast fare of fried bison and venison, wheat flour breakfast cakes with cream and butter. A meal described in 1851 by visiting artist Rudolph Kurz provided even further description of class distinction. While the bourgeois' table enjoyed chocolate, milk, butter, omelet, fresh meat, and hot bread, with soup and pie frequently served on Sundays, a second table for hunters and workmen consisted of meat, biscuit, and black coffee with sugar. Guests and dignitaries enjoyed bourgeois benefits, from dining at the bourgeois' table, to honorific recognition upon arrival and departure. This included raising the flag and firing a three-gun salute from the fort cannon.[60]

Fort Union remained the head of navigation until the last years of its existence, but it was never the terminus of the Missouri River trade. The interests of AFC and its successor companies extended beyond the confluence area, southwestward into the broken plains of the Yellowstone River Valley, along the northern tributaries of the Missouri River, and eastward toward the open prairies of the Souris River Basin and the Red River Valley. By 1845, the persistence of large bison herds and developing trade relations to the west led to the establishment of Fort Benton near the confluence of the Marias and Missouri rivers—some 525 river miles beyond the mouth of the Yellowstone. Relocated a short distance in 1846 and rebuilt in 1850, Fort Benton was well-situated for carrying on the bison trade with the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) and A'aninin (Atsina, aka Gros Ventre), and offered the potential of further engaging the Apsáalooke (Crow Nation) to the south.

These latter efforts were bolstered by an 1855 treaty ("Treaty with the Blackfeet") between the United States, the Niitsitapi, and other American Indian nations that designated Fort Benton as the distribution point for the federal government's distribution of treaty annuities. Such an arrangement proved doubly profitable for the AFC, since the Company held the lucrative contracts for transporting government merchandise up the

[59] William R. Swagerty and Dick A. Wilson, "Faithful Service Under Different Flags: A Socioeconomic Profile of the Columbia District, Hudson's Bay Company and the Upper Missouri Outfit, American Fur Company," *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 252-256; Thompson *Fur Trade Empire*, 61, 63; Barbour, *Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 115.
[60] Thompson, *Fur Trade Empire*, 59, 61, 63, 66; Barbour, *Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 57, 78.

Missouri River and gained from the additional trade that accompanied the annual distribution of goods near Fort Benton. This situation became even more promising in the summer of 1860, when the steamboat *Chippewa* extended steam-powered navigation to Fort Benton, which thus became known as "the world's innermost port."[61]

With Fort Union still serving as the central hub of the Company's various enterprises, these developments briefly resuscitated the AFC's position across the Upper Missouri River Basin. Along with better connections to St. Louis by steamboat, administrative authority over other AFC posts, and direct relations with Nakoda (aka Assiniboine), Nehiyaw-Pwat (Plains Cree), Nakawemowin (Plains Ojibwe), and other Native groups that came to the Yellowstone-Missouri Confluence to trade and receive treaty annuities, Fort Union was still the largest and most important fur trade establishment on the entire Missouri River. This pre-eminence continued into the early 1860s, but it lost its meaning since most fur trade posts—like Fort Union—had become dull and sagging after years without regular maintenance and repair. Like the lands in which they were situated, the declining fur trade forts of the Upper Missouri reflected the ecological, commercial and political unraveling of the Northern Great Plains.[62]

[61] Theodore Binnema, "Allegiances and Interests: Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) Trade, Diplomacy, and Warfare 1806-1831," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 37(August 2006):348-349; Ryan Hall, "The Divergent Wests of Isaac Stevens and Lame Bull Finding Motive in the 1855 Blackfoot Treaty," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 105 (June 2014):107-121; William E. Lass, *A History of Steamboating on the Upper Missouri* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 15-18, 21, 42; Lesley Wischmann, *Frontier Diplomats: Alexander Culbertson and Natoyist-Siksina Among the Blackfeet* (Spokane: Arthur H. Clarke Co., 2000), 222-233, and passim. Fort Benton was preceded by a number of short-lived forts in the 1830s and 1840s (Forts Mckenzie, Judith, Lewis, Clay, and Piegan), which were abandoned due to poor location, declining trade, and/or structural deficiencies.

[62] Kaitlyn Chandler, "Fort Union Ethnohistory: Final Report, September 29, 2014" [Prepared for National Park Service Midwest Region (M.N. Zedeño, Principal Investigator and Editor)], 107-118, 158-161. Treaty annuities were the items, materials, and foodstuffs that the federal government delivered to American Indian nations on an annual basis—for a set period of years—in accordance with the terms of a land cession treaty.

Chapter Eight

Working the Borderlands

From the 1830s through the 1850s, Fort Union annually employed several dozen men as *engagés* (contracted laborers), skilled workers (cooks, blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, stone masons, hunters, interpreters &c.). Within this male dominated environment, Native and Métis women were frequently engaged to produce clothing, footwear, process hides and skins, and a host of chores. Men and women with multi-lingual skills also served as interpreters.[1] A number of people also participated in a more casual trade of services and materials. This might involve exchanges of European or American-made wares for a tailored garment or its repair, trade store credit for Native or Métis craftwork, and a variety of other material and personal exchanges in a remote but diverse community that was always existed for the purpose of trade.

The fur trade was a labor-intensive business, especially at a large facility like Fort Union. In the harsh climate of the Northern Plains, the fort required constant maintenance. Over the years, employed artisans included blacksmiths, tinsmiths, dairymen, carpenters, stonemasons, tailors, various journeymen and a host of seasonal or annual laborers. The fort itself provided enough work for all of them, but some artisans were more valued than others. Kenneth McKenzie believed a tinsmith was "a most useful artisan" to have at the trading post because his labors would contribute directly to the self-sufficiency of the remote post. Along with assisting or directing certain laborers in the general upkeep of Fort Union, they could also make trade items such as bracelets, rings, pots, and other pieces of metal ware. A blacksmith was equally essential, if not more so, since he would be responsible for repairing and manufacturing tools and hardware, as well as repairing guns, tools, locks, and a variety of metal items. Unlike the famed artists who visited Fort Union, a young Swiss artist and writer named Rudolph Friedrich Kurz earned his stay at Fort Union by working as a clerk and also received a commission to produce artwork for the Fort Union Bourgeois Edwin Denig and repaint portions of the fort. Kurz also used his talents and entrepreneurial skills to make a unique entre into the fur trade. In some of his spare time he made flags trimmed in striped fabric, with a large eagle painted in the center. Some of these flags were given to prominent Native leaders, but many were traded for as much as twenty bison robes. These were then

[1] Quoted in M. N. Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study for Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, and Theodore Roosevelt national Park: Final Report—December 8, 2006* (Task Agreement No. J606804112, DSCESU Cooperative Agreement CA-1248-00-002), 227.

traded to the AFC, and thus Kurtz was able to lay away some savings for future journeys in North America.[2]



Image 8.1: Paul Kane, *Buffalo Pound*, 1846. Source: Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Hunting was another ongoing concern at the fort, that was perhaps even more essential than tinsmithing or blacksmithing. Usually undertaken by American Indian or Métis men, hunters brought in a regular supply of meat to feed the array of workers and guests at Fort Union. Native groups also brought loads of dried meet and bison tongue to trade at Fort Union, some of which was stored at the fort for consumption instead of being shipped down river. This resource was likely acquired through large group hunts in which portions of herd were stampeded into a pound or "park" (a lightly fenced surround) in a low-lying area, where the animals were killed by multiple hunters. In the early 1850s, Denig noted that "there are three parks in operation a short distance from [Fort Union]," suggesting that this ancient hunting technique was still common near Fort Union at least through the 1850s. Perhaps the best sense of how important hunting was to life at Fort

[2] Erwin Thompson, *Fort Union Trading Post: Fur Trade Empire on the Upper* Missouri (Williston, ND: Fort Union Association, 2005), 32; Rudolph Kurz, *On the Upper Missouri: The Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz, 1851-1852*, ed. Carla Kelly (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 72, 176; Steven L. DeVore and William J. Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Cultural Reports, Part IX: Personal, Domestic, and Architectural Artifacts* (Lincoln: Midwest Archeological Center Report, National Park Service, 1993), 76; Devore and Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part VIII: Artifacts Associated with Transportation, Commerce, and Industry, and of Unidentified Function* (Lincoln: Midwest Archeological Center Report, National Park Service, 1993), 74.

Union comes from Prince Maximilian's estimate that 800 bison were needed to provide a year's worth of meat for the men, women and children at the post.[3]

Other forms of labor that were not directly recorded at Fort Union involved the products that women traded at the fort, though generally not in the trade house. These included "Corn Beans and moccosins" they traded "for old Shirts, buttons, knives, &c." Native women residing at the fort, and to a lesser extent some of the women from passing trading camps, worked raw hides into usable and tradeable materials. Processing hides was a labor-intensive and time-consuming task that required specialized knowledge and years of accumulated experience to perform efficiently. Beyond the preparation of bison robes, the hides from elk, deer, and other animals were also used to create leather goods and clothing. Maximilian observed that most people at Fort Union used moccasins for footwear rather than manufactured shoes. Women also made other leather goods and clothing for many of the fort's employees, since the high price of shipping anything to the isolated post, including clothing, made those items too expensive for many of the fort's *engagés*. In many cases, leather clothing was preferred by Native, Métis, and European American hunters because of its superior durability and warmth. Deerskin moccasins soled with elk leather lasted better than European shoes on the arid prairie terrain, and were also coveted for the embroidered designs made from porcupine and feather quills.[4]

Fort Union also included families who lived in employee housing outside the palisades, who hunted and provided meat to the fort, and also brought in furs and robes that they sold as independent traders. One such family was the Deschamps, who were Métis from the Red River Settlement near Fort Garry in present-day Winnipeg, Manitoba. Beside hunting and trapping, some members of the family worked at the fort as interpreters or carried on a casual trade at Fort Union where they exchanged beaver pelts and other furs for various sundries. Hides and pelts from animals trapped or hunted for meat were also taken back to the fort and repurposed either for the trade or for personal use. In this way, the family was able to bring in a bit of extra income to supplement their annual contracts with the AFC. While their labor contributed to the overall profits of Fort Union, the family had a loathsome reputation. As Elliot Coues noted in his edition of Charles Larpenteur's diary and memoir, the Deschamps "twice robbed Fort Union, "robbed Mr. Jeanisse" (who managed a post on the Yellowstone River), "and threatened to kill him; robbed and whipped Indians; murdered a young man in 1834; and habitually committed adultery with their sisters-in-law." The patriarch of the family, François was

[3] Edwin T. Denig, *The Assiniboine*, ed. J. N. B. Hewitt (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2000), 138; Maximilian zu Wied, *The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied*, Vol. II, April-September 1833, ed. Stephen S. Witte and Marsha V. Gallagher (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 230.

[4] Wied, *The North American Journals, Vol II,* 250. This and the following paragraph are closely informed by Rodney L. Lassey, "What the Ledgers Tell Us: The Role of Native Women in the Fur Trade, paper presented at 2018 National Fur Trade Symposium "Old Forts Never Die": The Middle Missouri Fur Trade, 1738-1850, Bismarck, North Dakota September 26-29, 2018.

renowned and reviled as the man who walked up to the wounded Robert Semple, the Governor of Rupert's Land (i.e., the domain of the Hudson's Bay Company), and shot him dead after the end of the Battle of Seven Oaks in June 1816.[5]

Working Across the Borderlands

More than a century and a half since the dilapidated remains of Fort Union were sold to the U.S. Army, and Fort Garry was torn down to make way for development in Winnipeg, many of the borderland conditions that gave rise to the original structures are still present in the region. Though rarely seen and barely recognized by visitors to the reconstructed Fort Union, the borderland of the mid 19th century retains much of its territorial integrity and persists to this day, as do the communities that have lived in the area since long before the United States and Canada drew a line across the land. For most of their overlapping histories, the lived experiences at Fort Union and Upper Fort Garry, and within associated communities, are best understood through the dynamics of a common region; namely, the Northern Great Plains borderland where both enterprises competed for the same resources, engaged with many of the same resident peoples (who acquired and processed those resources), and contracted with many of the same individuals and families who were variously employed by both companies. This mutually competitive dynamic had been intrinsic to the North American fur trade since the early 17th century, and was deeply familiar to individuals, families, and communities in whose collective experiences in the fur trade extended back through as many as eight or nine generations.[6]

These common personal histories contributed to a fair amount of social familiarity within the Northern Plains borderland region and at the competing posts of the HBC and AFC. Employees at Fort Garry and Fort Union, for instance, came and went on a relatively frequent basis, but they did not necessarily leave the fur trade or the region. Long winters and distance from other places helped make the Northern Plains borderland a place unto itself, where winter hunts, visiting, time with extended family, and repair or maintenance work

[5] Charles Larpenteur, *Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri: The Personal Narrative of Charles Larpenteur, 1833-1872*, ed. Elliot Coues (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1898), Vol. 1:96, n.4.

[6] See Randy William Widdis, "Borderland Interaction in the International Region of The Great Plains: An Historic-Geographical Perspective," *Great Plains Research* 7 (Spring 1997): 105-111. The cultural continuities that flow through the various geographies of the North American fur trade are found within a broad array of studies. See, for instance, Laura J. Murray, "Fur Traders in Conversation," *Ethnohistory*, 50 (Spring 2003): 285-314; Paul C. Thistle, *Indian-European Trade Relations: in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1986), 33-57; and Tanis Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996). The reference to eight generations corresponds to the author's family history, which intersects with many of the Métis families who lived and worked in what is now southern Manitoba in the first half of the 18th century. Though not particularly unique among the Métis communities associated with the HBC, it encompasses people who previously engaged with the fur trade around the Great Lakes, as well as in the St. Lawrence, Upper Hudson, and Monongahela river valleys.

brought a measure of consistency to life. The opportunity to leave one Company and work for another also provided an opportunity to gain new responsibilities, more money, and better conditions. Such itinerancy was common enough that HBC or AFC employees who knew each other at one post often met again on the far side of the borderland. All of this was especially true of the borderland's Métis communities, who constituted the bulk of the people employed by and engaged with the fur trade.[7]



Image 8.2: Paul Kane, *[Upper] Fort Garry and St. Boniface*, ca 1850s. Source: Canadian National Art Gallery. Image depicts Upper Fort Garry on the right (north) and St. Boniface on the opposite side of the Assiniboine River in present-day Winnipeg.

Borderland Peoples

Collectively, the Métis of the Northern Plains were (and are) borderland peoples, who emerged as distinct communities within the cultural, geographic, and commercial contexts of the North American fur trade. Their most significant and best-known contribution to the Northern Plains trade involved the large bison hunts they conducted in the river basins that ran along and across both sides of the 49th parallel—from which they produced pemmican for the HBC and processed hides for the U.S. trade. These "in-between" people were native to an in-between place where they often maintained close relations with their First Nations and American Indian kin during the winter, while

[7] William R. Swagerty and Dick A. Wilson, "Faithful Service under Different Flags: A Socio- economic Profile of the Columbia District, Hudson's Bay Company and the Upper Missouri Outfit, American Fur Company, 1825-1835," in *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991*, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 243-268; Jacqueline Peterson, "Many roads to Red River: Métis genesis in the Great Lakes region, 1680-1815,"in *The New Peoples: Being and becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Peterson and Jennifer Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 37-72. The reference to eight or nine generations lineage given here is the author's, which intersects with many of the Métis families who lived and worked in what is now southern Manitoba in the first half of the 18th century. Though not particularly unique among the Métis communities associated with the HBC, it encompasses people who previously engaged with the fur trade around the Great Lakes, as well as in the St. Lawrence, Upper Hudson, and Monongahela river valleys.

spending the bulk of the year within Métis communities or working at American and British-Canadian fur trade centers.[8]

Though closely identified with the region, the Métis were not the only transborder, or borderland, people on the Northern Plains. All of the Native peoples who traded with the AFC and HBC lived within a network of territorial and kinship associations across the region. This was especially true for less sedentary groups like the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), Aaniiih (Atsina, aka Gros Ventre), Nakoda (Assiniboine), Nakawē (Plains Ojibwe), Apsáalooke (Crow Nation), and Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Seven Council Fires). A brief look at a map of the rivers and river basins that span the borderland region suggests the basic geography of favored hunting locales and areas of seasonal residence as well as the corridors of travel, transport, and trade that had long connected Indigenous groups on the Northern Great Plains. In further testimony to the longstanding and ongoing importance of these areas, the locations of American Indian reservations in the United States and First Nations reserves in the Dominion of Canada are generally situated within these same river basins—where Indigenous communities have maintained their abiding relationships with some of the environments that have long sustained them—even after a century and a half of change and restriction.[9]

Unbordered Histories

Squeezing the Upper Missouri fur trade into a national or bi-national historical narrative does a kind of posthumous violence to the people who lived and worked in the region. Instead of agents in their own lives, they become characters in a story about the inevitable development of two nation states that few acknowledged or sought to bring forth. When tied to the frontier paradigm their lives almost disappear into a presumed "meeting point between savagery and civilization" or a transition to full-fledged "Europeaness" where they become fodder for the development of "American character"

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[8] Ted Binnema, "A Fur Trade Historian's View of Seasonal Bison Movements on the Northern Plains," and George Colpitts, "A Métis View of the Summer Market Hunt on the Northern Plains," both in *Bison and People on the North American Plains: A Deep Environmental History*, ed. Geof Cunfer and Bill Waiser (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2016), 159-176 and 201-226. Also see Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 28-44; Jennifer S. H. Brown, *An Ethnohistorian in Rupert's Land: Unfinished Conversations* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2017), 63-67, 78-83; Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West,* Vol. 2 (The University of Alberta Press, 1986), 2: 153-155; and Colpitts, "Provisioning the HBC: Market Economics in the British Buffalo Commons in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 43 (Summer 2012): 179–203.

[9] M. N. Zedeño et al, *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study for Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park, North Dakota: Final Report* (Tucson: Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, University of Arizona, 2006), 67-72, 75-85, 88-99, 103-113, 117-127, 135-143, 147-154, 164-175. Also see Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 59-60, 66, 68, 72-78; Loreta Fowler, *The Columbia Guide to American Indians of the Great Plains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 7-10, 12-15.

and Canadian civility. To varying degrees, American Indian, First Nations, Métis, French *Canadien*, British, and European American participants in the Northern Great Plains fur trade experienced and shaped the borderland within a much broader geographical and historical context. Native communities lived, hunted, socialized, and traded in a changing but still ancient world of large seasonal gatherings and ephemeral trade fairs that tapped into continent-wide exchange networks.[10] Cross-generational continuities also characterized the lives and work of fur company employees, from Chief Factors to Journeymen whose Scottish, French, English, and Spanish surnames filled AFC and HBC registers, and attest to their families' experiences in previous fur trade centers from St. Louis to York Factory, Montréal to the Ohio Valley and the Upper Great Lakes.[11]

To more fully understand how Fort Union functioned within the Northern Plains borderland, and how the people who worked at the fort identified themselves with the region, it is worth "listening" (through written text) to the stories of two very different people of the borderland, whose many descendants still live in the region. The first story or tale comes from a Métis woman's scrip application, a document by which applicants confirmed their status as Métis people and demonstrated their need for scrip (in the form or land or money) as compensation for the taking of their lands by the Dominion of Canada and for depredations caused by agents of the federal government**.**[12]

Borderland Tales

For much of her adult life, the author of the scrip application was known as Madame LaBombarde. In November 1851, many years before she told her own story to Canadian officials, she was mentioned in the journal of Rudolph Kurz, the talented Swiss artist and a respected clerk at Fort Union. Kurz noted that he had "finally decided to order

[10] Michael Witgen, "The Native New World and Western North America," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 43 (Autumn 2012): 292-299; Matthew Boyd et al, "Reconstructing a Prairie-Woodland Mosaic on the Northern Great Plains: Risk, Resilience, and Resource Management," *Plains Anthropologist*, 51 (May 2006), 235-252; Jennifer S.H. Brown, "History of the Canadian Plains Until 1870," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, vol. 13, pt. 1, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 300-308; *Carolyn Podruchny et al,* "Putting Up Poles: Power, Navigation, and Cultural Mixing in the Fur Trade," in *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, ed. Podruchny and Laura Peers (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 25-47.

[11] Lucy Edersveld, "'To live among Us': Accommodation, Gender, and Conflict in the Western Great Lakes Region, 1760-1832," in *Contact Points*, 270-303; Philip D. Wolfart, "Against Spacialized Ethnicity," in *Contours of a People*, 120-142; Richard K. Stenberg, "An Unknown Factor?: *The Role of African-Americans at Fort Union*," *Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly*, 43 (Fall-Winter 2007): 64-68; George Bonga, "Letters of George Bonga, *The Journal of Negro History,* 12 (January 1927): 41-54; Frank Mackey, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 198-200; Kenneth W. Porter, "Negroes in the Fur Trade," *Minnesota History*, 15 (December 1934): 421-433, The connections across families and between different historical centers of the fur trade can also be traced through a judicious reading of Eric Jay Donin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in* America (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010).

[12] On scrip, see "Métis Scrip Records" at *Library and Archives of Canada* < https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/metis/metis-scrip-records/Pages/introduction.aspx> (accessed 2 June 2019).

from Madame LaBombarde a winter suit made of buckskin. Up to the present time I have worn my summer clothes, with a buckskin shirt." Four days later he excitedly wrote, "Today I received my winter suit of calfskin, made with hood, 'metif fashion,' and sewed throughout with sinew." Along with her two daughters, Madame LaBombarde was contracted (or licensed) to make clothing for AFC employees and visitors while her husband, Alexis LaBombarde, worked as a hunter, guide, and labourer. According to Kurz, the women were "employed regularly at the fort to make clothes for pay (credit on account.)"[13]

The woman Kurz described was born Nancy Kipling, her 1885 scrip application presents a brief, dictated autobiography. "I was born at Winnipeg about 1810. My father was [John] Kipling. My mother was Marguerite Okenese. My father was a halfbreed. My mother was an Indian." Also known as John Rem or Ram Kipling, her father served as a steersman on boats that moved cargo to various HBC posts and was probably a Cree-Scot Métis. Her mother was most likely Sakāwithiniwak (Woodland Cree), and related to the namesake of the present-day Okanese First Nation in the lower Qu'Appelle River Valley. Through most of Nancy's childhood her father worked out of Pembina and other posts on the Assiniboine, Souris, Red and Qu'Appelle rivers until he left the HBC in 1821. The Kipling family then moved to the high plains, most likely to hunt bison. In Nancy's scrip application she noted that "I married twice. The first time to Michel Gravel, on the plains about 1825." She also gave the names of the two daughters from her first marriage, Marguerite and Domitilde, born in 1826 and 1828. Her daughters' scrip applications identified their father as a "Halfbreed." Gravel was employed as an interpreter in 1828 and 1830 by the American Fur Company, and worked as a clerk at Fort Cass in the early 1830s (near the confluence of the Yellowstone and Bighorn rivers). For some of these years the Kipling-Gravel family lived at Fort Cass, but conditions were cramped and Nancy moved with her daughters to Fort Union in 1834—where they were housed with John Ram Kipling and other family members at nearby Fort William. [14]

The journals of Francis Chardon, who served as the head trader at Fort Clark in the 1830s, and Charles Larpenteur, who spent many years at Fort Union as a clerk and Bourgeois, noted a series of profoundly tragic events in Nancy Kipling's life. These included the killing of Michel Gravel by a group of Siksiká (Blackfoot) in 1835 while he

[13] Quotations from Rudolph Kurz, *Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 115: Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz),* trans. Myrtis Jarrell, ed. J. N. B. Hewitt (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1937), 229, 234, 252

[14] The biography of Nancy Kipling/Madame LaBombarde is largely based on Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing for a Living: The Commodification of Métis Women's Artistic Production," in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*, ed. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 31-32. Also see Biographical File for John Ram Kipling (fl.1798-1821), Hudson's Bay Company Archives/Archives of Manitoba. On the family's move to Fort Union, see F. A. Chardon, *Chardon's Journal at Fort Clark, 1834-1839*, ed. Annie Heloise Abel (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 288.

was trapping on the Milk River. By the end of the year she married Alexis LaBombarde, who was frequently employed at Fort Union and other AFC posts as a hunter, trapper, and interpreter. Though usually referred to as a "half-breed" in most official documents, in Nancy's scrip she calls him "a plain Indian" who "resided at various places throughout Manitoba and the Territories." This way of life was also true of the Kipling-Gravel family and, soon after their marriage, which occurred in Pembina, Nancy moved back to Fort Union while Alexis continued to work in both the Red River Valley and on the Upper Missouri River.[15]

Alone with her two daughters, she took small quarters among other Métis families at old Fort William, just to the east of Fort Union. Other residents included the Deschamps family, who were widely viewed as willfully belligerent and mercurial. The patriarch, François Deschamps, Sr., had a well-known reputation for pathological violence and murder. These traits apparently spilled down to at least two of his sons, who were responsible for killing Madame LaBombarde's brother while he was trapping on the plains in 1834, and later participated in the killing of John Ram Kipling at Fort Union in June 1836. Within a few days of this second murder, AFC employees and temporary residents entrapped the entire Deschamps family in their quarters at Fort William, burned them out, and slaughtered them as they escaped the flames. No doubt traumatized by the killing of her father and the gruesome spectacle of seeing the Deschamps shot down and burned, Nancy LaBombarde had no place to live since her residence and most of her belongings were also reduced to ashes.[16]

Following these tragedies, Nancy moved to Pembina with her daughters, where they lived among relatives. Alexis Labombarde apparently joined the household when he was not engaged by the American Fur Company or some other paid endeavor on the Northern Plains. Conversely, she and her children would join him during some of his stints as an interpreter for U.S. *councils with the* Piikáni (Blackfeet), Nakoda (Assiniboine) and Dakȟóta (Dakota*),* or during a large hunt with other Métis. In 1843, for instance, Alexis was at Fort Pierre where he was engaged to assist John James Audubon's zoological expedition. Nancy, who Audubon described as "a good-looking young woman," accompanied the party and was paid by Audubon to make him a fitted coat of elk and antelope hide with quilled decorations, which is now stored at the American Museum of Natural History.[17]

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[15] For biographical information, see "Labombarde, Alexis (b. 1803)," *Metis Dictionary of Biography: Volume L,* ed. Lawrence Barkwell (Winnipeg: Louis Riel Institute, 2018), 4-5.
[16] Chardon, *Chardon's Journal at Fort Clark*, 297-298; Charles Larpenteur, *Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri: The Personal Narrative of Charles Larpenteur, 1833-1872* (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, 1962), 72-76, 80-84. Jarrell
[17] John James Audubon and John Bachman, *The Quadrupeds of North America*, vol. 2 (New York: V. G. Audubon, 1851), 528-530; Maria R. Audubon, *Audubon and His Journals* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1972), 529; John Francis McDermott, *Up the Missouri with Audubon: The Journal of Edward Harris*



Image 8.3: Rudolph Kurz, "Returning from the Dobies' Ball, 1851. This sketch by Rudolph Kurz offers a glimpse into the social life at Fort Union. Two of the young women in the image may also be the daughters of Madame LaBombarde. Source: Rudolph Kurz, *Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 115: Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz,* trans. Myrtis Jarrell, ed. J. N. B. Hewitt (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1937), Plate 6.

By the late 1840s the LaBombardes were again employed at Fort Union, but a disagreement between Madame LaBombarde and Fort Union's Bourgeois Edwin Denig ended her long association with the AFC. Rudolph Kurz noted in his journal entry for Christmas Day 1851 that "Madame la Bombard ... refused Mr. Denig the loan of her dogs to send goods to the Upper Bourbeuse [aka Upper Big Muddy Creek]." She may have balked because of the holiday, the distance (100 miles roundtrip), concerns about the weather and quality of snow, or some combination of all these factors. Whatever her reasons, Denig was so incensed that he "retaliated by giving her no more work to do [and] now she has to use her own supply of meat for food." Alexis LaBombarde already had a contract for the coming year, which Denig was both obliged and wanted to honor, but he could not bide having a Métis woman deny him—the Bourgeois—the use of her dogs. Denig's anger simmered into early spring, and Nancy LaBombarde likely returned

(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), 84, 217; Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 105. On the location of the coat, and other museum items associated with Nancy Labombarde's work, see Racette, "Sewing for a Living," 45: notes 92 and 93.

the sentiment, but with less recourse. Alexis, who returned to Fort Union in early April 1852 to fulfill his contract, also arranged for some Red River Métis to escort his family back to Pembina. As Kurz reported, Denig continued to insist that the rest of the family "must go. The metifs leave tomorrow on their horses." And thus ended Madam LaBombarde's nearly twenty-year association with Fort Union and the American Fur Company.[18]

Denig, despite all his bluster and impatience with Madame LaBombarde, exemplifies another kind of borderlander. One who came to the region and found a home, career, and life that was both more fulfilling and entirely unlike anything he might have had back in "the States." Born in central Pennsylvania in 1812, he left his family home in the fall of 1832 and set out for St. Louis to find work in the fur trade. He was most likely recruited by Alexander Culbertson that summer, who would have filled him with tales of the trade and promises of great fortune now that steamboats had begun to navigate the Missouri River. Denig was hired by the American Fur Company in 1833 and began a clerkship at Fort Tecumseh (renamed Fort Pierre) that April. During his first winter on the Dakota prairies he managed a trading house on Cherry Creek (along what is now the southeastern boundary of the Cheyenne River Reservation). He was subsequently transferred to Fort Union in 1837, where he became the chief clerk in 1843 and subsequently rose to Bourgeois—a position he held until his retirement six years later.

In 1833, perhaps while stationed at Cherry Creek, Denig married a Lakȟóta woman named Šiná Wamníʾomni (Whirlwind Blanket). The marriage, in the parlance of the fur trade, was known as a "country marriage" or, as the French put it *à la façon du pays* (in the fashion of the country). Absent a clergyman or formal document, such marriages did not have legal standing. Nevertheless, they functioned according to the hybrid contexts in which they occurred; i.e., as a cross-cultural partnership that facilitated trade and diplomacy, involved shared labor, provided companionship, and reared children. The marriage between Denig and Šiná Wamníʾomni resulted in a son named Robert Jean Baptiste in 1837 and a daughter Sarah in 1844. Šiná Wamníʾomni and Sarah remained near the vicinity of Fort Pierre and their Lakȟóta relations, but Robert lived with his father at Fort Union during the latter's time as chief clerk (1843-1847) and Bourgeois (1847-1854). While at Fort Union, Denig married a Nakoda (Assiniboine) woman named Hítáȟcawíyą (aka Little Deer Woman), with whom he had a son named Alexander and two daughters named Ida and Adeline. This second marriage was later formalized through a Catholic ceremony in St. Louis, and lasted the rest of Denig's life. As Denig explained to Kurz in 1851, his marriages had both a strategic and a personal dimension. "Men in charge of trading posts," he noted, "like to marry into prominent Indian families when they are able to do so; by such a connection they increase their adherents, their patronage is expanded, and they make correspondingly larger profits.

[18] Kurz, *Journal*, 252-253, 324.

Their Indian relatives remain loyal and trade with no other company." These financial and diplomatic interests also coincided with private obligations to assist his wife's relatives and to cultivate mutually favorable relations with a diverse array of people.[19]

Memorable Manitoban

When Denig retired from the American Fur Company in 1856, he never considered moving back to Pennsylvania or anywhere else in the United States. Instead, he and his wife chose to move to the most populated area in the borderland region: the Red River Settlement in the vicinity of Fort Garry and the future city of Winnipeg. It was the only area where his Métis children could attend school, where his marriage would not bring derision to him or his wife, and where he could develop a private trade on the White Horse Plains in the more orderly—and less cutthroat—British system that he had long admired. While there, it is very likely that he would have encountered Madame LaBombarde on a few occasions, and probably exchanged courteous words. He was no longer the Bourgeois, after all, and they were now both residents of southernmost Rupertsland—and subject to the same laws and authorities.

Denig was only 44 years old when he moved to the Red River Settlement with his wife and four children: Sarah (from his first marriage), Alexander, Ida, and Adeline. Though he lived a relatively quiet life at Red River, he was widely regarded as a community member of high-standing and would later be recognized by the Manitoba Historical Society as a "Memorable Manitoban." In 1858, however, his life was cut short by a likely bout of appendicitis. Denig's will, which he likely drew up short after arriving in the Red River Settlement, reveals a fair amount about his relative wealth as well as his concern for his wife and Métis children. To his son Robert, who still lived in the United States, Denig bequeathed $1,000 and half of all the livestock he owned. The rest of the family's fortune was to be administered by executors to support Hítáȟcawíyą (Deer Little Woman), their three children, and his eldest daughter Sarah. Along with trusts deposited in the "in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company" to be used for the support of his family members in Canada, he also set aside funds to pay for the education of each child, with one firm caveat: that none of "my children should be taken to the United States to be educated … [so] long as their mother is alive …. Some school at Pembina or Red River Settlement is preferable or a private teacher if funds allow.[20]

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[19] Quotation from Kurz, *Journal*, 156. For a more sustained assessment of bicultural marriages in the fur trade, see Michael Lansing, "Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage in the Upper Missouri Trade, 1804-1868," *Western Historical Quarterly* 31 (Winter 2000): 413-433.

[20] Chris Vickers, "Denig of Fort Union," *North Dakota History* 15 (April 1948): 134-43; Ewers, "Literate Fur Trader Edwin Thompson Denig," *The Montana Magazine of History*, 4 (Spring, 1954), 8-9; Barkwell, "Edwin Thompson Denig and His Metis Children," *Louis Riel Institute*, 2011 <https://www.scribd.com/document/63729541/Denig-Edwin-Thompson-b-1812> (accessed 2 June 2019); "Memorable Manitobans: Edwin Thompson Denig (1812-1858)," *Manitoba Historical Society*

<http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/denig_et.shtml> (accessed 2 December 2019). Quotations of the will are from “Denig and His Metis Children.”

Chapter Nine

The Imperial Gaze and the Confluence

Fort Union was built to impress Native peoples, American Fur Company employees, opposing fur trade outfits, U.S. officials, and the Hudson's Bay Company. Given its dramatic setting and the relative comforts of steamboat travel, Fort Union also attracted a host of artists, ethnographers, scientists, writers, and wealthy tourists who wanted to experience the "uncivilized regions" of the "Prairies of the 'Far West,'" to hunt up fossils, imbibe an expansive "wilderness," and see the *wildest tribes of Indians in America*, and *entirely* in their *Native Habits* and *Costumes*."[1] These self-appointed discoverers, who longed to experience the scenery, peoples, wildlife, fossils, and "new animals to science" before they were destroyed by "civilization." In the process, these visitors defined whole regions and the peoples that inhabited them as doomed to extinction. While the desire to see the end of the "vanishing West" accrued a sense of virtue to the people who made the effort, but it also made them directly complicit in the act they sought to witness. These issues, and the central importance of Fort Union to mid-19th century ideas about wilderness and "civilization," remain one of the more salient legacies of the fort.

The same conduits that brought beaver pelts, bison robes, and other proceeds of the fur trade to St. Louis and the world, also brought people from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean to Fort Union and its environs. From the first voyage of the steamboat *Yellow Stone* until the 1860s, Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company hosted artists, scientists, journalists, missionaries, and adventurous aristocrats, as well as official U.S. government explorations and surveys. Such hospitality allowed Chouteau to engage with some of the leading minds of the age, but also served as a way to gain public recognition as a generous benefactor of the arts, religion, literature, science, and government. With the exception of some of the federal explorations, nearly all of these visitors travelled in the relative comforts that the early industrial age could provide. Set high above the waterline, they could gaze out from the decks of the *Yellow Stone* or some other steamboat, and gaze in "splendid contemplation" upon "all the wild and freshness of … nature's beauty!" Like present-day tourists, they travelled on what Leo Marx called a "Machine in the Garden." From the perspective of their relative comfort, they moved through a "perilous wilderness" but experienced the world as a slow, effortless unfolding of scenery that ultimately led to the heart of a "Wild Continent." Once they arrived at Fort Union, however, they marveled at this "outpost of civilization" juxtaposed with visiting Native peoples, Métis employees, and the vast landscape that surrounded them.[2]

[1] Catlin quoted in William H. Truettner, *The Natural Man Observed: A Study of Catlin's Indian Gallery* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1979), 38.

[2] Quotations from George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Conditions of the North American Indians*, 2 vols. (1844; reprint, New York, 1973), 1: 160-62. Also see Washington Irving,

From the 1830s and through the early 1860s, historic Fort Union hosted a number of artists, authors, gentlemen explorers and scientists whose work played a significant role in shaping European and American ideas about Native peoples and the landscapes of the Northern Plains. Among these were the artists George Catlin, Karl Bodmer, Isaac Sprague, and Rudolf Friedrich Kurtz, William Jacob Hays, and William De La Montagne Cary; the naturalists John James Audubon, Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuweid, Dr. George Stuckley, James G. Cooper; the geologists Thaddeus Culbertson and Ferdinand V. Hayden; and the ethnographer Lewis Henry Morgan. Together with published and unpublished documentation from fort employees Edwin Denig, Charles Larpenteur, Friederich Kurz, and Alexander Culbertson, the art, journals, and writings continue to inform present-day understandings of early- and mid-19th century American Indian lifeways on the Northern Plains.[3]

This is especially true in regard to the material culture and social dynamics of the fur trade, as well as the native flora and fauna of the region. Along with their value to present day residents and visitors of the Northern Plains, these works and the perspectives they represent must be filtered through the context and legacies of their times. Namely, as expressions of a kind of "imperialist nostalgia" or "imperial gaze" that is situated within a fiction of innocent inaction, whereby people "mourn the passing or transformation of what they have caused to be transformed." As Renato Rosaldo puts it, imperialist nostalgia "is a mood of nostalgia that makes" imperial systems of governance and economics seem natural, "innocent and pure." At its core,

> Imperialist nostalgia revolves around a paradox: A person kills somebody and then mourns the victim; or someone deliberately alters a life form and then regrets that things have not remained as they were…. Imperialist nostalgia uses a pose of 'innocent yearning' both to capture peoples' imagination and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination."

The "imperial gaze" is companionate to imperialist nostalgia, and is often attributed to landscape and ethnographic artists who create images from the perspective of a detached and all-knowing observer, and thus make the artist and the viewer the central authors and

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Astoria, or Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains (Philadelphia, Carey, Lea, & Blanchard, 1836), 305; "Smithsonian: Scenes from the Wild Continent," *AAD Reports* (2 November 2019) <https://www.art-antiques-design.com/art/766-smithsonian-museum-of-american-art-scene-from-the-wild-continent> (accessed 4 February 2020); and Pierre-Jean De Smet, "An Outpost of Civilization" in Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson, eds., *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, S.J., 1801-1873* (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905), 240-246. On "Machine in the Garden," see Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

[3] Quotations from Renato Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis, with a New Introduction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 68-69; E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

interpreters on the meaning of an otherwise "exotic" scene that hangs on a wall in the imperial center.[4]

In terms of contemporaneous ethnographic writings, the most notable non-Indigenous sources include amateur ethnographer and post trader Edwin Thompson Denig, naturalist Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied, George Catlin, Fort Union clerk Rudolph Kurz, and Jesuit missionary Pierre-Jean De Smet. In the realm of what is broadly termed natural history, Fort Union also hosted several leading lights of the age. Among these were the geologist Thaddeus Culbertson, the early anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan, and the well-known artist and naturalist John James Audubon. All produced influential studies based on their time on the Upper Missouri River. In one form or another, all of these men and those noted above described (in prose, paint, or both) their impressions of American Indian cultures and individuals, regional landscapes, and conditions within and around Fort Union. All of their impressions, regardless of artistic or literary quality, are of value for the detail they provide regarding life and labor at Fort Union as well as the facilities of the historic fort.[5]



Image 9.1: George Catlin by William Fisk, 1849. This painting post-dates Catlin's visit to Fort Union and the Upper Missouri by sixteen years, but draws on some of his more iconic portraits and village scenes near Fort Union and Fort Benton in 1832. Source: Smithsonian Institution, National Portrait Gallery.

[4] Quotations from Renato Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis, with a New Introduction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 68-69; E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[5] Other European nobles who traveled to Fort Union included Prince Paul of Wurtemburg, Lord Richard Grosvenor, Sir William Drummond Stuart, Prince William Nicholas of Nassau, Lord George Gore, and General Philippe de Trobriand.

Though he was as much a Jacksonian Era self-promoter as anything else, George Catlin produced a vast array of artistic and ethnographic observations that he used in a series of public lectures across the United States and Europe, and subsequently published in a two-volume collection entitled *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Conditions of the North American Indians* (1844). During his five-month trip from St. Louis to Fort Union and back, Catlin produced almost 170 paintings, including landscapes, portraits, and village scenes. Moreover, Catlin made damning indictments in his *Letters and Notes* on what he described as the "contaminating vices and dissipations introduced by the immoral part of civilized society," and decried the "most pitiable misery and wretchedness" Native peoples endured as a consequence of the fur trade.[6] While these sentiments derived from his experiences on the Upper Missouri River in 1832, Catlin did not express them for many years after. Indeed, he went out of his way to flatter Chouteau and the AFC. In early 1833, for instance, he wrote a letter for publication that lauded the "vast importance" of the company's ability to "oppose the British influence" in the region and "secur[e] to the U.S. a share of the Fur Trade of our own Country." He also advocated for a lifting of the ban on alcohol in the so-called "Indian Country," and intimated a need for the government to ease restrictions on the AFC for fear that rival companies would weaken this important commercial institution. If nothing else, Catlin made passionate arguments that reciprocated Chouteau's favors and, by supporting the financial interests of this patron, continued his commitment to paint, lecture on, and write about the subject he considered his livelihood and life's work.[7]

A year after Catlin's sojourn at Fort Union, the Swiss artist Karl Bodmer visited Fort Union in the company of his patron Prince Maximilian zu Wied Neuwied. While Prince Maximilian –a trained naturalist– compiled notes for a detailed travel narrative, Bodmer "was hired to produce a pictorial documentary of Maximilian's travels in North America. Nothing in his work suggests anything other than an attempt to approximate reality, although one must admit that in several of his paintings, his vision transcended his intentions. This is particularly the case with many of his landscapes, which are appreciated today for their aesthetic merit as much as their documentary value." The same can be said of Bodmer's portraits of Nakoda (Assiniboine), Dakȟóta (Dakota, aka Eastern Sioux), Lakȟóta (Lakota, aka Teton Sioux), Nueta (Mandan), Hiráaca (Hidatsa), Sahnish (Arikara) Aaniiih (Atsina, aka Gros Ventre), Omaškêkowak (Cree), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) individuals and groups. As Mary Terrence McKay notes,

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[6] Catlin, quoted in Barbour, *Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 71, 73.

[7] Gareth E. John, "Cultural Nationalism, Westward Expansion and the Production of Imperial Landscape: George Catlin's Native American West," *Ecumene*, 8, (April 2001): 175-203; Brian W. Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 55-58; quotations on pp. 57-58. On the growing prominence of romanticized depictions of American Indians in early 18th-century art and literature, as well as their representation as noble manifestations of the American continent and thus fodder for cultural nationalism, see Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 86.

Bodmer "captured not only a multitude of ethnological detail, but rendered with haunting accuracy superb portraits of" each subject's distinctive features and dispositions.[8]

Bodmer and Maximilian resided at Fort Union for two weeks in early summer of 1833 (June 24—July 6), and again for several weeks in the fall after returning from Fort McKenzie (on the Missouri River near the mouth of the Marias River), then headed down river for a brief sojourn at the AFC's Fort Clark (about ten miles downriver from the mouth of the Knife River in central North Dakota) before heading back to St. Louis where they made preparations to return to New York. During the course of their travels along the Upper Missouri, Maximilian and Bodmer produced 250 images (by Bodmer), filled several journals, and acquired crates of botanical, ethnological, and zoological specimens. Aside from the drawings and preliminary paintings, all of these items were lost when the steamboat *Assiniboine* was destroyed by fire while making a return voyage to St. Louis the following year. Despite this loss, Maximilian published German, French, and English editions of his *Travels in the Interior of North America*, each accompanied by lithographs of Bodmer's paintings. As the historian Barton Barbour writes, the two-volume work represented a remarkably "extensive and important … collection of Upper Missouri Indian materials."[9]

George Catlin and Karl Bodmer were very different artists, but they equally influenced how their European and American contemporaries—and subsequent generations—viewed Native peoples in the Trans-Mississippi West. Catlin's works were quickly rendered, but they were invariably accompanied by his commentary he presented in illustrated lectures or his publications. In this regard, Catlin presented himself as a witness and translator of Native cultures and their homelands. Bodmer, on the other hand, endeavored to present his subjects with a scientific precision that was sheathed in the aesthetics of Romanticism. Unlike Catlin's works, Bodmer's paintings and lithographs wordlessly held the viewer's gaze within the framework of the artist's chosen perspective. In this way, he sought to convey his own sense of wonder and admiration for a world that few of his contemporaries, and almost none of their progeny, would ever see.[10]

As the late historian William H. Goetzmann noted, Bodmer, like Catlin, "felt that in his contact with the Indian he was in touch with sublime nature in all its mysterious

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[8] Quotations from David C. Hunt, "Forward," in Robert Linholm and W. Raymond Wood, *Karl Bodmer's America Revisited: Landscape Views Across Time* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), x; Mary Terrence McKay, "Introduction," in *Karl Bodmer: Engravings from an Expedition* (Santa Fé: Zaplin-Lampert Gallery, 1990), 2.

[9] Barbour, *Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 81.

[10] Catlin is renowned for making the first proposal for the creation of a national park or, as he put it, a "Nation's park." For his ideas, and how they mirror his "imperial gaze," see Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9-10.

power …. Ironically, [their] highly charged visions of a paradise on the verge of extinction [were] intended to preserve a way of life," but they also inspired subsequent federal and commercial explorations that laid the groundwork for undermining and transforming the region and its people into a new region that promised a "glorious national future." In this way, both men contributed to the vision of Native peoples as noble and doomed; a trope that preceded Catlin and Bodmer by several generations, but one they (perhaps) inadvertently promoted in their art. The same was true of "nature's beauty" (to quote Catlin), which was destined to become the material basis for transforming the still-young United States into a powerful nation state. These ideas were hardly new or unique to either man, but they provided some of the most compelling iconography of what constituted "real" American Indians and "untouched nature" –which are two concepts that continue to inform non-Indigenous conceptions of history, landscapes, and first peoples in North America.[11]

Within a decade of Catlin's and Bodmer's journeys up the Missouri River, a growing number of scientists and naturalists collected specimens in the Fort Union area and prepared them for shipping them to the East. In 1843 the famous but aging naturalist John James Audubon traveled to the Upper Missouri, accompanied by the artist Isaac Sprague (who specialized in landscapes, botanical, and ornithological subjects), ornithologist Edward Harris, taxidermist John G. Bell, and Lewis M. Squires who served as Audubon's scribe. On June 12, 1843, the group arrived at Fort Union, which they used as a base for acquiring hundreds of specimens for Audubon's last published work, *The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America* (1845-1848). Explorer and geologist Ferdinand V. Hayden, who would later become instrumental in the creation of the U.S. Geological Survey, made a trip with Gouvernor K. Warren in 1857 to Fort Union, which served as their base while they searched for fossils in the Dakota Badlands. Specimens collected near Fort Union by Dr. George Stuckley and James G. Cooper during the 1853 Pacific Railroad Survey (which effectively mapped the future route of the Great Northern Railway), and later by Thaddeus Culbertson, are now housed in the Smithsonian Institution. For some of these men, their work at Fort Union is memorialized in the type locality that has been designated for species that include the Audubon, or northern, grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys leucogaster missouriensis),* the Hayden's shrew (*Sorex cinereus*), the Maximilian pocket mouse (*Perognathus fasciatus maximilian),* and the Audubon bighorn (*Ovis canadensis auduboni*).[12]

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[11] William H. Goetzmann in Hunt and Gallagher, *Karl Bodmer's America*, 22. Also see John C. Ewers, *Artists of the Old West* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), 95; and J. Gray Sweeney, "The Artist-Explorers of the American West, 1860-1880" (Ph.D. diss. Indiana University, Department of Fine Arts, January 1975), 11. Catlin's journey to the Northern Plains would also inspire him in 1832 (in his letters published in 1841) to call for America to create "a nation's Park" to protect both the American Indians and bison.

[12] For a fuller accounting of these scientific studies, see Barbour, *Fort Union*, 82-93. It should also be noted that Chouteau assisted many of these expeditions, while Denig and Culbertson acquired animal, fossil, and

Finer Things

Given the variety of people who worked at the Upper Missouri River fur trade posts, social life and common gatherings tended to mix an odd assortment of predilections with necessary deprivations. Dried or fresh bison meat was a frequent staple, even in the Bourgeois House where the Bourgeois lived, entertained guests, and kept track of various projects and tasks that occurred within the building. When bison or some other meat could not be found, residents occasionally had to boil corn for their entre and side dish. Hominy for dinner did not make the same lasting impression as the chance to dine with Kenneth McKenzie, who insisted his clerks wear coats, that a white cloth covered the table, and two waiters served milk, cream, butter, coffee, wine, and bread made with white flour, as well meat and some vegetable or starch. Meals and after meal gatherings might also include some of McKenzie's imported luxuries, such as French brandy, dried plums, almonds, and cigars.[13]

James Archdale Hamilton Palmer possessed even more flamboyance than McKenzie. He was a middle-aged English aristocrat who sought out the fur trade in the early 1830s as a kind of escape from whatever he left behind in England. After meeting McKenzie in St. Louis, he was hired to be the chief clerk or bookkeeper at Fort Union and served as McKenzie's stand-in when the Bourgeois was away. For the three or so years he was at Fort Union, Palmer placed annual orders for fashionable clothes from London. To the amazement of the *engagés*, he took a bath and put on a clean shirt every day, and frequently wore a gold chain with ruffled shirt fronts. Christmas meant special treats of eatables, which he had ordered earlier in the year, and often included a drunken spree. A generally private man who suffered from gout, Palmer shared little about himself and his disposition tended to swing between "very pleasant and very crabbed."[14]

Palmer was very much his "pleasant" self during a visit by George Catlin, who enjoyed Palmer's "intellectual and polished society" and praised him as "a complete storehouse of ancient and modern literature and art." The following year, Prince Maximilian zu Wied and Karl Bodmer were generously entertained by Palmer during their multi-week stays at Fort Union by the "well-informed Englishman [who] held forth in evening conversation … by the fireside, over a glass of punch every evening." [15]

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mineral specimens that they subsequently shipped to scientists and scientific institutions. There is some dispute that *Ovis canadensis auduboni* is not a distinct species, and its taxon is currently designate as an Inactive Taxon [extinct]." See *iNaturalist, Audubon's Bighorn Sheep* <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/503419-Ovis-canadensis-auduboni> (accessed 5 February 2020)

[13] Charles Larpenteur, *The Personal Narrative of Charles Larpenteur, 1833-1873*, 2 vols., ed. Elliott Coues (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, Inc., 1962), 1: xxvi-xxx.

[14] Ibid., 1: 86-8. Palmer dropped his formal surname and went by Hamilton until he returned to England. Larpenteur surmised that Palmer had left some embarrassment behind in his home country and wished to live somewhat incognito in the United States.

[15] George Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, 1: 21, 41, 47-48; Alexander Philipp Maximilian, Prince of Wied, *Travels in the Interior of North America,* Part I (London: Ackerman & Co., 1843), 197, 205.



Image 9.2: ***Fort Union on the Missouri***. Source: Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied, *Maximilian Prince of Wied's Travels in the Interior of North America, during the years 1832–1834* (London: Achermann & Comp., 1843-1844).

Both Catlin and Bodmer painted several sketches in the vicinity of Fort Union, with the former spending most of his time working on preliminary portraits of Native individuals and groups within the fort and just outside the stockade. Given his monumental mission, Catlin tended to paint quickly in a style that captured his impressions more than the specific physical details of the subject. Bodmer, on the other hand, drew multiple field sketches before putting paint to canvas; an approach that gives some of his paintings less immediacy, but allows the viewer to more fully examine the exacting details of the subject or the scene. Some of the most iconic works these two artists produced are panoramas of Fort Union, as seen from an elevation. Both artists also worked with a perspective that might be described as a "minds' eye vantage," whereby the viewer's gaze is allowed to wander through, above, and within the various elements of the composition. The most arresting element of these works comes from the juxtaposition of "civilization," as represented in the solid geometry of the gleaming white fort, with the casual movements of Native peoples moving through an unconstructed landscape. Though both artists intended to "capture" a vanishing world, and provide a true representation of Native peoples before they succumbed to "civilization," their paintings nevertheless functioned like the dinners with McKenzie and Palmer. Namely,

as assertions of sophisticated perspectives in a world where "civilization" could find no purchase.

While such a presentation fails to capture the purposeful manner in which Native peoples travelled, or the many ways they shaped and utilized the landscape, the paintings strike a profound chord with the non-Indigenous viewer of the 19th century and the present. Like European paintings of Roman ruins and ancient castles, or the crude huts of peasants in alpine valleys, the painters bring the aesthetic of European Romanticism to the peoples and landscapes of interior North America. In doing so, they make the fort a focal point that is both incongruous and oddly at place in the landscape. The ancient world of Native peoples, forests, prairies, and mountains are made new and thus the landscape is nudged away from its current inhabitants and toward the world where the paintings will be exhibited or printed into a lavishly expensive book. Much like the Renaissance-style Manaus Opera House (Teatro Amazonas), of which every piece was carried 2,000 miles by steamboat and donkey train to the confluence of steep rainforests that crowd the Amazon and Rio Negro rivers, for the sole purpose of bringing the opera star Enrico Caruso to Brazil, Fort Union represented a force of will and a foreign aesthetic that together would "civilize" the landscape and "naturalize" its expected transformation.

Letters and Science: Edwin Denig as Bourgeois Ethnologist

Though not nearly as famous as any of the people named above, Edwin Denig produced a remarkable body of scholarship of lasting significance while serving as the Bourgeois of Fort Union. For several years, he spent a good deal of his free time working on an extensive study of the American Indian nations that were most closely associated with Fort Union; namely, the Nakoda (Assiniboine), Omaškêkowak (Cree), Lakȟóta (Lakota, aka Teton Sioux), Sahnish (Arikara), and Apsáalooke (Crow). Possessed of a sharp mind, situated in the midst of his subjects, and able to take advantage of quiet winter days, his ethnographic work was richly informed, methodical, extensive, and conscientious. Unfortunately, his early death in 1858 prevented him from ever publishing a complete edition of his work. When portions of a manuscript were discovered in 1949 by the ethnologist and historian John C. Ewers, and confirmed by a handwriting expert as the work of Denig, the material had been languishing in the archives of the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis for several decades.[16]

The initial impetus for Denig's work came from Father Pierre Jean De Smet's request that Denig prepare a study on the Nakoda, to whom Denig was related through his marriage to Hítáȟcawíyą (Deer Little Woman) and their children. Denig's insights were conveyed to the famed Jesuit missionary in 1852 in a series of letters that amounted

[16] John C. Ewers, "Literate Fur Trader Edwin Thompson Denig," *Montana Magazine of History* (Spring 1954), 1-12.

to seventy-two pages of published material. De Smet, who was as committed to gathering and sharing insights on Native peoples who were not familiar with the Catholic faith, published the work in 1863—with posthumous attribution to Denig—in *Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters by Rev. P. J. De Smet.*[17] Two years after sending his serial manuscript on the Nakoda to De Smet, Denig prepared a second study in response to a circular distributed by Henry R. Schoolcraft, who had received a commission from the U.S. Congress to produce a six-volume work to be entitled *Indian Tribes of the United States* for the Office of Indian Affairs. Denig ultimately submitted a weighty tome on the Nakoda (Assiniboine) and the region where they lived, but it was never incorporated into Schoolcraft's project and remained buried in files for 76 years. In 1855, however, Denig incorporated the bulk of his scholarship in a report that he submitted to Isaac I. Stevens, Governor of Washington Territory, for inclusion in Stevens' *Report of Explorations for a Route for the Pacific Railroad near the 47th and 49th Parallels of North Latitude, from St. Paul, Minnesota, to Puget Sound*, 2 vols. (Washington: United States Congress, 1855-1860). In 1930 Denig's second study was edited by the linguist and ethnologist John Napoleon Brinton Hewitt and published by the Bureau of American Ethnology as *Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri*.[18]



Image 9.3: Edwin Denig and Hítáȟcawíyą (Deer Little Woman). Source: *Forty-sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1928-1929* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930).

[17] Rev. P. J. de Smet, *Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters by Rev. P. J. de Smet* (New York: James B. Kirker, 1863), 133-205.

[18] The information about Denig's contribution to Schoolcraft's project comes from Hewitt's Preface to "Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri," edited with Notes and Biographical Sketch by J.N.B. Hewitt, in *Forty-sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1928-1929* (Government Printing Office, Washington, 1930), 375-391.

Denig's contribution to the massive report foreshadowed the use of "culture areas" by early twentieth anthropologists. He also proposed to examine the significance of the fur trade on the ongoing development of Northern Plains cultures. In his draft introduction he noted that

> [t]he plan intended to be pursued in these pages, [so] that the reader may understand the different traits of Indian character without difficulty or confusion, is, first to give a short history of each tribe, its geographical position and other peculiarities; after which an inquiry will be instituted into their government, condition, manners, and customs as a body. Most customs and opinions are common to all tribes, but wherever any great difference is observable, or marked traits to be noticed, they will be found in the compendiums of their separate histories. This is necessary to avoid the constant repetition that would follow if detailed accounts of each tribe were presented.
>
> The Indians of the Upper Missouri territory may be divided into two classes, the roving and the stationary tribes-the former comprising the Sioux, Crows, Assiniboines, Crees, and Blackfeet, the latter, the Gros Ventres [Hidatsa], Mandans, and Arikaras. My object is to show the state of these Indians in former times, what their present condition is and what circumstances have tended toward their general advancement or decline; and after a general and minute research into all their motives, acts, religion, government, and ceremonies, conclude with a history of the American fur trade embodying many statements of various matters incident to the lives of trappers and traders (xxviii-xxix).[19]

At the time of his first submission to Schoolcraft, Denig had not fully met these prefatory expectations. However, the scholarship that informed "A Report to the Hon. Isaac I. Stevens, Governor of Washington Territory, on the Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri, by Edwin Tompson Denig" was much closer to the mark. Even with this success, which Denig never lived to see, his publishing travails were still not finished. As Hewitt noted 1930, portions of the report to Stevens were heavily plagiarized by the famed geologist, Ferdinand V. Hayden. A comparison of the Denig manuscript with a monograph published by Hayden in 1862 (titled *Contributions to the Ethnography and Philology of the Indian Tribes of the Missouri Valley*), reveals that large sections of the two works are identical. The "borrowing" was so egregious, Hewitt was almost certain that a chapter on the Nueta-Hiraacá (Mandan-Hidatsa) in Hayden's book was also lifted from Denig's manuscript. Because that chapter was noted by Denig, but has not been found within his archived papers, Ewers did not rule out the likelihood that Denig may

[19] Quotation and page numbers are from Denig, *Five Indian Tribes.* The French term "Gros Ventre" simply means "big belly. It has been applied to the Hiraacá (Hidatsa) and the A'aninin (aka Atsina).

have loaned the material to Hayden who either lost it or never returned it to Denig's estate.[20]

The report submitted to Stevens was subsequently augmented by the materials that were found in the archives of the Missouri Historical Society, and published in 1961 as *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri: Sioux, Arickaras, Assiniboines, Crees, Crows.* More than 100 years after it was written, Denig's work was praised for its

> value primarily to archeologists and ethnologists interested in culture history and culture contact. For each tribe, detailed information is presented on the area of occupation; the climate, ecology, flora, and fauna; population size and tribal divisions; intertribal relations; and attitudes toward white traders. Data is also presented on political organization, leadership, hunting, and warfare, but the cultural descriptions tend to be fragmentary and incomplete. Denig at his best lacks the flair of Catlin and the soundness of Maximilian. But despite these and other weaknesses, this reviewer agrees with Ewers that Denig deserves recognition as one of the most important authorities on [American] Indian peoples of the Northern Plains in the mid 19th century.[21]

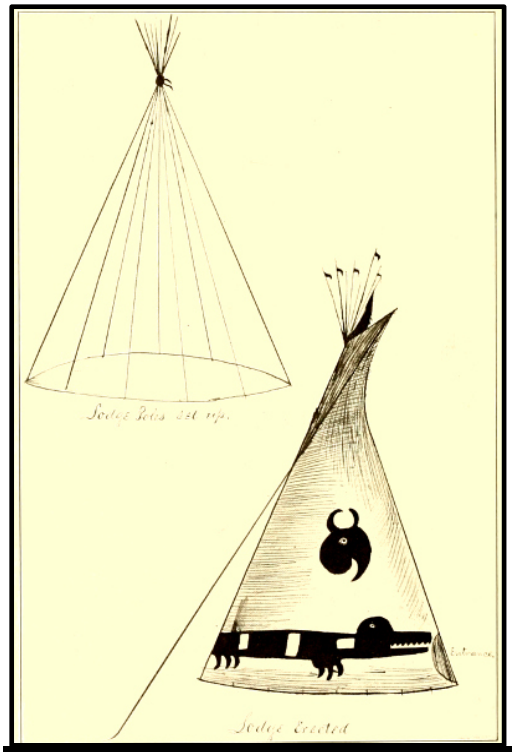
Few authors, if any, have endured such an array of publication delays; especially in a case where the author received no remuneration. Nevertheless, Denig's diligence belies a sense of purpose and personal reflection in the many relationships and experiences he acquired over the near entirety of his adult life. His long career and success was ultimately based on an ability to develop and sustain respectful relationships with the Native groups associated with Fort Union and, earlier in his career, the small post at Cherry Creek in present-day South Dakota. While the text of his study largely addressed the 348 questions that accompanied Schoolcraft's original circular, the information that Denig provided far exceeded the circular's emphasis on "the history (and archeology), the tribal organization, the religion, the manners and customs, the intellectual capacity and character, the present condition, the future prospects, and the language, of the Indian tribes of the United States." Denig certainly covered these matters, but the subtlety he brings to the subjects he takes on reveals a clear sense of trust and respect between him and the Native peoples who shared their stories, skills, social systems, beliefs, foods, tools and more. The depth of detail and array of subjects covered in the work also suggests that exchanges of favors, kindnesses and mutual curiosity were at the heart of his research and narrative.[22]

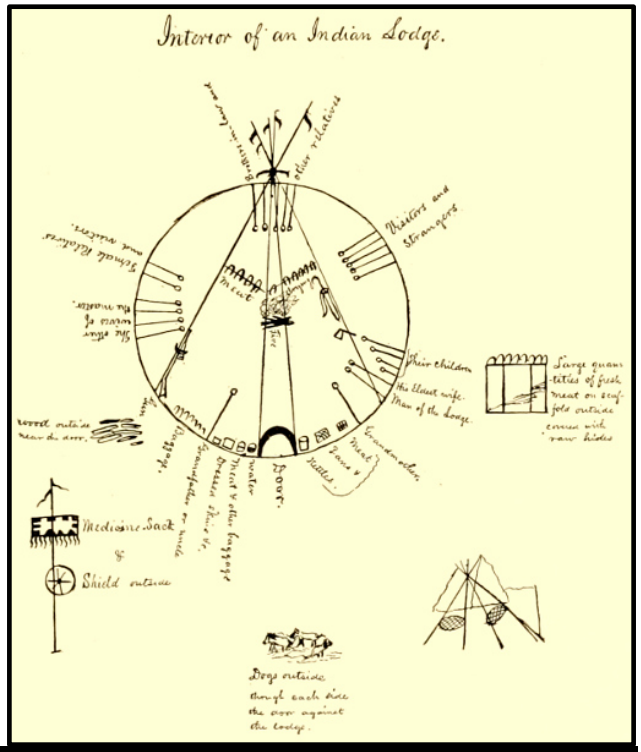
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[20] Denig's report to Stevens was published in 1930 as "Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri, edited with notes and a biographical sketch by J. N. B. Hewitt," in the *Forty-sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1928-1929* Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930), 375-628.

[21] Edward M. Bruner, "Review of Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri," *American Anthropologist*, 64 (June 1962),658.

[22] Hewitt, "Preface," 380-381.





Images 9.4 and 9.5: "A Lodge Frame" and a Completed Lodge" (L), and "Interior of an Indian Lodge." Source: Denig, "Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri," edited with Notes and Biographical Sketch by J.N.B. Hewitt, in *Forty-sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1928-1929* (Government Printing Office, Washington, 1930), Plates 74 and 75.

As Denig was working on his serialized manuscript for De Smet, he frequently confided in his clerk Friedrich Kurz, who shared a similar interest in Kurz's subject. "He talks to me continually about Indian legends and usages," Kurz noted in his journal. "As he writes the best of these stories for Pere De Smet, by whome they are [to be] published, there is no need of my preserving more than some bits of memoranda." Sometime later, Kurz noted that

> Mr. Denig has been reading to me again from his manuscript, which is extremely interesting. He is very well educated and he has made a thorough study of Indian life—a distinct advantage to him in trade. He is so fond of the life in this part of the country that he is averse to any thought of going back to his Pennsylvania home in the United States. For the reason, he says, that he may avoid political carryings-on that disgust him.[23]

In the decades since his work was first published in 1930, Denig's scholarship continues to receive high praise. In 1961 it was edited by John C. Ewers and reissued as

[23] Freidrich Kurz, *Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz: An Account of His Experiences Among Fur Traders and American Indians on the Mississippi and the Upper Missouri Rivers During the Years 1846 to 1852* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 133, 136.

Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri: Sioux, Arickaras, Assiniboines, Crees (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961). While that book remains in print, the bulk of the work—which focused primarily on the Nakoda—was jointly published in the United States and Canada as *The Assiniboine*. As David Reed Miller notes in the introduction to these new editions,

> *The Assiniboine* … is a remarkable document, the finest and most detailed description of a Plains Indian tribe written during the Buffalo-hunting days…. Denig's writings constitute the historical baseline for Assiniboine culture. Subsequent studies provide supplementary cultural detail and document Assiniboine culture changes in the century and a half.[24]

While Denig's work continues to be a valuable resource for scholars of Northern Plains Native peoples, and especially the Nakoda, the scholarship remained almost completely unknown through the first decades of the reservation era, and the entirety of the allotment period when tribal reservations were greatly diminished and carved up into a checkerboard of private property, tribal lands, and the U.S. Public Domain (a process the occurred on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation between 1908 and the early 1930s). It is possible that Denig's work, once it was published in the 1930s, inspired advocates for the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (aka Indian New Deal), which ended the policy of allotment in severalty and implemented a series of less coercive policies that shaped federal programs through the mid 1940s.[25] The true value of the work, and the one virtue of its long delayed publication, is that it provided an unexpected time capsule of the pre-reservation era Nakoda. Written in the early 1850s, the period that is most fully represented in the interpretation of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. Denig's work remained hidden for 70 years but never mouldered into bits of dust and brittle sheaves of paper. And unlike the old fort, Denig's manuscripts retains all the qualities it possessed in the mid 1850s. As such, it continues to inform an interested public, Native peoples, and a scholarly community associated with Indigenous studies. In short, Denig's work represents one of the more important and tangible legacies of Fort Union and the various peoples who converged there over the course of four decades.

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[24] Quotation from Miller, "Introduction to the 2000 Edition," in Denig, The Assiniboine, ed. J. N. P. Hewitt (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), ix-xiv. This edition shares a copyright with the Canadian Plains Research Center at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan.

[25] For an overview of the Indian Reorganization Act and the effects of its policies, see Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980); and Vine Deloria, ed. *The Indian Reorganization Act: Congresses and Bills* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2002). On the implementation of the allotment program on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and its subsequent replacement by the Indian Reorganization Act, see Miller, "The First Allotments, Changes in Land Tenure, and the Lohmiller Administration, 1905-1917" and "The Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, and the Indian New Deal, 1921-1935;" both in Miller et al, *The History of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes, 1800-2000* (Poplar: Fort Peck Community College, 2008), 187-231 and 251-271.

Chapter Ten

Disease, Dependency and the Diminished Cultural Geography of the Northern Plains

> I am Wounded, and by Whom, by those same White Dogs that I have always Considered, and treated as Brothers. I do not fear *Death* my friends. You Know it, but to die with my face rotten, that even the Wolves will shrink with horror at seeing Me, and say to themselves, that is the 4 Bears the Friend of the Whites —
>
> Listen well what I have to say, as it will be the last time you will hear Me. Think of your Wives, Children, Brothers, Sisters, Friends, and in fact all that you hold dear, are all Dead, or Dying, with their faces all rotten, caused by those dogs the whites, think of all that My friends, and rise all together and Not leave one of them alive. The 4 Bears will act his Part —
>
> Speech of Mątó Tóop (Four Bears), during 1837 smallpox epidemic.[1]
>
> * * * * * * * *
>
> In order that justice may be done to each nation, it is proposed that your country shall be divided into geographical districts – that the country and its limits shall be designated by such rivers, mountains, and lines, as will show what country each nation claims and where they are located. In doing this it is not intended to take any of your lands away from you, or to destroy your rights to hunt, or fish, or pass over the country, as heretofore. … Your Great Father only desires to punish the guilty and reward the good, when a horse is stolen, or a scalp taken, or a woman or child carried off, or any other wrong done, he wants to find out who did it, and punish the bad men or nation; and the nation will be held responsible for the acts of its people.
>
> Opening statement of David Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, at the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty[2]

Between the time when George Catlin and Karl Bodmer visited Fort Union, and Edwin Denig moved to the Red River Settlement, the world beyond Fort Union's palisades underwent a series of deadly and tragic changes that greatly reduced Native autonomy and populations. The establishment of Fort Union and other trading posts along the Missouri River brought Native peoples into direct and increasingly frequent

[1] Quotation from Francis A. Chardon, *Chardon's Journal at Fort Clark, 1834-1839*, ed. Annie Heloise Abel (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 124. The reference to "White Dogs" is two-fold. Along with describing the complexion of Europeans and European Americans who worked in the fur trade, the color white is also associated with death. The dual allusion effectively defines Europeans and European Americans as harbingers of death.

[2] Mitchell quoted in Raymond J. DeMallie, "Touching the Pen: Plains Indian Treaty Councils in Ethnohistorical Perspective," in *Ethnicity on the Great Plains,* ed. Frederick C. Luebke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 124-125.

contact with non-Native peoples. Though often quite social, these encounters came with a specter of severe and inescapable consequences. Among these were the pandemics that seemed to strike Indigenous peoples every one or two generations—decimating whole communities and profoundly undermining the material, economic, religious, social, and domestic bases that defined their cultural and social life. The unavoidable consequence of the fur trade occurred in 1837, when the AFC steamboat *St. Peters* carried smallpox up the Missouri River and ignited a firestorm of epidemic disease. Population losses were staggering throughout the region, and compounded the personal and collective traumas of past epidemics that still haunted all Native peoples. Equestrian peoples—who were more mobile and lived in less concentrated communities—tended to have lower infection rates than the densely populated horticultural groups along the Missouri River. However, this dynamic did not hold for the Nakoda (Assiniboine), who were very closely associated with the trade at historic Fort Union. According to Edwin Denig they suffered a 60% population loss in a matter of months.[3]

The epidemic largely coincided with the collapse of the beaver trade, which caused the fur trade to become increasingly focused on the acquisition of bison robes. Consequently, the diminished populations on the Northern Plains—in order to reconstitute the health of their communities and access trade goods—increasingly dedicated their time and energy to bison hunting. Because robes did not fetch the same prices that pelts did just a few years prior, traders encouraged increased hunting for a market economy that demanded high returns on small investments.[4] For equestrian Native peoples still living with the consequences of the 1837 epidemic, participation in

[3] Edwin Thompson Denig, *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri: Sioux, Arickaras, Assiniboines, Crees, Crows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 71-73, 397-399; David Reed Miller estimates the Nakoda lost about two-thirds of their population in a matter of weeks. Like most peoples on the Northern Plains, the Nakoda first experienced the scourge of smallpox in the epidemic of 1780-1782, having carried the disease north to the Assiniboine River Valley after a raid on the Hiraacá. While early counts do not effectively show population changes from this earlier epidemic, Miller estimates that that between 1809 and 1823, the Nakoda population increased more than four-fold, from approximately 5,000 to over 23,000. While a substantial number of these people were from more northerly communities that experienced lower mortality rates from the disease in the early 1780s, the Nakoda associated with Fort Union had certainly prospered and grown over the previous two generations of the equestrian era. See Miller et al, *The History of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes, 1800-2000* (Poplar: Fort Peck Community College, 2008), 18-20; DeMallie and Miller, "Assiniboine," in *Handbook of North American Indians,* Vol. 13:1 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 573-575.

[4] By 1835, American Fur Company trading posts had been established within the territory of each of the major Northern Plains groups. These included Fort Clark at the Nueta and Hiraacá villages, Fort Tecumseh among the Sahnish, and Fort Union in the southern portion of the Nakoda homeland. Other forts associated with specific Plains groups during the 19th century include Fort McKenzie, established in the territory of the Piikáni (Blackfeet, or Piegan) nation within the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), and Fort Cass in Apsáalooke (Crow) territory near the mouth of the Big Horn River. Because neither of these more westerly posts could be reached by steamboat in the 1830s, the people who traded at Fort Cass and Fort Piegan were not as profoundly affected as the groups downriver. William R. Swagerty, "Indian Trade in the Trans-Mississippi West to 1870," *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 4: A History of Indian-White Relations*, ed., William Sturtevant, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 370.

the bison robe trade was essential, especially since the trade goods they acquired had become increasingly central to their material needs and cultural expressions. This dynamic allowed the AFC to successfully transition away from the peltry trade and, with larger steamboats able to transfer heavier cargo, dominate the robe trade of the Upper Missouri River Basin.[5]

This new and increasing focus on a single resource (robes) made Native communities increasingly vulnerable to resulting declines in bison populations. The first outside threat to this precarious situation came in the late 1840s and early 1850s, when migrants from the eastern states pushed onto and across the Central Plains toward the Oregon Territory and California. As large herds of livestock trampled and chewed their way through the lush grasses along the Platte River, and emigrants cut down cottonwood groves for firewood and to repair wheels, axels, wagons and miscellaneous equipment, they undermined the key locales where bison, people, and horses had sheltered and sustained themselves for countless generations. The consequences were devastating for all three, and fomented conflict with migrant parties and the U.S. Army. Through the mid 1850s, the trials of war and the effects of declining herds caused hunger and disease to stalk the Native nations that had previously traded in large numbers along the Middle Missouri River.[6]

Making Boundaries: Bounding Peoples, Animals, and Landscapes

While these developments primarily affected Native groups on the Central Plains and AFC traders at Fort Pierre Chouteau, they soon led to a treaty in 1851 that directly affected Northern Plains peoples. Known as the Fort Laramie Treaty, or Horse Creek Treaty (as Native peoples generally refer to the event) it was one of the most spectacular and confounding expressions of treaty making to ever occur in the region. The treaty included an estimated 10,000 people from an array of groups including Oglála, Sičháŋğu and other Lakȟóta, Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne), Hinono'eino (Arapaho), Apsáalooke (Crow), Sahnish (Arikara), Nakoda (Assiniboine), Aaniiih (Atsina or Gros Ventre), Nueta (Mandan), and Hiraacá (Hidatsa). The Horse Creek Treaty involved no land cessions, proclaimed peace between the United States and all the assembled nations, and promised

[5] Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 93-97. The carrying capacity of larger steamboats also contributed to lower shipping costs for the company, which allowed for offering higher prices for the robes.
[6] Elliott West, *The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 40-45, 52-55; Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison*, 107, 109, 119-120; Connie A. Woodhouse, Jeffrey J. Lukas, and Peter M. Brown, "Drought in the Western Great Plains, 1845-56: Impacts and Implications," *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 93 (September 2002): 1485-1494. Also see Paul N. Beck, *The First Sioux War: The Grattan Fight and Blue Water Creek, 1854–1856* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004), 15-16; and United States Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-First Congress, 1849-1850* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1850), 132.

a total annual distribution of $50,000 in supplies and provisions (i.e., annuities) for the next fifty years in exchange for general agreement with the establishment of "roads, military and other posts, within their respective territories." Much of the treaty's final text was given over to defining these "respective territories," and U.S. officials recognized the territorial dominance of the Lakȟóta and their allies across much of the Northern and Central Plains. However, it was not the relative sizes of tribal territories that concerned U.S. officials so much as their formal delineation. The Lakȟóta made it clear that they expected the lines to change as conditions changed, but the treaty included language that called on the U.S. Army to police the treaty boundaries and punish trespassers or aggressors. In short, the federal officials understood these territories in three ways: they were fixed in space and time, violation of the boundaries implied war with the United States, and they provided the template for future land cessions.[7]

Along with establishing a fixed geography, the United States also required the diverse assemblage of band leaders within each group to select a single head chief who would be responsible for the fulfillment of each component of the treaty. This issue proved untenable from the outset since it required a kind of political hierarchy that had no grounding in Plains societies. Matȟó Wayúhi (Conquering Bear), a respected itančan (band leader) among the Sičháŋğu Lakȟóta (aka Brulé or Burnt Thighs), tried to explain to the American commissioners that the Lakȟóta had no word for, or conception of, a "principal or head-chief." The Americans insisted that such a designation was essential for the treaty, and Matȟó Wayúhi—understanding full well that it would never work—chose to be amenable in the context of a peace council and allowed himself to be the person "through whom all national business will hereafter be conducted … for the Sioux or Dacotah Nation."[8]

While the concept of a "head chief" was incompatible with the political realities of all the Plains groups assembled at the treaty council, the matter was compounded by an additional misunderstanding of what U.S. officials called the "Sioux Nation," which they considered to be the simple combination of three large subtribes that were generally referred to as the Western or Plains Sioux, the Eastern Dakota Sioux (in present-day Minnesota), and the Western Dakota Sioux (centered near the Missouri River). Based on this misunderstanding, government officials viewed the matter of selecting a head chief as a fairly simple question of three sub-chiefs picking one national leader. As described elsewhere in this study, the constituent parts of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ were too dynamic

[7] Raymond J. DeMallie, "Touching the Pen: Plains Indian Treaty Councils in Ethnohistorical Perspective," in *Ethnicity on the Great Plains*, ed. Frederick C. Luebke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 38-44. Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 28-32; Catherine Price, *The Oglala People, 1841-1879: A Political History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 27-37. For the text of treaty ratified by the U.S. Senate, see "Treaty of Fort Laramie with Sioux, Etc.," in Charles Kappler, ed. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* Vol. II (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904), 594-96.
[8] DeMallie, "Touching the Pen," 44-53; and Price, *The Oglala People*, 27-37.

and too complex to readily function under a singular leadership. Mnikȟówožu (Minniconjou), Sihásapa (Blackfoot Sioux), Oóhenuŋpa (Two Kettles) and Sičháŋğu (Brulé). In short, a "head chief," if such a position even existed, would have to be selected through a consensus of the multiple tiyóšpaye within each of the larger groups that made up the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ. Such a process would have been endless and ultimately pointless. In naming Matȟó Wayúhi the "head chief," the U.S. government's desire to deal with single leaders of clearly defined nationalities that controlled specific geographic territories would complicate and undermine existing leadership systems within the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ for decades and generations to come.[9]

Mató wįtko (Bear that is Spirited; aka "Crazy Bear") and the Crises of Leadership

Matȟó Wayúhi was hardly alone in his protestations about leadership and representation at the Horse Creek Treaty Council, and had little or no faith that his "Head Chief" designation would lead to good outcomes. (He would be killed three years later at Fort Laramie while trying to prevent violence between U.S. soldiers and his band.) Mató Wįtko made similar protestations, but his concerns were hardly noted since the Nakoda only included three men. From the perspective of the U.S. commissioners, this made selecting a single Nakoda representative all the easier. In the eyes of the commissioners, one "signatory" from each nation was sufficient for making a binding legal document in accordance with federal law. The U.S. simply needed a designated leader who would serve as the legal recipient and distributor of annuities, and the person to blame if boundaries and policies were not observed by their communities. In short, the "x" that Mató Wįtko and so many other Native men marked on the treaty document, to note their concurrence, essentially made it comport with U.S. law.[10]

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[9] As Victor Douville, the History & Culture Coordinator in the Lakota Studies Department at Sinte Gleska University describes it, "*Oceti Sakowin* is a cohesive tribal society consisting of seven tribes known as the Seven Council Fires. These Seven Council Fires are divided into three linguistic dialects, the *Dakota*, which are the *Sissetonwan, Wapekute, Wapeton* and *Mniwakantunwan/Bdewakantunwan; Nakota* which are the *Iyanktonwan* and *Iyanktonwanna*; and *Lakota* which are the *Oglala, Hunkpapa, Itazipcola, Hohwoju/ Mnikowoju, Sihasapa, Oohenunpa* and *Sicangu*." For Douville's definition see Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards Work Group, *Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards* (Pierre: South Dakota Office of Indian Education, 2012), 39 [note: the preceding quotation retains the orthography used by Douville, which closely approximates the orthography of the *New Lakota Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, Indiana: Lakota Language Consortium, 2008).
LeRoy R. Hafen, and Francis Marion Young, *Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West, 1834-1890* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, 1984), 209-10; and Remi A. Nadeau, *Fort Laramie and the Sioux* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 86-89. Also, Paul, *Blue Water Creek and the First Sioux War, 1854-1856* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004); and George E. Hyde, *Red Cloud's Folk: A History of the Oglala Sioux Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), 69-84.
[9] Kingsley M. Bray, *Crazy Horse: A Lakota Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 32-33; Paul N. Beck, *The First Sioux War: The Grattan Fight and Blue Water Creek, 1854–1856* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004), 15-16. Also see Paul, *Blue Water Creek and the First Sioux War.* Harney quoted in Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism,* 41.
[10] Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: A History of a Political Anomaly* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 224-247.

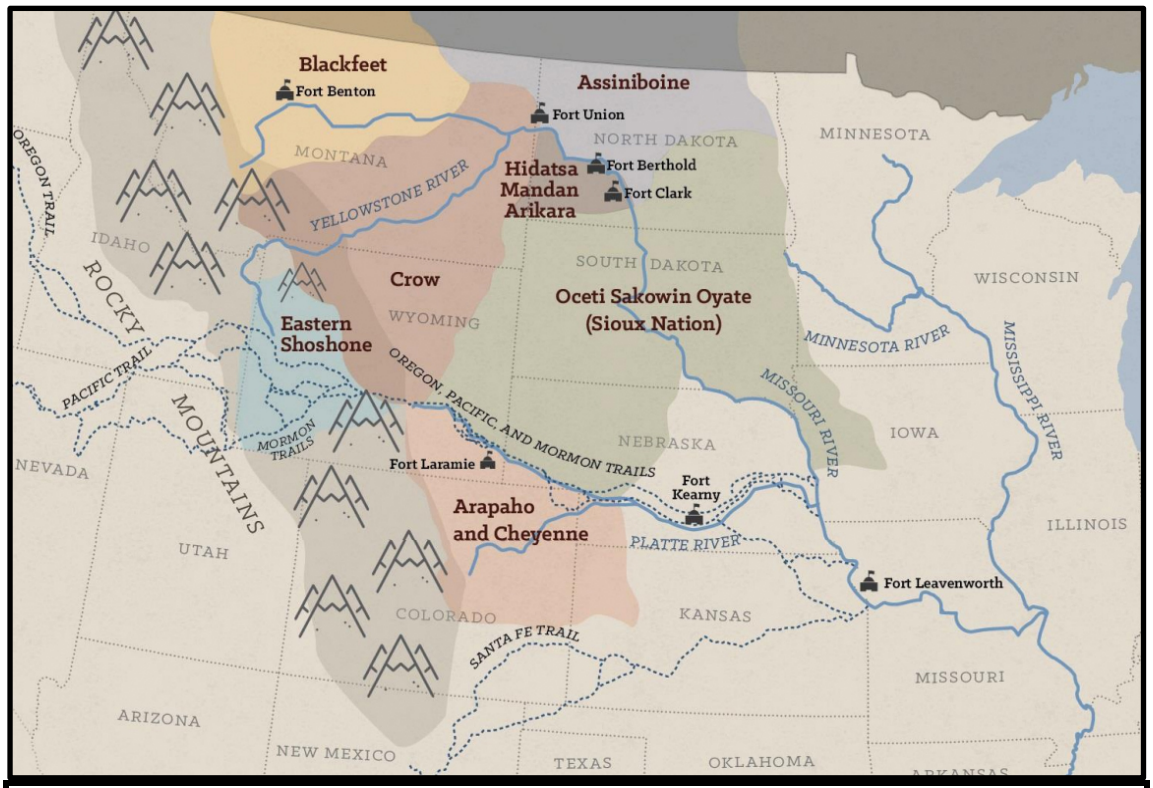


Image 10.1: Boundaries of Tribal Nations, as delineated in the Fort Laramie (Horse Creek) Treaty of 1851. Source: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution.

For Mató Wįtko, the role that U.S. officials expected him to play would prove a heavy burden amidst several recent sorrows that derived, in one form or another, from the dysfunction and discord that flourished in the midst of chronic illnesses, epidemics, conflict with stronger nations, declining trade, dependency, and three generations of accelerating population loss that had reduced the Nakoda from 10,000 people in 1790 to less than 4,800 in 1850.[11] Fort Union clerk Rudolph Kurz, who ocasionally shared his living quarters with Mató Wįtko when the latter made extended visits to the post, considered it a great honor that "'Uncle Sam' appointed *Ours Fou* [French for "Crazy Bear"] chief of the Assiniboin." He made this comment in his journal on October 31, 1851, but just four weeks later he recognized that the "newly acquired title is not recognized." "Neither the Absaroka [Crow]," with whom the Nakoda were working through a tentative peace, "nor Assiniboin accept him" as a chief.[12]

[11] On some of the fall-out from the treaty and the killing of Matȟó Wayúhi , see Kingsley M. Bray, *Crazy Horse: A Lakota Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 32-33; Paul N. Beck, *The First Sioux War*, 15-16.Population numbers from DeMallie and Miller, "Assiniboine," in *Handbook of North American Indians,* 596.

[12] Rudolph Kurz, *Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 115: Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz,* trans. Myrtis Jarrell, ed. J. N. B. Hewitt (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1937), 216, 20, 242. While this section uses primary materials related to the Horse Creek treaty, as well as the writings of Rudolph Kurz and Edwin Denig, it also draws on the insights of Fred MacVaugh's essay "'The Furious and Fearless

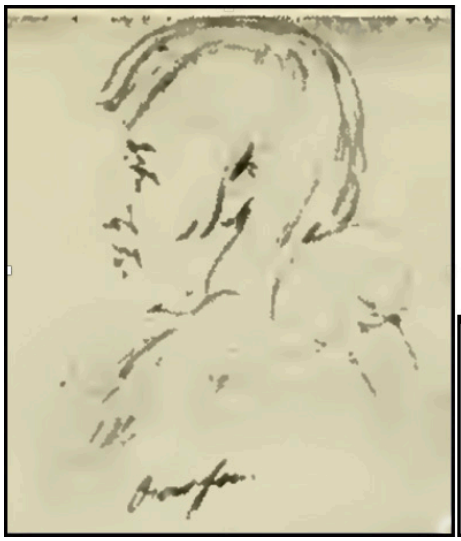


Image 10.2: Sketch portrait of *Ours Fou* (Mató Wįtko Freidrich Kurz, ca 1851-52. Source: Rudolph Kurz, *Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 115: Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz,* trans. Myrtis Jarrell, ed. J. N. B. Hewitt (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1937), Plate 7.

Having the mantel of a government appointed chief (which contravened the process of consensus and reasoned assent that underlay all legitimate leaders) suggested that Mató Wįtko was essentially an agent of the U.S. government. He certainly did not set out to be the chief of all the Nakoda, and recognized that his "official" status would more than complicate his ability to do the best he could for the Nakoda. Yet Mató Wįtko was consumed with a profound grief that he could not separate from his new status. During the three months he was away from the Confluence area, traveling more than 500 miles due south to the Horse Creek Treaty council site, the weeks spent along Horse Creek, and the return journey, he suffered three profound losses that he did not learn of until his arrival at the Confluence.[13]

While he was away a son was killed on the plains by a Piikáni warrior, and that son's child subsequently died of an illness (perhaps influenza or cholera). These tragedies very likely opened an old well of grief from a few years earlier that resulted from the rape of his then 16-year old daughter and her subsequent suicide. Along with the news of his son's and grandson's deaths, compounded with the poignant reminder of his daughter, he also learned that his wife had committed suicide after attending her son's funeral, where she subsequently learned that her grandson had died. "The shock proved too great" and she "hanged herself with a rope," Kurz wrote. Already distraught that her husband was on a journey through enemy territory to participate in a large council with even more enemy peoples, she may well have concluded that fate had singled her out to lose her entire

Actions of a Crazy Bear': The Peace-Seeker Nearly Everyone Opposed," <https://www.nps.gov/fous/learn/historyculture/crazy-bear.htm> (accessed 6 December 2019)

[13] This and the following paragraph are based on Kurz, *Journal*, 143-44, 216. On the diseases that most likely killed the grandson of Mató Wįtko, see John F. Taylor, "Sociocultural effects of Epidemics on the Northern Plains" (master's thesis, University of Montana, 1982), 64-67.

family, and in her dread she may have presumed her husband was also dead. These were the horrors that Mató Wįtko came home to, and had to carry for the rest of his life.[14]



Image 10.3: Rudolph Friedrich Kurz, [*Sketch of the The Cree Chief, Le Tout Pigue*] *1851*. Image depicts a negotiation between traders and Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree) at Fort Union. (Courtesy of the Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma.)

After one of Mató Wįtko's brief sojourns with Kurz , the latter noted that Mató Wįtko knew "perfectly well that" the days of "hunting for a livelihood" were numbered, if not over, and thus he and his people (in the short-term at least) desperately needed the overdue annuities that were promised at the 1851 treaty. In early 1852 Mató Wįtko determined to travel to St. Louis with Alexander Culbertson, Bourgeois at Fort Benton and former Bourgeois at Fort Union. Culbertson had assisted the U.S. government at the Horse Creek Treaty and had been appointed Chouteau and Company's "principle upriver agent" in 1848. Culbertson was already aware of these concerns and conveyed them to federal officials. They responded by authorizing the release of supplies already at Fort Union to the Nakoda, in lieu of the long-delayed annuities, along with a commitment that the U.S. government would fully reimburse the AFC. When Culbertson arrived in late January with the written orders from the office of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in St. Louis, a grand display of goods was placed within the interior of Fort Union. As

[14] Kurz, *Journal*, 143-44, 216. On the diseases that most likely killed the grandson of Mató Wįtko, see John F. Taylor, "Sociocultural effects of Epidemics on the Northern Plains" (master's thesis, University of Montana, 1982), 64-67.

Nakoda gathered around the spectacle, Mató Wįtko offered a few words of collective relief. However, he also unburdened himself of the rancor and criticism that had piled upon his personal grief over the past 18 months. [15]

> My children and friends: The clouds that have hitherto obscured the sky are brushed away and a fine day appears before you. The time has arrived when all the turbulent and discontented must be convinced that the whites have but one tongue; that our great father, the President, is rich and powerful. But a few days since most of you were violent in your reproaches against myself and the whites. If you have any more abuse left, heap it on now, disburden your hearts at once of all complaint, make the pile of your abuse as large as the pile of goods before you ….
>
> When you were invited to the treaty you were afraid to go, some to leave their wives, others their children, others to cross the warpath of the Blackfeet. I went. I appeared among nations in your name and am the cause of the present smiling pile of goods being laid before you.
>
> "When I returned from the treaty after an absence of three moons and repeated to you the words of our Great Father, what was my reception? How was I listened to? When, by some accident the goods promised did not arrive, how did you act? What now do you think of yourselves?[16]

The crises that afflicted the Nakoda in the early 1850s were certainly compounded by the Horse Creek Treaty of 1851, but they also stemmed from the Nakoda's long association with the American Fur Company and Fort Union. The nation had welcomed the construction of a fur trade post within its territory and likely recommended that Kenneth McKenzie build his fort a short distance upriver from the marshy confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers. Indeed, Iron Arrow Point, father of Deer Little Woman (wife of Edwin Denig) is reported to have helped in selecting the location for Fort Union. Over the next few decades the Nakoda became the AFC's primary trading partners at Fort Union, and often advanced their own and the AFC's interests by defending the area from occasionally aggressive actions of the Piikáni (Blackfeet) from the upper reaches of the Missouri River, the Siksika (aka Blackfoot) from the northwest, and the Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree) from present-day Saskatchewan.[17]

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[15] Kurz, *Journals*, 300; Denig, *Five Indian Tribes*, 597-98; Joseph Agonito, *Brave Hearts: Indian Women of the Plains* (Guilford, CT: TwoDot Press, 2016), 54. Sunder, *The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri*, 105-106, 132.

[16] Edwin Thompson Denig, 1812-1858. *Indian Tribes of the upper Missouri, by Edwin Thompson Denig., with notes and biographical sketch by J.N.B. Hewitt. (Washington, 1930).* 599.

[17] DMallie and Miller, "Assiniboine," in *Handbook of North American Indians,* 573-583; Charles Larpenteur, *Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri, The Personal Narrative of Charles Larpenteur, 1833-1872*, Elliott Coues, ed., (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1898), 109; John C. Ewers, Plains Indian Hisotry and Culture, Essays on Continuity and Change (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997) 151.

Before the annuities arrived, Mató Wįtko dictated a letter to Edwin Denig, to be mailed to "To the Medicine Man of the White Nation," father Pierre Jean de Smet. The letter offers poignant insight to the plight of the Nakoda, and the toll that the fur trade ultimately took on this once powerful nation.

> "Black-robe, Father and Friend:"
>
> "I was so happy as to become acquainted with you at Fort union, in the summer of 1851; but I was then ignorant, in a great degree, of the motives of your visit among us, and hence I could not discover to you my inmost feelings and explain to you my thoughts. At Fort Union you preached to us—telling us of the Great Spirit and his law. You said you would like to come and teach us, so as to ameliorate the mental and moral condition of our tribes. I think, also that you gave us reason to expect that after two or three winters some Black-gowns would come and establish themselves among us, in order to show us how to live well and how to train up our children. Afterward we traveled together as far as the Platte, During that journey and since my return from Fort Laramie. I have learned and heard much of the beautiful word of the Great Spirit, which you fist made known to us. Now I am persuaded that this word would change our state and render us happy. At the Great Council, our great Father (Colonel Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian Territory) told us that some Black-gowns would come and live among us in the course of four or five years. Black-gown, five years are long to wait! In this long interval I and many of my children may have entered the land of spirits. Take pity on us! The Black-gowns ought not to delay their coming so long. I am growing old: before I die I should like to begin the work, and then I could depart satisfied. My country is tranquil, we are at peace with all the surrounding tribes—our ancient enemies, the Blackfeet, are the only ones we have to fear; but we can protect you. All my nation call aloud for the Black-gown, and invite him to come with all sped: I sincerely hope that our expectation may not be deceived. We know that the Black-gowns devote themselves to the happiness and well-being of the Indians. If to hasten the project pecuniary aid be wanting, I will cheerfully give a portion of the annuities of my tribe to meet this deficiency.
>
> "I see the buffaloes decrease every year. What will become of us without help? If our children are not instructed in time, they will disappear like the game.
>
> "I have learned that the 'Long Knives' (the Americans) have bought the lands of the Chipeways, Sioux and Winnebagoes, as far as Red river, and of the Pawnees, Omahas and Otoes on the Missouri. The whites are approaching us on the north and on the west, which is a new motive for hastening the arrival of the Black-robe among us.
>
> "I hope my words will reach you, and that you will think of us and our destitute situation. Do this, Black-robe, at the request of your friend,
>
> "THE BEAR, Chief of the Assiniboins."
>
> The whites are approaching us on the north and west, which is a new motive for hastening the arrival of the Black-robe among us.[18]

[18] Pierre-Jean de Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean de Smet, S.J., 1801-1873* (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905), 934-935.

The Nakoda also formed close social bonds with people who worked for the AFC. For instance, two esteemed women made important marriages with two different Bourgeois. Hítáȟcawíyą (Deer Little Woman) married Edwin Denig in 1837 and Amáȟpiyawíyą (Makes Cloud Woman) married longtime AFC employee Charles Larpenteur in the late 1840s or early 1850s when he was a clerk or a free trader. Such marriages established strong kinship ties between leading Nakoda families and some of the more respected and long-tenured men of the fort. The lasting association the Nakoda had with a single trading post was quite unique among equestrian peoples, who tended to move throughout an extensive territory while trading at various posts and with different Native communities. However, their movement away from the Nehiyaw-Pwat (Iron Confederacy) in the late 18th and early 19th centuries diminished the once-powerful Nakoda and coincided with the period of prolonged population decline that followed followed the 1837 smallpox epidemic as well as the territorial restrictions that larger and stronger equestrian peoples placed on the Nakoda to keep them from accessing areas to the north, east, and west.[19]

The 1853 release of items and materials from Fort Union's stores, and the subsequent arrival of more annuities later that year, was a harbinger of Fort Union's coming role as a proxy for the U.S. government and center for annuity distribution to various groups. AFC employees were already instrumental in helping to transport representatives from four of the tribal nations that attended the 1851 Fort Laramie/Horse Creek Treaty Council. Those tribal representatives came together at Fort Union and then departed in the company of Alexander Culberson and Father Pierre Jean De Smet. Thereafter, Fort Union became the annuity distribution point for the Nakoda as well as the Apsáalooke. Over the next several years, the fort hosted U.S. government officials for occasional meetings with Northern Plains tribes from the early 1850s until the mid 1860s.[20]

Isaac I. Stevens and the new "light of exploration":

The second delivery of the promised annuities from the Fort Laramie treaty arrived with a large contingent from the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers, which departed St. Paul, Minnesota two months earlier. The group was led by Isaac I. Stevens, an audacious and "very come-at-able" young man who had recently acquired responsibilities that were roughly equivalent to those earned by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark over the course of their entire careers. Through political connections and his own merits, he was placed in charge of an expedition to assess "the most practicable and economical" railroad route across the continent, appointed Governor of Washington Territory, made the *ex officio* Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the territory, and given

[19] Ibid.; DeMallie and Miller, "Assiniboine," in *Handbook of North American Indians,* 575.
[20] John E. Sunder, *The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri, 1840-1865* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 255-56

the responsibility for conducting treaties with Native nations from the northwestern edge of the original Louisiana Territory to the Pacific Coast.[21]

Along with his astounding portfolio, this proud young man also possessed a penchant for the flamboyance that he was all to eager to display at Fort Union. After two months crossing the often-boggy prairies of Minnesota Territory, Stevens and his thirty-member party finally came in sight of Fort Union. To mark the occasion, "the governor took his horse, the first time in several days, and rode at the head of the Column." As one of the participants described the scene, "An American flag, made on the way …, was carried in the forward rank," and behind it fluttered the banner of "the Engineer party" showing "a long locomotive running down a buffalo, with the motto 'Westward Ho!'" Other banners followed, each displaying an insignia for each group in the expedition. These included the "meteorological party," which featured a mountain peak, a barometer and "the inscription 'Excelsior,'" the "astronomical party" and its "device representing the azure field dotted with stars, the half-moon and a telescope," and several more scientific divisions until the flags of the "Teamsters, packmen, hunters, and etc." made their appearance.[22]

Waving banners and singing as they approached the large gathering at Fort Union, they deposited the annuities they had carried from Fort Snelling (present-day St. Paul, Minnesota). While the boisterous entrance, and the dramatic presentation of more annuities, certainly made for a lively day, it is likely that Stevens was the most impressed person: with himself and the setting. For Stevens, the arrival at Fort Union was the fulfillment of a boyhood dream. An eager student of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Stevens' arrival at the Confluence was his first chance to walk in the footsteps of his heroes and further extend what he termed "the light of exploration and discovery" that the Corps of Discovery first carried across the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific in 1805.[23] His identification with Lewis and Clark had many sources, not the least being a twelve-year career with the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers which, in some respects, could trace its institutional origins back to Corps of Discovery. At West Point, where he graduated first in his class in 1839, and later during his training with the Corps of Topographical Engineers, he developed a deep admiration for the logistical thoroughness of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and its ability to meet unplanned exigencies. Stevens had a romantic sensibility about the expedition as well, but this had less to do with

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[21] Congressional Globe, 32nd Cong., 2nd Sess. (1853), 841; quoted in Goetzman, *Exploration & Empire:* The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West (New York: W. W.Norton, 1978), 281; Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens*, 96-99. The quote on the railroad comes from Congressional Globe, House of Representatives, 32nd Congress, 2nd Session. (1853) 841. The quote on Stevens' as "come-at-able" is from Dr. George Suckley to John Suckley, 20 June 1853; as quoted in Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens*, 109.

[22] Robert Taft, *Artists and Illustrators of the Old West, 1850-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 17-18.

[23] "Speech of Hon. I. I. Stevens, of Washington, in the House of Representatives, May 25, 1858," *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, House of Representatives, 35th Congress, 1st Session, 428.

adventure than political vision. As a leading light in the Democratic Party's "Young America" movement in the 1840s and early 1850s, he was a zealous advocate for continued national expansion who saw his cause as a direct extension of the Jeffersonian program.[24]



Image 10.4: "Fort Union & distribution of the Goods to the Asiniboins." Original artwork that was subsequently used as a lithograph in Stevens' final report. (Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery).

Beyond an agrarian "empire for liberty," however, Stevens and his contemporaries saw the United States as a future industrial power that could compete with and eventually overwhelm its imperial rivals in Europe. The key lay in building a railroad across the continent, to link the eastern states with the resources of the West and gain access through Pacific ports to Asian markets. While Stevens was hardly unique in these sentiments, they were a consuming passion of his and he was convinced that the future of the United States lay in the Pacific Northwest. This conviction, more than anything else, inspired him to champion a northern transcontinental railroad route that approximated Jefferson's directions to Meriwether Lewis a half century earlier. What Meriwether Lewis once described as "a darling project of mine," was a geopolitical obsession for Stevens. In this regard, at least, he was less a follower of Lewis and Clark and more the disciple of Asa Whitney; his fellow New Englander and the first great advocate for a transcontinental railroad. After three very successful years of trading in China, Whitney had returned to the United States in 1844 convinced that a

[24] Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens*, 21-24.

transcontinental railroad would make Americans the masters of the globe. "It would unite and bind us together as one family, and the whole world as one nation," he told Congress a few months after his return, "giving us control over all, making *all* tributary to us."[25]

Stevens was convinced that the best and only route to such a future ran from the Great Lakes to the mouth of the Columbia River or Puget Sound. Besides giving access to a wealth of North American resources, the northern railroad route would guarantee "the future grandeur of our Pacific empire … and make us one compact and continuous nationality…; in truth, the ocean-bound Republic, controlling the commerce of the world."[26] To advance his update of the Jeffersonian model for expansion and global commerce, Stevens also promoted the Jeffersonian model of Native dispossession and survey grids, put in the service of a new industrializing (rather than agrarian) order. Within a few decades this vision would be pushed onto the plains and across the continent, thus transforming the area that William Clark had administered for most of his adult life into the patchwork grid of square farms and towns, straight roads, and rigid boundaries that remain hallmarks of the region today.[27]

Commerce Amidst Conflict

While Stevens made it across the continent without any real mishaps or fraught encounters with Native peoples, the delivery of treaty of annuities at Fort Union did little to resolve the larger consequences of the Fort Laramie/Horse Creek Treaty of 1851. This was especially true of Articles 3 and 5 of the treaty, which stipulated that the "the United States bind themselves to protect the aforesaid Indian nations against the commission of all depredations by the people of the said United States, … [and] the aforesaid Indian nations do hereby recognize and acknowledge the [delineated] tracks of country … as their respective territories."[28] While Native peoples did not fully recognize the boundaries that were defined by the U.S. commissioners, they continued age-old patterns of movement that aligned with changing environmental conditions and the variable abundance of resources. Consequently, the powerful alliance of Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho) committed "infractions" of the treaty, but these did not lead to wholesale of displacements of other peoples through the 1850s or early 1860s.

The 1862 discovery of gold in present-day western Montana brought an invasion of would-be Argonauts through key hunting territories in the Upper Missouri River

[25] "Memorial of Asa Whitney, of the City of New York, Praying a Grant of Land, to Enable Him to Construct a Railroad from Lake Michigan to the Pacific Ocean" (28th Congress, 2nd sess., Senate Doc. 69, Serial 451, Jan. 28, 1845), 7.
[26] Stevens, "Speech", 430.
[27] Isenberg, *Destruction of the Bison*, 93-122; Claire Strom, *Profiting from the Plains: The Great Northern Railway and Corporate Development of the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 13-18.
[28] "Treaty of Fort Laramie with Sioux, Etc.," in Kappler, ed. *Indian Affairs*, 594-95.

Basin. Bison migrations were affected by the movements of people from the East, and herds were reduced by market hunters who supplied meat to growing mining camps. While these developments led to sporadic conflict on the Northwestern Plains, a more dramatic situation developed along the Minnesota River to the southeast of Fort Union. After a decade of treaty violations in the 1850s and early 1860s by U.S. officials and citizens in the State of Minnesota, Euro-American homesteaders invaded the reserved treaty lands of the Isáŋyathi Dakȟóta (aka Eastern Dakota, or Santee Sioux), abused Native residents, cleared fields, and hunted game. An ensuing series of conflicts commonly known as the Dakota War of 1862 resulted in a crushing defeat of the Isáŋyathi Dakȟóta, a mass public hanging of thirty-eight Dakȟóta men, and expulsion to the western side of the Missouri River.[29]

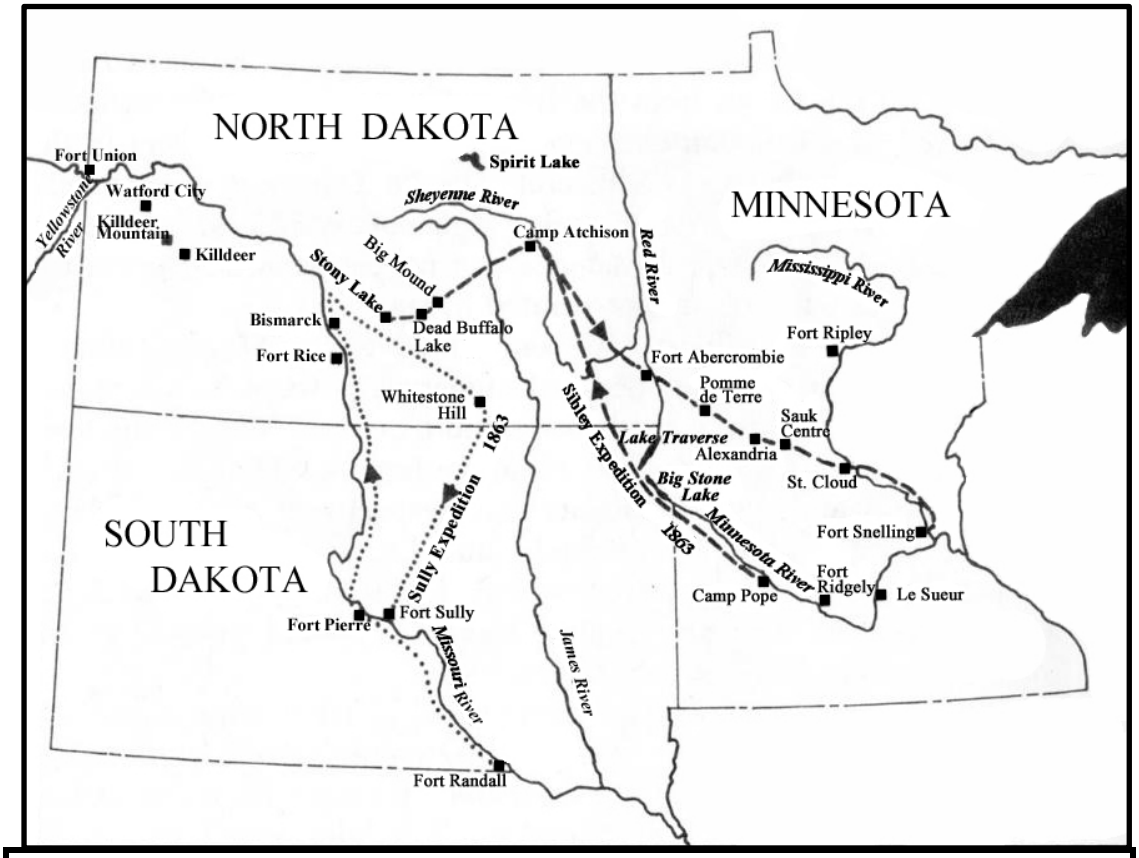


Image 10.5: Military Expeditions in the Dakota Territory, 1863-64. Source: Closely adapted from Alan Ominsky, "Map of Expeditions in Dakota Territory, 1863-64," in Kenneth Carley, *The Dakota War of 1862: Minnesota's Other Civil War* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1976), 88.

[29] Jerome A. Greene, *Fort Randall on the Missouri, 1856-1892* (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2005), 184-187; Barbour, *Fort Union*, 201-203, 214. For a compelling study of the Dakota-US War, see John Peacock, "An Account of the Dakota-US War of 1862 as Sacred Text: Why My Dakota Elders Value Spiritual Closure over Scholarly 'Balance'," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37 (January 2013): 185-206.

In the midst of these developments and their aftermath, the U.S. Army replaced Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company as the main institution on the Upper Missouri River, and steamboat companies shifted to the business of supplying goldminers in Montana Territory to the west, hauling troops and supplies to Fort Benton and Fort Union, and handling the removal process of the Isáŋyathi Dakȟóta from Minnesota to what is now the Crow Creek Reservation near Chamberlain, South Dakota. These trends ticked upwards in the years immediately following the end of the Civil War, especially as the U.S. Army mobilized for long-expected campaigns against some of the more powerful Native nations on the Great Plains. Among these were the alliance of Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho) in the Powder River Basin, and the Piikáni (aka Blackfeet) in the upper Milk, Marias, and Sun river basins.[30]

In response to these pending changes, Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company leased part of Fort Union and its surrounding grounds to the United States in 1864. The military garrisoned troops there part of, and in consequence of, the 1863-1864 punitive expeditions that followed the Dakota War of 1862. Because the aging fort still retained some of the strategic assets that had made it the center of the Upper Missouri fur trade, it offered a number of qualities that appealed to the U.S. military. The buildings, stockade, and their immediate surroundings provided storage space, level ground for encampments, and a good landing site for off-loading materials, stores, and gear, and reliable transportation from and to St. Louis and other downriver sites. From a military standpoint, the Confluence area positioned U.S. troops in a key location that provided overland access to potential conflict areas to the north and southeast. While these expectations never materialized, Fort Union was well situated for accessing the Yellowstone River Basin and the Powder River country where the U.S. Army expected to mount its first extended military campaign against the Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho) alliance in the next few years.[31]

Even though military conflict and the specter of war had always been antithetical to the interests of the St. Louis-based fur trade, it now seemed like cooperation with the U.S. Army offered a chance for Chouteau to salvage something out of the rapidly declining trade on the Upper Missouri. After all, the transportation network that Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company possessed on the Missouri River was the one remaining component of the original partnership between the Chouteau family, Astor, Crooks, and the Upper Missouri Outfit that made a sufficient profit from his transportation network on the Missouri River was to contract with the U.S. Army for the movement of troops and

[30] Alton B. Oviatt, "Steamboat Traffic on the Upper Missouri River, 1859-1869," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 40 (April 1949): 90-96;
[31] Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 238-46; Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 99-115

supplies along the river, and use of the fort site and some of its structures. Conflict and the preparation for conflict was not a sufficient basis for a long-term business plan, but it provided a bridge to the next potential opportunity in St. Louis or along the Missouri River. Whatever that might be, it was clear that the fur, hide, and robe trade would not be part of that future.[32]

The Faltering Ecology of Trade and War

The issues and conditions that were reshaping life and trade on the Upper Missouri River in the early 1860s can be broken down into a set of discrete conditions. The first related to the faltering commerce of the trade itself, which had largely come to focus on the bison hide trade. The second stemmed from the U.S. military's ability to move large numbers of troops onto the Great Plains via railroad transport from the East, coupled with steamboats and well-guarded wagon trains on the plains. The third related to the ecological consequences of the trade, which increasingly came to resemble a parasitic institution rather than an arena of exchange and cross-cultural interaction. Beginning with the decimation of beaver and other fur-bearing animals in the 1830s and 1840s, the ecological richness of riparian areas began to falter. This dynamic was further compounded by the wide-spread use of horses, which generally sheltered in wooded riverside areas during the winter and early spring. The season-long presence of extensive herds had a detrimental effect on cottonwood growth as well as shrubs, tubers, herbs, fruiting plants, and grasses. The advent of the steamboat era only further undermined river environments, as each boat burned an average of 25 cords of cottonwood per day. A single steamer working the river between March and November might burn thousands of cords. The consequences of all these actions, which essentially took place over the course of just two generations, was a wholesale decline of plant and animal populations across the region. Because every fur, pelt, hide, and robe that was taken in the fur trade came from an animal that was either directly dependent on utilizing riparian areas for a good part of each year, or preyed upon animals that did, the fur trade had long since-soiled its own nest by the 1860s.[33]

The reasons for the movement of the Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho) into the Power River Basin all stemmed from the conditions described previously. Emigrants and gold seekers to western Montana Territory generally skirted the region, mainly to avoid the Native alliance in the region and to follow easier westward trending routes. Consequently, the fouling of rivers

[32] Barbour, *Fort Union*, 216-218.
[33] Robert Kelley Schneiders, *Unruly River: Two Centuries of Change Along the Missouri* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 23-37; Schneiders, "A Butiful Plain: The Oacoma Bottom, the Missouri River and the Legacy of Lewis and Clark," *We Proceeded On*, 45 (May 2019), 18-19; Elliott West, *The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 40-45, 52-55; Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 24-30.

by livestock and grazing of riparian grasslands in early spring did not affect bison or Native peoples in anything resembling the migrant trains that followed the Platte River Valley to the south. Because the area was located a good distance from the Upper Missouri River corridor, where bison herds had declined from overhunting, the introduction of livestock, and the decimation of cottonwoods, bison were healthier and reproduced better. In short, the Powder River Basin was the one area of the Northern Plains where bison populations were healthy and sizable.

Because of these conditions, the large alliance of Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho) was more independent than the Apsáalooke (Crow) whom they replaced, and could more effectively control the amount of high-quality robes that were traded along the Upper Missouri River. The position of the alliance, along with that of all Native groups on the Great Plains, was tested in the 1850s with the end of the Neoboreal climate episode and the onset of extended drought conditions in the mid 1850s which took a toll on bison herds. However, conditions in the Powder River Basin were better than neighboring regions, which increased the advantage that the Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho) alliance had over other Northern Plains Native peoples. In some respects, this was the time when they became the archetypes of Plains nomadism, "from the adoption of horses to the exhilarating affluence of the buffalo days and from the fierce resistance against the American empire to the final, dreadful defeat."[34]

Violence at the Confluence

Although Fort Union was not a military post, the Lakȟóta and Dakȟóta certainly took note of Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company's quasi-official association with U.S. policies. As Native territories were increasingly invaded by European American migrants to the Far West, the U.S. military established Fort Kearney in 1848 to protect overland travelers on the Platte River, then repurposed a former American Fur Company trading post into the military fort known as Fort Laramie in 1849. For Native peoples who were undermined by such developments, the distinctions between the U.S. military and civilian actions seemed almost indistinguishable. The same was true of how commerce and government policy blended at Fort Union. Isaac Stevens' delivery of annuities in 1853, and his subsequent expedition across the Northern Plains, is a good case in point. When the Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho) learned that Steven's had met with their rivals and enemies to the west, they became incensed.

[34] Quotation from Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," *The Journal of American History*, 90 (December 2003), 860. Also see, Hämäläinen, *Lakota America,* 238-46. Note that Montana Territory was not formally established until 1864.

These concerns were made especially acute by a series of "everyday" processes that undermined the lands and resources that the Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse, Nank'haanseine'nan, and other groups relied on. The toll that steamboats took on riparian forests, for instance, and the growing propensity of passengers to fire on any animal that caught their attention, certainly raised the ire of Native peoples who could see cottonwood groves, grasslands, and streams get used up to the point where they could no longer support a village. The federal government's forced removal of American Indians from east of the Mississippi River to lands extending westward from the Middle Missouri River, also created whole populations that needed to hunt for trade and sustenance as they rebuilt their lives in a new landscape. In sum, the Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho) likely viewed Pierre Chouteau and Company as an agent of the United States as well as a witting and willing friend of their enemies. Not surprisingly, then, the Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse, and Nank'haanseine'nan alliance began to find virtue and necessity in attacking and harassing a soft but strategic target like Fort Union in the early 1860s.[35]

Just five years earlier, the impasse between the Lakota and Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company had begun to give way. The first indication came early in 1855 when Alexander Culbertson, who was the Upper Missouri River agent for Chouteau and Company's agent and the bourgeois at Fort Benton, and a small party were heading downriver to St. Louis. They were subsequently detained by Iháŋkt̆huŋwaŋ (Yankton) warriors who threatened to kill the entire party. Later that same spring, a group of seven traders were attacked by Húŋkpapȟa (Hunkpapa, aka Northern Lakota) warriors between Fort Union and Fort Sarpy, which Culbertson had built five years earlier to trade with the Absáalooke near the confluence of Rosebud Creek and the Stillwater River in the vicinity of present-day Absarokee, Montana. Five days after the traders managed a safe return to Fort Sarpy, Fort Union was surrounded by a group of Lakota that was apparently too small to attack the fort. In the summer of 1860, however, an estimated 250 Húŋkpapȟa surrounded and attacked Fort Union. Employees managed to shut the gate at the last minute and then watched from the palisades as the Húŋkpapȟa killed cattle, burned the outbuildings as well as masses of hay and lumber, and destroyed two mackinaw boats.[36]

After a dozen warriors attempted to break through the palisades with firebrands and hatchets, fur trade employees opened fire from palisades and killed at least one Húŋkpapȟa and wounded a few others. While the assault did not end well for the

[35] For descriptions and commentary on these conditions, see Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison,* 103-109, 123-24; Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West*, 40-47; David J. Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 48-62; Greg Gordon, "Steamboats, Woodhawks and War on the Upper Missouri River," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History,* 61 (June 2011), 30-47.

[36] John E. Sunder, *The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri, 1840–1865* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 215.

attackers, it was probably meant to send a message that wašíču (white people) farmers, troops, and forts would not be tolerated in Lakota lands. After leaving the Confluence the Hunkpapas then made a broad southwesterly sweep, recruiting members from Itázipčho (Sans Arc) and Sihásapa (Blackfoot) bands, and launched raids along the Oregon Trail. In this manner they carried their message into a wider world of wašíču incursions and affronts that would be answered with violence rather than a patience that had grown impossibly thin. Charles Primeau, who was in charge of Fort Pierre, protested that the "Hunkpapa, Blackfeet, and Upper Yanktonai have this last spring acted with us more as a people at war with us than otherwise. Whenever they met a white man they ill-treated and abused him, and in many cases whipped him."[37]

The Center Cannot Hold

In terms of population and territorial movements, the Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho) alliance had reached its zenith by the mid 1850s. After that time, a series of profound changes would diminish the benefits of their expansive tendencies. The end of the Neo-Boreal episode and the onset of extreme droughts took a heavy toll on bison and horse populations. Conditions between 1857-1864 were worse than those of the 1930s Dust Bowl, and poor forage may have caused bison populations to decline by as much as 60 percent in some areas of the plains. The increased traffic of humans and livestock along the American emigrant trails to California, Oregon, and, after 1859, to the gold fields of Colorado and later Montana, put added strain on fragile plains resources. By the mid 1860s, when wetter conditions returned, two new competitors for plains resources arrived: Métis market hunters from the Red River Valley to the north, and U.S. military garrisons. The latter did not take a direct toll on bison, but they were invariably located in critical over-wintering sites. More significantly, they presented a military challenge to the geographic expansion of the Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho) alliance. The challenge became even more significant when U.S. troops became allied with Apsáalooke (Crow), Chatiks si chatiks (Pawnee), Kutsindüka (Northern Shoshone, aka Buffalo Eaters), and Sahnish (Arikara).[38]

The tour of retribution that followed the assault on Fort Union roughly traced the population declines and geographic shifts of bison and people over the previous decade.

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[37] Ibid. Quotation from Charles Primeau to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 20, 1862, in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Made to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1862* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1862), 6, 8, 373. Also, Latta to William P. Dole, August 27, 1862, op. cit., 193.

[38] Dan Flores, "Wars over Buffalo: Stories vs. Stories on the Northern Plains," in *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian*, ed. Michael Harkin and David Rich Lewis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007): 153-72; Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison*, 106-120; Kent Curtis, "Producing a Gold Rush: National Ambitions and the Northern Rocky Mountains, 1853-1863," *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Autumn, 2009), pp. 275-297.

Dozens of factors were involved, but the clearest metric for the decline and shift of bison numbers and equestrian peoples can be found in fur trade returns. Throughout the Northern Plains, trading posts on the Upper Missouri probably experienced a decline in the trade sooner than posts in other regions of the plains. Nevertheless, the trendlines follow a similar downward path. Fort Pierre, for instance, reported a trade of 75,000 bison robes in 1849, which accounted for more than two-thirds of the robes produced in the Northern Plains that year. By the early 1850s, however, the bison were practically eliminated from the expanse of plains between the North Platte and the Powder rivers. Even as the total number of robes shipped to St. Louis increased through 1860, the number of robes collected by the Upper Missouri River posts declined from an estimated 110,000 in 1849, to 89,000 in 1853, then down to 50,000 in 1859. By the time Fort Union was attacked in 1860, the last great herds were in the Powder, Tongue, and Bighorn rivers of present-day Wyoming and Montana. As the last years of Fort Union would illustrate, military officers would replace traders and Bourgeois as they worked to reorganize populations and maps to fit an industrial and agrarian vision of the nation's future.[39]

[39] Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison*, 103-107.

Chapter Eleven

A Post-History of Fort Union Trading Post: Boom, Bust, and Re-Creation

The history of the Confluence Area in the decades after the demise of Fort Union is nearly as complex and compelling as the fur trade era, and taps into many of the themes and historical processes that shaped the rise and fall of the American Fur Company and its successor companies. The boom and bust economic cycles that shaped the fur trade also defined the demographics and economics of the region through the twentieth century and into the present day. These dynamics would also inspire and influence efforts to establish a park unit and a reconstructed fort. The first half of this chapter hones closely to events and developments that occurred within the current boundaries of the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, from the U.S. Army's acquisition of Fort Union in the 1860s, the subsequent development of nearby Fort Buford, Indigenous use and residence through most of the late 19th century, the development of the town of Mondak and its general demise in the 1920s, and early efforts to commemorate the history of Fort Union and incorporate the site into the Great Northern Railway's efforts to increase rail travel. From there, the narrative moves to the long and sporadic effort of local communities, state officials, fur trade buffs, politicians and the National Park Service to create what is now the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the controversy over transforming the site into a large archeological project that would inform an ahistorical partial reconstruction of the original fort.

What Lewis saw when he looked into the future of the Missouri-Mississippi confluence area was an expanse of private property spreading in a simple grid from the river's edge, along the bottoms, up over the bluffs and across the prairies. In place of small gardens and narrow strips of common fields, there would be row crops that ran in corduroy patterns from edge to edge of each evenly measured parcel of land. Farmers would not live in villages and travel out to their fields, but would instead live on their own private square mile of property. The new order would also create a new ecology, with an emphasis on new crops and more intensive cultivation. Farms would still have gardens and rows of corn and cereal grains set aside for household consumption and livestock feed, but most of the land would give over to cash crops like wheat, hemp, tobacco, rye and buckwheat. Agrarian commerce would bring other changes as well; streams would turn mills, cleared forests would become new fields and become the

lumber that built market centers, while straight roads would connect farms, towns and river ports to the national economy.[1]

Johnny Goes Marching to the Confluence: Fort Union gives way to Fort Buford

Fort Union was first occupied by troops in 1864, when it served as a temporary military-post for Company I of the 30th Wisconsin Infantry. The first troops arrived June 13, 1864, on board the steamboat *Yellowstone*. The remainder of the company came four days later on the steamboat *Welcome*. Their primary duty was to protect a large stock of supplies that had been deposited at the fort by Lt. Colonel (Brevet Brigadier General) Alfred Sully, who was then in the midst of a summer campaign against the alliance of Lakȟóta, Ȯhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho). When the troops arrived at the Confluence, Sully was conducting reconnaissance through areas of the plains to the southeast of Fort Union and the badlands of western Dakota Territory and eastern Montana Territory. Some two months after the first troops arrived by steamboat, Sully returned to the Confluence on August 12. During his preparations for what became known as the Northwest Indian Campaigns, Sully had given much thought to the strategic significance of Fort Union's location. However, he was not impressed by the condition of the old fur trade post, which he described as "an old dilapidated affair, almost falling to pieces."[2]



Image 11.1: "Interior view of Fort Union, Montana, taken while Crossing the Plains to Montana with Captain Fisk's Expedition, 1866." Photograph by J. Corbutt. Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society.

[1] Conevery Bolton Valencius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 199-201.

[2] Mark Harvey, "Securing the Confluence: A Portrait of Fort Buford, 1866-1895," in *At the Confluence: Now and Then* (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 2003), 34-37; Doreen Chaky, "Wisconsin Volunteers on the Dakota Frontier," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 80 (Spring 1987): 162-178; Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 236-239. Sully quoted in Ray H. Mattison, "Fort Union: Its Role in the Upper Missouri Fur Trade," *North Dakota History*, 29 (1969): 200. Please note that the steamboat *Yellowstone* is not the same vessel as the earlier steamboat *Yellow Stone*.

Company I remained at Fort Union through the winter of 1864-65, guarding supplies and making the fort a target for more harassment and raids from Húŋkpapȟa Lakȟóta (Hunkpapa Lakota) and other members of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Seven Council Fires). By the spring of 1864, the raiders had killed all the livestock at the post, destroyed the kitchen garden, and suppressed most of the post trade with the Nakoda (Assiniboine). These assaults had tapered down by the middle of April, which may have given the troops a fall sense of security as they neared the end of their posting. There were no further incidents until late April, when a hunting party of three soldiers was attacked by about two dozen warriors. One soldier and one warrior were killed. On June 4, 1865, Company I was relieved of its duty at Fort Union by two companies of the First U.S. Volunteer Infantry and boarded the *Yellowstone*.[3] Their replacements were Confederate prisoners of war who had volunteered to serve on the frontier rather than languish in prison camps. On August 13, most of this company departed, leaving only a lieutenant, a doctor, and eighteen soldiers to guard the government supplies. In the meantime, a steamboat had arrived with the news that the Northwest Fur Company had purchased Fort Union from Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company.[4] The last faint echo of Fort Union's hey day on the Upper Missouri came that same year, when Charles Larpenteur, former AFC employee and the last Bourgeois of the fort, established a modest opposition post to compete against the Northwest Fur Company. Located a short distance to the north and west of the old fort, it was a modest adobe structure with a single bastion. Along with the competition of another opposition post, and the relatively small amount of business conducted by the Northwest Company, all parties left the area within a year.[5]

In June of 1866, while Sully was campaigning in the Powder River country, a construction crew was encamped at the Confluence to repurpose Fort Union or begin work on a new fort. Colonel Sackett arrived at Fort Union on June 11, 1866, to assess whether the Army could adapt the old fur trade post for military own use. Colonel Sackett ultimately agreed with General Sully's earlier disparaging appraisal of Fort Union, as too small, insufficiently fortified, and not adjacent to a large enough area to train troops—it simply did not meet Civil War era standards for fortifications and posts. Consequently, he recommended using the site of old Fort William, seven miles by river below Fort Union, or a location at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone. One day after Sackett made his inspection, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel William G. Rankin arrived at Fort Union

[3] Thompson, *Fort Union Trading Post: Fur Trade Empire on the Upper Missouri* (Medora, North Dakota: Theodore Roosevelt Nature& History Association, 1986), 79-85; Sunder, *Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri*, 260; Chaky, "Wisconsin Volunteers,"175-176.
[4] Thompson, *Fur Trade Empire*, 86-89. For a history of James Hubbell's Northwest Fur Company enterprise, see William E. Lass, "The Northwest Fur Company in the Fort Union Region," *Fort Union Fur Trade Symposium Proceedings, September 13-15, 1990* (Williston, North Dakota: Friends of Fort Union Trading Post, 1994): 69-88.
[5] Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 227-229, 235.

with Company C of the Thirteenth Infantry. Two days later, Rankin commenced work on Fort Buford a short distance downriver from Fort Union. [6]



Image 11.2: Exterior view of Fort Union, looking south, ca. 1866. Photograph by J. Carbutt. Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society.

During the initial construction period, soldiers were attacked on several different occasions by Húŋkpapȟa Lakȟóta (Hunkpapa Lakota) led by Tȟatȟáŋka Íyotake (Sitting Bull), with a few casualties on both sides. The fort was besieged on a number of occasions in the winter of 1866-1867, with soldiers and civilian laborers occasionally assaulted and harassed while they were cutting wood, guarding livestock, or conducting other tasks beyond the fort area. By the spring of 1867, however, the number of soldiers at the fort had increased several-fold, while the strength of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Seven Council Fires) and its allies had been undemined by multiple U.S. military campaigns on the Plains. With the Confluence area secured, the final days of Fort Union passed ingloriously, though somewhat peacefully, as the deteriorated facility was salvaged in 1867 and repurposed as lumber for ongoing construction at Fort Buford or burnt as firewood. Constructed to convey power, solidity and permanence in what Americans regards as a wilderness frontier, Fort Union had enjoyed tremendous success for many of its 40 years. The next era of development at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers would be exemplified in the development of Fort Buford and the next great confrontation between the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Seven Council Fires) and the U.S. military, culminating in the Black Hills, or Great Sioux War (1876-1877).[7]

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[6] U.S. Congress, House, "Protection Across the Continent," 39th Cong., 2d sess., Ex. Doc. 23, 1867; Ronald Phil Warner, "Fort Buford: Sentinel on the Northern Plains, 1866-1895," (master's thesis, University of North Dakota, 1986), 29-30.

[7] Mark Harvey, "Securing the Confluence: A Portrait of Fort Buford, 1866-1895," in *At the Confluence: Now and Then* (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 2003), 34-37; Doreen Chaky,

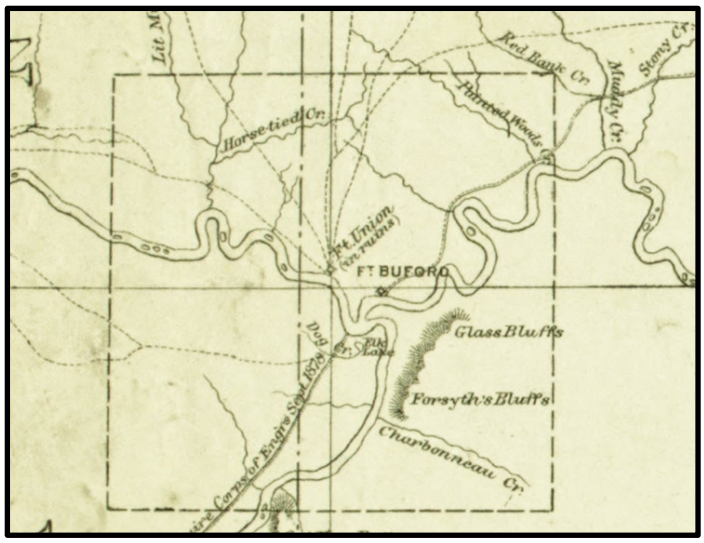


Image 11.3: Detail of Dakota Territory (1878): Map shows the location of Fort Buford, the surrounding Fort Buford Military Reservation, the Confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers, and the former site of Fort Union. Source: see footnote 7 below.

The first iteration of Fort Buford was constructed in 1866 and 1868, and then expanded in the early and mid 1870s. By that time the fort complex encompassed one square mile at the center of the 900 square-mile Fort Buford Military Reservation. Once completed, the fort became an instrument for a new order on the Northern Plains; one that would be defined by industrial processes, railroad surveys, map makers, federal authority, and the exercise of military force. As such, Fort Buford and its Sixth Infantry troops served as a bastion from which the U.S. could project its authority via the Upper Missouri and Yellowstone rivers. Even as it provided a staging area for troops heading to the Northern Plains, the main purpose of Fort Buford was to support what might be described as the early templates of future national policies. In 1872, for instance, troops were sent to join a large force of infantry and cavalry that had been assembled from multiple posts to protect railroad surveyors and construction crews in the Yellowstone Valley, along the route of what became the Northern Pacific Railroad. The following year, two companies journeyed with the steamboat *Key West* up the Yellowstone as far as the mouth of the Powder River, and thus established a sort of mid-continent "beach head" for subsequent railroad construction and the supply of expected military campaigns. A month later, three more companies were dispatched to accompany three steamboats that were carrying supplies to Lt. General George A. Custer, who was tasked with overseeing the construction of a cantonment for railroad crews.[8]

In 1874, three companies of the Sixth Infantry escorted and assisted the work of the Northern Boundary Commission, which was tasked with surveying and marking the boundary between the United States and Canada along the 49th parallel. Besides

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"Wisconsin Volunteers on the Dakota Frontier, *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 80 (Spring 1987): 162-178; Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 236-239.

[8] Harvey, "Securing the Confluence," 42. Image presents a detail from Julius J. Durage, "Dakota Territory," prepared by order of Brig. Gen'l A.H.Terry, 1878. Source: Library of Congress.

providing protection and physical labor, the companies also carried a host of supplies that included 16 cords of firewood, "1,140 lbs of grain, writing paper envelopes, pencils, inkstands, shovels, hospital tents, and ax handles." While the Northern Boundary Commission was a significant and lasting enterprise, Fort Buford also supplied troops for a more ephemeral—though more famous—enterprise in 1874. Namely, the blend of reconnaissance and summer holiday known as the Black Hills Expedition. Led by Lieutenant Colonel George Custer, the one-thousand member expedition included a band, photographer, hunting dogs, a herd of cattle for meat, two miners, and few natural scientists. Fort Buford would also become associated with the most famous opponents of U.S. expansion, including the Niimíipuu (Nez Perce) leader Hinmatóowyalahtq̇it (aka Chief Joseph) who, along with other Niimíipuu, were incarcerated at the fort in October 1877. Four years later, Tȟatȟáŋka Íyotake surrendered at Fort Buford after he decided to leave Canada to live among his Húŋkpapȟa and Lakȟóta kin.[9]

Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (Crow-Flies-High) and Garden Coulee[10]

During the brief periods when Hinmatóowyalahtq̇it and Tȟatȟáŋka Íyotake remained at Fort Buford, a mostly Hiraacá (Hidatsa) village was situated within the Fort Buford Military Reservation, between the main fort complex and the site of old Fort Union. Associated with Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (Crow Flies High), the village is important cultural and historical site that is mostly located within and adjacent to the Garden Coulee area of the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic site's boundaries. The village had its origins in a schism that dated back to the smallpox epidemic of 1837, when the Hiraacá and Nueta consolidated their populations into one village that would be better able to protect and feed itself. Strategically, the move made perfect sense, but the effort to consolidate the surviving members of several different bands created a host of issues. Each band was defined by its relation to particular elders, the keepers of sacred bundles, and leaders associated with war, peace, hunting, and other core elements of social life. When the three bands of the Hiraacá (Awatixa, Awaxawi, and the Hiraacá proper) and Nueta (Mandan) came together in one village, there was overlap and some disagreement between the leaders of each community. While the Awatixa and Awaxawi tended to be more culturally conservative, with a deep affinity for inherited rituals and rites, the Hiraacá (like their close kin the Apsáalooke/Crow) were inclined to see personal visions as sources of power and sacred affirmations of leadership skills. While these

[9] Ibid., 37-42; quotations on p. 42. Also, John C. Ewers, *Indian Life on the Upper Missouri* (Norman University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 175-181; Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 236-238. On Custer's 1874 expedition, see William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 419-424.

[10] This section is closely informed by material on the Crow-Flies-High village in Kaitlyn Chandler, "Fort Union Ethnohistory, Final Report, September 29, 2014" (Prepared For Michael J. Evans, Cultural Anthropologist, National Park Service Midwest Region, DSCESU Agreement No. H1200100001 UAZ-388 [M. N. Zedeño, Principal Investigator and Editor]), 162-171.

inclinations did not lead to schisms in the wake of the epidemic, they nevertheless marked a key distinction in how the large community recognized and affirmed leadership.[11]

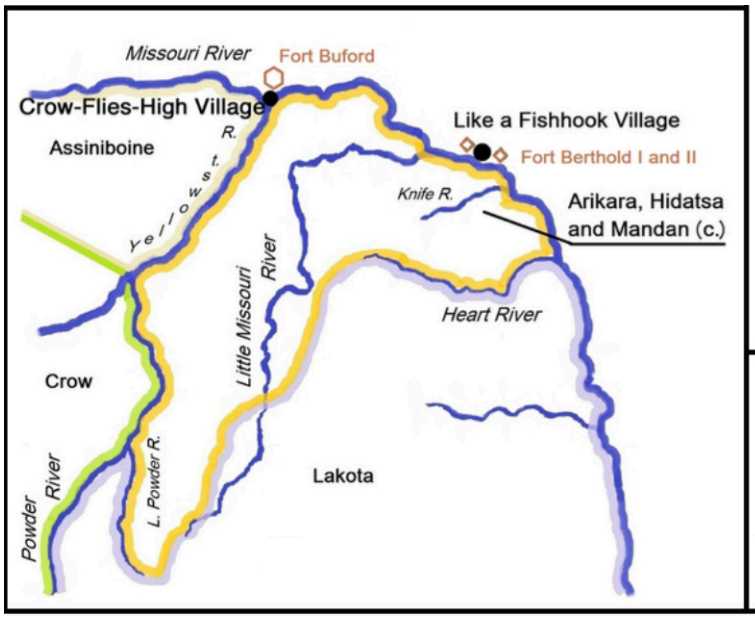


Image 11.4: Regional Map showing the locations of Fort Berthold, Like-a-Fishook Village, Fort Buford, and Crow-Flies-High Village. Source: Naawada2016 through Wikimedia Commons.

Sometime in the late 1860s, a division developed between an Awaxawi leader known as Poor Wolf and a Hiraacá proper leader known as Bobtail Bull. Both possessed some of the most sacred bundles within their respective communities, and lead some of the important ceremonies. Since both could not lead at the same time, they decided to separate. Bobtail Bull and his war leader, Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (Crow Flies High), led their community to the Garden Coulee site in 1869 at about the same time the first iteration of Fort Buford was under construction. While the move represented serious concerns about leadership and community cohesion, it also reflected the poor conditions at Fort Berthold—and especially in the vicinity of Like-A-Fishhook Village—where food and material rations were insufficient for all the people living in the area. General William Hazen, who commanded Fort Berthold (the location of a former AFC trading post that became the location of an Indian Agency in 1868), understood that supplies were insufficient for the Hiraacá and Nueta, and had no qualms about the movement towards Fort Buford.[12]

[11] Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 245-247; John A. Matzko, *Reconstructing Fort Union* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 24; Rebecca Toupal and Kacy Hollenback, "Fort Union Trading Post Native American Oral Traditions: Draft Report," Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, University of Arizona, Tucson, 2008 (Copy on file at Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service), 13.
[12] Toupal and Hollenback, "Oral Traditions: Draft Report," 230; Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32WI18): Reprints in Anthropology*, vol. 37 (Lincoln, NE: J & L Reprint, 1988), 246.

The move to Garden Coulee was not exactly a social divorce, and archeological evidence of corn caches suggest that the people living near the Confluence were trading with their kin at Like-A-Fishhook. Since the people at Garden Coulee seem to have devoted more time to hunting, and had closer access to better hunting areas, the proceeds of the hunt may have been what they used in trade for produce and grain. The area was not a shining land of plenty, however, and it was sometimes dangerous to leave the confines of the village to harvest crops, hunt, or gather native foods. In leans times, which grew more frequent over the years, the people at Garden Coulee became dependent on food stuffs from Fort Buford. During the worst of times, this meant using food scraps and offal from the post's butchers and cooks. Other food supplies that were still edible, but not worth storing or sending to another post, were also provided to the residents of Garden Coulee. Such resources were especially important for older people left behind in the village, when large groups went out to hunt.[13]



Figure 11.5: Crow that flies high. Cabinet card, ca. 1881. Source: Smithsonian Institution.

In many respects, life at Garden Coulee was made possible by Fort Buford. Men were often employed as scouts, guards, woodcutters, teamsters, and mail carriers between Fort Buford and Fort Berthold. In return they were paid in rations or additional annuity goods, and their efforts were reciprocated by presence of soldiers who could foil attacks from distant Native groups or help retrieve stolen horses. Perhaps even more than men, women occupied a central role in what might be called the "economic life" of the Garden Coulee community. They made and sold leather goods and moccasins, did beadwork, and also made what the purchasers considered souvenirs—such as small bows and arrows and the like. Although prostitution was not part of a remunerative exchange system within Indigenous communities, something akin to prostitution occurred at Fort Union. When venereal disease became all too common at Fort Buford, officers took measures to prevent women from residing within the fort complex. Whether those measures were for the protection of Native women, or the soldiers, is not known –nor is it clear if the policy had its intended

[13] De Vore and Hunt, Jr., *Material Culture Reports, Part X*, 31); Chandler, "Fort Union Ethnohistory, 166.

effects. Dances accompanied by drums and chanting were also presented at Fort Buford, and generally garnered material and cash donations as well as food rations.[14]

The Confluence area was also a sacred space, filled with stories and sacred resources, as well as the stuff necessary for daily life. Not surprisingly, then, it also served as the venue for important gatherings and ceremonies. In 1874 and 1879, military officers and even the *New York Times* made note of an important summer ceremony that occurred at the former site of Fort Union. Though it was identified as a Sundance, the ceremony was almost certainly the NaxpikE. This multi-day ceremonial event, as Alfred Bowers described it in the early 1930s,

> provided a formal institution for the transfer of bundle rights from a father to his son. In addition, it provided an opportunity for others to fast and thereby receive vision instructions to purchase their own fathers' bundle rights to other ceremonies. The ceremony also provided the [larger community] with an opportunity to observe young men's abilities to endure the torture features of the ceremony.

In its specifics, the NaxpikE serves as a

> ritual reenactment of torture undergone by a mythical character called Spring Boy but thwarted by his twin brother Lodge Boy. The twins had made themselves unpopular with the local gods, especially Spring Boy, who was taken to the sky by a sky chief named Long Arm. Lodge Boy rescued Spring Boy, and in the process they threatened to cut off one of Long Arms's hands.[15]

The fact that the Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (Crow-Flies-High) band was able to hold the NaxpikE ceremony "off-reservation" and very near the Yellowstone-Missouri Confluence, indicates that life at Garden Coulee, with all its challenges, was a place of perseverance, renewal, and community self-determination. This is further borne out by the amount of time the band spent in the area: 15 years, or the equivalent of a generation. In some respects, they left the area out of necessity—but also on their own terms—in 1884. With Fort Buford slated for troop reductions and necessary decline in supplies and rations, the Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (Crow-Flies-High) band would no longer have an outlet for trade or remunerative labor, let alone the food they occasionally received from the fort. This pending change also came in the wake of a directive from Captain William Clapp, the U.S. Indian Agent at Fort Berthold, who informed Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh that his community could not receive rations at the Fort Berthold reservation unless they resided within its boundaries and accepted individual allotments of land. With game

[14] Chandler, "Fort Union Ethnohistory, 167-68.
[15] First quotation from Alfred W. Bowers, Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization: Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology Bulleting 194 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 320; description of the Spring Boy and Lodge Boy story and its relation to the NapikE is from Robert L. Hall, *An Archaeology of the Soul: North American Indian Belief and Ritual* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 21. Also, "Doings in the Indian Country: The Sun-Dance of the Gros Ventres [Hidatsa]," *New York Times*, July 28, 1879, p. 1.

declining and their food stores almost empty, the "dissident" group at Garden Coulee was escorted to the Fort Berthold reservation. When they arrived, the 126 Hiraacá, 23 Nueta, and one Sahnish member of the community reconstituted themselves near the mouth of the Little Knife River and the eastern bank of the Missouri River. Located at the northwesternmost point of the reservation, and thus as close to the Yellowstone-Missouri Confluence and as far from the Agency as they could be, the Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (Crow-Flies-High) band once again became a powerful faction within the larger Hiraacá community.[16]

Mondak

Established in 1903, just eight years after the closure of Fort Buford, Mondak was the last community to occupy any part of the current Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site . Like Fort Union, the town was established at a geographic crossroads—but the intersections largely derived from the historical processes that followed the demise of the old fur trading post. With most of the small town clustered on the north side of the Great Northern Railway tracks, and a short distance from the Missouri River and the Snowden Bridge Mondak became something of a remote transportation hub. With ferry service across the Missouri River, and railroad connections to Chicago and the West Coast, Mondak thrived as a transshipment site and market center for surrounding communities and ranches. The other key geographic feature that defined Mondak was the invisible line of 104° 2' West Longitude that marks the boundary between North Dakota and Montana. When the town was first platted out, commercial and residential lots were marked off on both sides of the state line. Because North Dakota was "dry," and Montana was "wet," the town's initial investors sought to exploit the differences in state laws by selling beer and spirits to North Dakotans. Success in this venture gave rise to new investments, which included the construction of grain elevators, a bank, hotels, and stores. A number of the first construction projects also benefitted from the nearby ruins of Fort Buford, where building materials and whole structures could be had for the taking.[17]

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[16] Chandler, "Fort Union Ethnohistory," 171-172; Matzko, *Reconstructing Fort Union,* 25; Jay T. Sturdevant et al., *Garden Coulee: 19th Century Hidatsa Archeology* <https://www.nps.gov/mwac/garden_coulee/history.htm> (accessed 14 December 2019).

[17] This and the following two paragraphs are based on Alice M. Sweetman, "Mondak: Planned City of Hope Astride Montana-Dakota Border," *Montana*: *The Magazine of Western History*15 (Autumn 1965), pp. 12-27; DeLyle Jarvis, ed., *Courage Enough: Mon-Dak Family Histories, Richland County, Montana* (Sidney: Mondak Historical and Arts Society, 1975), 356, 387, 392, 403; and T. Weber Greiser et al., "Testing and Evaluation of Cultural Resource Site 24RV102, the Mondak Townsite, Roosevelt County, Montana," (Historical Research Associates, Missoula, Montana. (Submitted to the North Dakota State Highway Department, Bismarck, Contract Number NDSHD 35-0006-1081.33), 36-38. On railroad service, see Montana Board of Railroad Commissioners, "In Re Mondak Passenger Train Service (Docket No. 777. Report and Order No. 311) (Hearing January 11, 1921, Decided February 3, 1921)," in *Reports of Cases and Proceedings Before the Board of Railroad Commissioners of the State of Montana*, Volume 14 (Independent Publishing Company, 1921): 21.

Over the course of a few years, Mondak acquired the appearance of a small but thriving prairie town. Though the town itself was founded on capital associated with selling alcohol within steps of a state where it was illegal, Mondak soon boasted a church that relied on itinerant preachers, including the noted prohibitionist Reverend William Van Orsdel (aka "Brother Van"), a brick schoolhouse, a newspaper (the *Yellowstone News*) and a small electric power generating plant. One building in particular seemed to capture the whole gamut of Mondak—the "Versatile School Building,"—which variously served as a saloon, county offices, a granary, and a residence before it was abandoned. Given the town's primary source of revenue, however, Mondak was better known for its saloons, illicit gambling houses, and prostitution. Associated, "respectable" businesses also included stables, hotels, short-term boarding houses and restaurants that mostly served visiting clientele. By far the most disturbing event in Mondak's history had little or nothing to do with its lucrative vices. It occurred in 1913 when J.C. Collins, a construction worker on the new Snowden Bridge across the Missouri River, reputedly shot Sheridan County [Montana] Sheriff Thomas Courtney and his deputy Richard Bermeister while they tried to arrest him at the American Bridge Company's offices. Collins was promptly jailed, but he never received a trial that might have explained his actions or those of the Sheriff and deputy. Instead, he was lynched by a mob (he was African America) as they grew frustrated with their efforts to burn his body.



Image 11.6: Mondak, ca. 1913. Panorama view toward the south and the Missouri River. Taken from the northern, more elevated portion of Mondak, near the current parking area that accesses the pedestrian trail to the Bodmer Overlook. Source: Montana Historical Society.

Mondak ultimately died from the same public virtue that allowed it to thrive. The town went "dry" in 1919, when the Montana Legislature voted to enact statewide prohibition. Within a year the town also lost its position as the provisional county seat, which was transferred to the community of Poplar, Montana. On top of the sharp decline of revenue associated with alcohol and gambling, Mondak also lost access to some of the labor, revenue, and government contracts associated with being a county seat. As Alice Sweetman recalled, "One by one the saloons closed and the cold storage plants [for kegs of beer as well as foodstuffs] followed suit." A "general exodus" ensued to other towns located within new irrigation districts in western North Dakota and eastern Montana.

Prairie fires also took a toll on the declining town, destroying homes, saloons, out buildings, a large brewery's cold storage facility and associated offices, and the Yellowstone Livery barn. The completion of the bridge project in 1913 badly undermined the local ferry service at the time, and took out one Mondak's main commercial arteries. The ensuing rise of automobility in the late 1910s also contributed to the decline and general abandonment of Mondak. No longer beholden to the ferry schedule, travelers had no reason to stay, dine, or buy supplies. As the Great Northern shifted most of its service to Poplar, and as automobiles became even more ubiquitous in the 1920s, Mondak was little more than a place that might catch the eye of bored automobile passenger. As Sweetman mused, "Thus the 'Wildest town of the West' passed into history. Nothing but a few shacks are left now to mark the spot."[18]

Gleaning the Past, and History as Spectacle: The Upper Missouri Historical Expedition

One former resident of Mondak referred to the Confluence area as a stopping place for many people.

> One might call it a crossroads of the times. Freight teams would load out for Sidney and points south of the river. The farmers with wagons of grain, and shoppers with buggies and saddle horses, kept the livery barns busy. Many Indians were travelling through by horse-drawn covered wagon, and camped along the river, sometimes for several days. It was interesting to watch the Indian women preparing meat and working on leather and bead work.

Old-timers from the small towns of Buford, Nohly (a few miles upriver from Mondak), and Fairview (several miles to the south of the Confluence on the Yellowstone River), reported similar encounters. It is most likely that the small groups of Native families they encountered were taking time to hunt, fish, gather plant foods and materials while traveling to visit friends and relations on other reservations or to attend a large summer gathering. In either case, they were continuing to live and travel in a familiar manner through long familiar country.[19]

The Upper Missouri Historical Expedition

Given the relative frequency of such encounters, it is somewhat ironic that the largest gathering of Native peoples at the Confluence since the advent of the reservation era occurred in 1925-1926, during the marquis event of the Great Northern Railway's Upper Missouri and Columbia River Historical Expeditions. The "Historical Expedition" was a publicity effort organized by Ralph Budd to promote rail travel on the Great Northern Railway's Oriental Limited service by highlighting scenic and historical locales along the route from Minneapolis to Seattle. With Fort Union as the premiere site of the "expedition" or extravaganza, Budd and his team of promoters fell back on the Great

[18] Quotation from Sweetman, "Mondak: Planned City of Hope Astride Montana-Dakota Border," 27.
[19] Quotation and general description from Jarvis, ed., *Courage Enough*, 403.

Northern's penchant for using the phrase "vanishing race" when referencing Native peoples, including the Piikáni (Blackfeet) who were employed by the Great Northern Railway at Glacier National Park, and whose images were used to promote visitation to that park. Because "vanishing" implied novelty, and a see-them-while-you-still-can sense of excitement and urgency, the Great Northern paid for the travel, lodging, and (in some cases) the costuming of Native participants to come to the former site of Fort Union. The events at Fort Union include a four-hundred strong "Indian Congress" of Sahnish (Arikara), Hiraacá (Hidatsa), Nueta (Mandan), Nakoda (Assiniboine), Piikáni (Blackfeet), Káínawa (Blood Nation), Siksika (Blackfoot), Ojibwe (aka Ojibway, or Chippewa), Apsáalooke (Crow), A'aninin (Atsina, aka Gros Ventre), Dakȟóta (Dakota) would gather between the railroad tracks and the Missouri River. The Great Northern also provided materials for constructing a large number of teepees as well as lumber for a Nueta (Mandan) earthlodge.[20]

As a news outlet reported at the time, "the elaborate program … [began with] a reception [for] the visiting party by the representatives of eleven Indian tribes." An exhibit of historical objects and photographs was hosted by the state historical societies of North Dakota and Montana.

> Indian contests preceded a flag raising and a program, the principal features of which were an address by Major General Hugh L. Scott and responses by Indian chiefs on behalf of the assembled tribesmen. In the afternoon a series of Indian games and contests was held. At an evening Indian ceremony three [dignitaries] were officially adopted each into a different Indian tribe and given Indian names. The interest of the visit to the site of old Fort Union was considerably enhanced by the distribution of facsimile reprints — made by the Great Northern Railway Company — of three numbers of the *Frontier Scout*, a paper issued in 1864 by Company I of the Thirtieth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry.[21]

[20] On "vanishing race," see Allison Robbins, "Scoring *The Vanishing American* (1925) in the American West," *American Music* (Spring 2018), 102-132, which discusses a film made in Glacier National Park with the active assistance of the Great Northern. On teepees, and the earthlodge, see Lisa Blee, "The 1925 Fort Union Indian Congress: Divergent Narratives, One Event," *American Indian Quarterly*, 31 (Fall 2007), 586; and Matzko, *Reconstructing Fort Union*, 41. Remains of the earth lodge are still visible between the reconstructed for and the banks of the Missouri River.

[21] Gertrude Krausnick et al., "The Upper Missouri Historical Expedition," *Minnesota History* 6 (September 1926):304-308. Quotation describes the events of the Columbia River Historical Expedition in 1926, but the event was essentially the same as the previous year. For fuller context, also see Lisa Blee, "The 1925 Fort Union Indian Congress," 582-88.

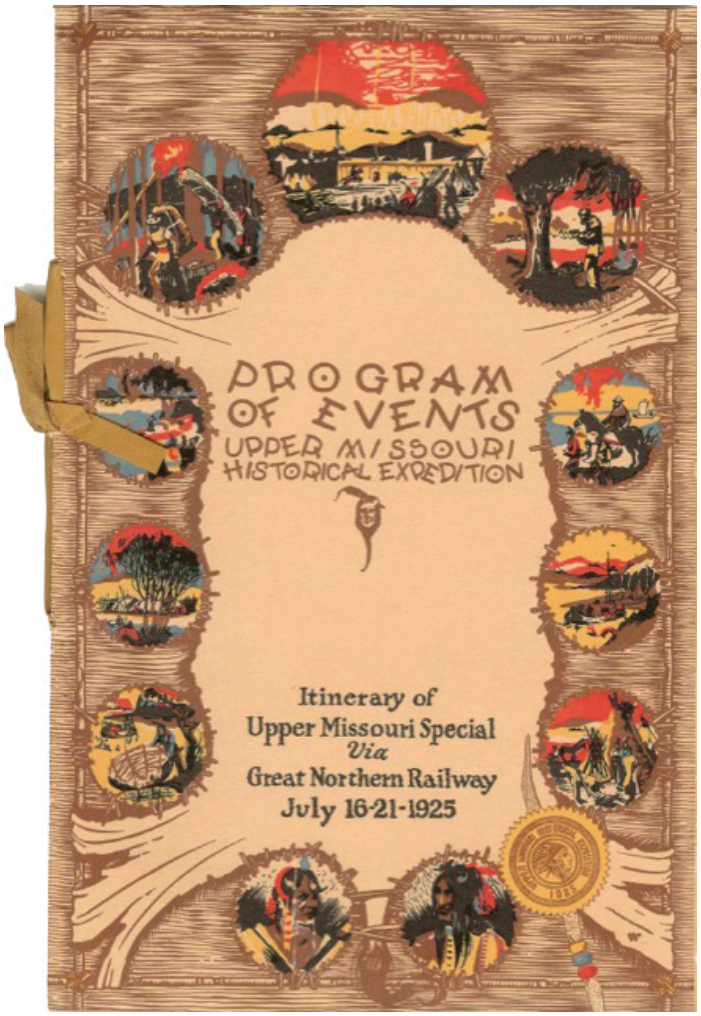


Image 11.7: Program of Events for the Upper Missouri Historical Expedition. Image depicts various sites to be visited along the Great Northern Railroad's route from Minneapolis to the mouth of the Columbia River. Source: *Streamliner Memories* (public domain).

The multi-day "Indian Congress" was one of the most elaborate events in the Great Northern Railway's two-year promotional program. The Great Northern sought to construct monuments along its line, and published a series of brief descriptive booklets for its passengers to provide a sense of historical drama to the lands they were crossing.[22] The construction of large public monuments by a major corporation might seem peculiar to us now, and it is worth noting that the Great Northern planned to build a commemorative version of Fort Union, but ultimately balked at the effort and cost associated with such an undertaking. Nevertheless, corporate action at a time when the federal government was not in the business of monument building would not have seemed peculiar to most Americans in the 1920s. After all, such efforts reflected a common enough assumption that public virtue was assumed to reside in corporations and

[22] These concerns were best captured by Grace Flandrau, who wrote promotional books and pamphlets for the Great Northern Railroad. See especially *The Columbia River Historical Expedition of 1926* (n.p.: Great Northern Railway, [1926?]); *Frontier Days Along the Upper Missouri* (n.p.: Great Northern Railway, [1926?]); and *A Glance at the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (n.p.: Great Northern Railway, [1925?]);

the "company man" This point was made explicit in a newspaper editorial on the Great Northern Railway's Historical Expeditions.

> Sentiment has indeed come to be an integral part of the modern business structure. Sentimental considerations observed by many business institutions bring to them a measure of respect and sympathy –a comradeship from the public –that mere success and fair dealing cannot alone engender. The recent action of the Great Northern Railway Company in leading the way toward a more general dissemination of knowledge of the early history of … the Northwest is a sentimental business activity which is bound largely and vitally to benefit this commonwealth while redounding to the credit and increasing the respect for the railway company.[23]

Like the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (aka St. Louis World's Fair) of 1903, the Great Northern sought to capitalize on a peculiar American penchant to combine learning with leisure. As historian Cindi Aron notes in her book *Working at Play*, recreation was already long associated with education and self-improvement: from week-long camp revivals and Chautauquas to World Expos and museums. What would later become known as heritage tourism was just beginning to develop in the 1920s as a particular niche market; one that would continue to be closely associated with other developing forms of self-improvement, leisure, and outdoor activities through the rest of the century and into the present. All of this came to decade-long stop in the 1930s, however. The automobile had already begun to undermine the best efforts of railroad promotions, while the Great Depression crippled the nascent tourist industry and, more importantly, destroyed the public credibility of corporate leaders. In the aftermath of these development, the next effort to commemorate and interpret the history of Fort Union would pass first to the state and then finally to a public agency that people would come to trust in the 1930s: the National Park Service.[24]

Becoming a Part of the National Park System

The Upper Missouri and Columbia River Historical Expeditions brought a level of popular attention to Fort Union that it had never enjoyed before. Little more than an old ruin that had gone to ground, people in surrounding towns valued the site of the former trading post as a source of gravel for roads and various construction projects as well as place to find a stray arrow point or some other item of from a vanished past. Fur trade historians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries certainly knew about the significance of Fort Union, and mention of the site might have struck a chord with people who were passingly familiar with the writings and paintings of George Catlin. However, it was not until Ralph Budd made the site a centerpiece of the Great Northern's Historical

[23] Text is from the clippings files of the Great Northern Railway; quoted in Michael Kammen, *In the Past Lane: Historical Perspectives on American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 137.
[24] Cindi Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 226-244

Expeditions, and floated the idea of a reconstruction, that people in the region began to take notice of the history that lay underfoot. After Congress passed the *Historic Sites Act of 1935*, which "declared that it is a national policy to preserve for public use historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States," a few politicians in North Dakota began to take interest in protecting, preserving, and interpreting sites like historic Fort Union. In its second article, the Act further declared that the National Park Service would also "[r]estore, reconstruct, rehabilitate, preserve and maintain historic or prehistoric sites, buildings, objects, and property of national historical or archaeological significance and where deemed desirable establish and maintain museums in connection therewith."[25]



Image 11.8: Fort Union site, ca. 1937. The leaning flagpole was erected for the 1925 Upper Missouri Historical Expedition. Source: National Park Service. Photograph by Edward Hummel.

Not long after the Historic Sites Act became law, a supervisor in the Department of Interior with a personal interest in the fur trade and Fort Union, delegated a young historian to compile a short history of the old fort with an eye toward it subsequent acquisition. By 1937, this idea had developed into a full review of the site's conditions and an evaluation of its historical significance. This task fell to Edward Hummel, a North Dakotan who had recently earned a Master's degree in History from the University of Minnesota. Hummel was thorough and completely enamored with the subject, and readily concluded that the site and subject of Fort Union was a perfect example of a new NPS thematic topic entitled "Exploitation of Natural Resources to 1870." Hummel went

[25] Federal Historic Preservation Laws, Preservation of Historic Sites Act, August 21, 1935 (49 Stat. 666; 16 U.S.C. 461-467); Historic Sites Act of 1935, Public No.292-74th Congress. Matzko further notes that this legislation also "envisioned federal acquisition of historic properties beyond the prehistoric ruins and battlefield parks that were then almost the only historic properties held by the park service." See Matzko, *Reconstructing Fort Union*, 50.

even further, however, in suggesting that the fort might be reconstructed if "visitation would justify such extreme measures." While the suggestion of a young historian with a mid-level patron in the Interior Department was not enough to bring his vision to life, the idea did find purchase among North Dakota state officials who saw an opportunity to expand on a nascent state park system, and thus further tap Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) funds to develop the site, alleviate unemployment, and help juice the badly depressed economic conditions of far western North Dakota.[26]

The historical significance of the site was unquestioned, though at the time of Hummel's report there was some concern that the site he identified might not have been the location of Fort Union. Even though no original structures remained on the site, foundation lines were still discernable, and few if any doubted that the site encompassed a rich trove of archeological evidence from the fur trade era. For these reasons, the Fort Union Trading Post did become a state historic site in 1938, but it did not receive funding or labor through the CCC or Works Progress Administration (WPA). Though Hummel was disappointed at the time, historian John Matzko considers this lack of support a blessing in disguise, since it spared the Fort Union Trading Post site from undergoing the kind of cursory concrete slab and Lincoln-log *rustica* that characterized a number of state parks in the Midwest. If such a fate had befallen the site of Fort Union, it is likely that the historic "integrity of the site" would have been so badly compromised "that it could never have been accepted into the National Park System."[27]

While the passage of the Historic Act of 1935 may have further prevented any efforts to reconstruct Fort Union, the point was academic since the site was not a federal property. Within a year of the Act's passage, the NPS Advisory Board for Preservation convened in February and May of 1936. Chosen by Department of the Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, all board members were "noted historians, archeologists, and preservationists representing all geographical areas of the nation."[28] At one of these initial meetings, Fiske Kimball, an architectural historian, thought reconstructions should appear aged to match the fabric of the rest, if any, of the original buildings in a particular location. Kimball stated that, "we should rebuild destroyed buildings on important historic sites. Even the ruins are more interesting, when used in a restoration."[29] However, Verne Chatelain, the first Chief Historian of the National Park Service, argued that instead of reconstructing historical buildings for interpretative purposes, an

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[26] Quotations and narrative in this and the following paragraph draw from John Matzko, "The Fort Union of the National Park Service," in *At the Confluence: Now and Then,* ed. Susan Dingle (Bismarck: North Dakota State Historical Society, 2003), 26. Also see Matzko, *Reconstructing Fort Union* (Lincoln: University of Nebrask Press, 2001), 46-64.
[27] Matzko, Matzko, *Reconstructing Fort Union*, 49-51.
[28] Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Willis, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s* <https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/unrau-williss/adhic.htm>
[29] Barry Mackintosh, "To Reconstruct or Not to Reconstruct: An Overview of Policy and Practice," *Resource Management Bulletin*, 13 (1990): 5-7, 14.

alternative way of interpreting sites must be found. Chatelain's fear was that a historical reconstruction would only focus on "one time period" and leave the remaining history to be forgotten. Though Chatelain and Kimball had very different approaches to the subject, it is likely that the combination of their concerns would have stymied any concerted approach to a reconstruction of the Fort Union site if it were to become part of the National Park System.[30]

The Nature of Reconstruction

In 1937, the year that Hummel visited the site, the committee drafting the NPS policy on preservation determined a simple order of priority when it came to managing and interpreting a historic site: "Better to preserve than repair, better to repair than restore, better to restore than construct."[31] While the tentative debate between Chatelain and Kimball suggests that this language could be divisive, no one seems to have noticed or objected about either approach during a National Park Service update on the policy the following year or for years after. In 1966, the year that Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site was established, subsequent iteration of the policy was put forward in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Though it made no mention of Fort Union or any other national park units, the policy update redefined "the term 'historic preservation' [to include] the protection, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction of districts, buildings, and objects significant in American History, architecture, archeology, or culture." In a 1973 revision of the NPS document on *Administrative Policies for Historical Areas of the National Park System*, reconstruction was subsequently deemed acceptable only in just three cases: 1) where "all or almost all traces of a structure have disappeared and its reconstruction is essential for public understanding and appreciation of the historical associations for which the park was established," when "historical, archeological, and architectural data exist to permit an accurate reproduction," and when "the structure can be erected on the original site or in a setting appropriate to the significance of the area, as in a pioneer community or living farm, where exact sites of structures may not be identifiable through research."[32]

The debates over, and the ultimate decision to create, a partial reconstruction of Fort Union Trading Post can be further contextualized by some counter examples. Within the Missouri River Basin, and the former network of American Fur Company posts, the most analogous is Fort Pierre National Historic Landmark. Like Fort Union in the century after its abandonment, Fort Pierre possesses no above ground remains. Established in 1832 to replace nearby Fort Tecumseh, Fort Pierre Chouteau served as a headquarters for the American Fur Company's and, later, Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Company's operations

[30] Advisory Board Minutes, 7-9 May 1936, National Register, History, and Education (NRHE files).
[31] Mackintosh, "To Reconstruct or Not to Reconstruct: An Overview of Policy and Practice," 5.
[32] Quotations from *Administrative Policies for Historic Areas of the National Park Service* (U.S. Department of the Interior: National Park Service, 1973), 28-29.

on the Middle Missouri River. Through the 1830s and 1840s, the post acquired, processed, and shipped hundreds of thousands of beaver pelts, deer skins, and buffalo hides for markets on the East Coast of the United States, and Europe. By the 1850s, however, trade lagged and the fort began to suffered from deferred maintenance. It was subsequently purchased by the U.S. Army in 1855, refurbished and expanded for use as a key installation for imposing U.S. sovereignty over Native peoples. Today, the site is a mostly non-descript park or open-space that is identified by a bronze plaque on a large stone.

The condition of Fort Pierre contrasts with two other plains forts, Fort Laramie National Historic Site and Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site. Like Fort Union, the first structures at the site of Fort Laramie were built in 1834 by Robert Campbell and William Sublette to tap into the beaver trade. As that trade faltered, "Fort William," as the fort was then known, shifted to the bison robe trade. The U.S. Army acquired the site in 1849 and developed it into a military post and a gathering place for overland travelers. While a good deal of historic fabric remains at Fort Laramie, nearly all of its structures correspond to its use as a military installation. In that regard, it somewhat reflects how Fort Union Trading Post might appear if it had been acquired and repurposed by the U.S. military in the late 1860s. Bent's Old Fort National Monument is something of a counterpoint to the partial reconstruction of Fort Union Trading Post. Established in 1833 by a partnership between Charles Bent, Wiliam Bent, and Ceran St. Vrain, the for was a center for the trade in furs and bison robes on the Southern Plains, as well as the commerce that moved along the Santa Fé Trail. The fort was subsequently abandoned after a cholera outbreak struck Southern Plains tribes and ended the primary business at the fort. Like Fort Union Trading Post, Bent's Old Fort was an abandoned ruin when it was incorporated into the National Parks System, and also underwent extensive archeological investigations and reconstruction. Unlike Fort Union, which requires constant upkeep, the adobe fort needs constant repair and refurbishment as a consequence of using ahistorical materials in its reconstruction that undermine the resiliency of adobe and make necessary structural repairs more difficult.[33]

The closest corollary within the National Parks System to Fort Union Trading Post is the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site in Vancouver, Washington. Situated within an urban military base that includes U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force facilities, Fort Vancouver is a partial reconstruction of the Hudson's Bay Company fort that operated on the site from 1824 until 1846. As the headquarters of commercial and political and operations in the Pacific Northwest, and serviced by ocean-going vessels, Fort Vancouver

[33] Merrill J. Mattes, *Fort Laramie Park History, 1834-1977* (Denver: Rocky Mountain Regional Office, National Park Service, 1977), passim; Rodd L. Wheaton, "Lessons Learned at Bent's Old Fort and Fort Union Trading Post," in *The Reconstructed Past: Reconstruction in the Public Interpretation of Archaeology and History*, ed. John H. Jameson Jr. (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2004), 215-232.

was a much larger facility than Fort Union and handled a greater array of administrative responsibilities and trade goods. Given its historic scale, the reconstruction of Fort Vancouver has more buildings as well as more empty spaces within its in progress that Fort Union. In recent years, NPS interpretation has placed more emphasis on the diverse array of employees who lived just outside the palisades. This has led to plans for the reconstruction of employee homes and the extensive vegetable gardens they maintained.[34]

Fort Union Trading Post and the Great Preservation vs. Reconstruction Debate

When Congress declared Fort Union Trading Post a national historic site in 1966, no original buildings remained. Local citizens organized the Friends of Fort Union and strongly supported the reconstruction of the fort. Before any reconstruction began, however, NPS researchers would have to conduct extensive archaeological investigations and delve into the historical record for clues to the building's past. These efforts, combined with historic images and collaborations between NPS historical architect Rick Cronenberger, NPS historian Marcy Culpin, and NPS archeologist William J. Hunt, Jr., provided sufficient information for a partial reconstruction of the fort at the exact location of the first, and including the restoration or manufacture of fine details that included craft replica hinges and window shutters, and reproduced woodwork.[35]

By any interpretation of National Park Service standards, the Fort Union site possesses tremendous historical significance, and for that reason was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1961 and made a unit of the National Park System in 1966. However, the manner in which the site should be protected, interpreted and presented to the public was a matter of fierce debate from the late 1970s through the early 1990s. Often described as a new iteration of the preservation-reconstruction debate that has long defined cultural resource management in the NPS, the "anti-reconstructionist" view, as the historian John Matzko terms it, can be summed up in five basic points: reconstruction necessarily destroys historical remains through excavation and new construction; it is more expensive than preservation and takes needed funds away from other projects; no historical reconstruction can be entirely faithful to the details of the original; reconstruction privileges a "moment in the structure's history … [and] obliterate[s] both the previous and subsequent history of the site"; and reconstructions possess inherent "interpretive weaknesses" that entertain more than they inform. Proponents of historical reconstruction also possess a set of compelling arguments: preservation and archaeological study often damage the integrity of historical sites, reconstruction can be an evocative means for educating young children, and reconstruction provides a sense of physical scale and historical use that displayed artifacts, scale models, and dioramas cannot convey. Lastly, Matzko also notes that

[34] National Park Service, *Fort Vancouver National Historic Site: General Management Plan* (2003), 11-20.
[35] Matzko, *Reconstructing Fort Union*, 126, 183, 190, 200-203, 222.

reconstruction, especially of a property like Fort Union, has undeniable public appeal and tends to capture the interest of local communities who often see it as "fun."[36]

"Fun" hardly begins to describe the debate, which at times resembled the acrimony of a volatile family feud. The first public salvo was fired by Richard Sellers and Dwight Pitcaithley, who wrote an essay for the December 1979 issue of the NPS's *Cultural Resource Management Bulletin* (CRM) entitled "Reconstruction—Expensive, Life Size Toys." Describing their argument as "philosophical, economical and practical," they argued that reconstructions illustrate how the past *may* have appeared, but they warp and undermine the original settings and contexts where the historic structure was situated. The authors regarded the popularity of historical reconstructions as a symptom of what they called the "Williamsburg Syndrome," a kind of dumbing-down of history on the cheap that fosters myth over fact, and story over place.[37] Their argument did not go unanswered, as Charles Bohannon, one of the regional archeologists for the National Park Service, promptly wrote a letter to the editor of the *CRM Bulletin* that disagreed with the Sellers and Pitcaithley article. In the letter, Bohannon contended that "there are instances where reconstructions are desirable and justifiable," but did not fully elaborate on the instances would determine the decision. Rodd L. Wheaton, who was part of the Ad Hoc Committee for Appropriate Reconstructions in the Rocky Mountain Region of the NPS, also took issue with the essay because it was more grounded in angry sentiments that construed the NPS Organic act as mandating the preservation of old ruins and not, as the Act states, to "promote and regulate the use of … national parks, … to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects … therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same."

A few years after this exchange, however, Wheaton became a critic of the proposal to reconstruct Fort Union. In a conference paper entitled "To Reconstruct or Not Reconstruct: Decision Within Documentation," Wheaton argued that the NPS did not have the documentation to reconstruct the fort and lacked the necessary funds for research and maintenance. Moreover, he endorsed the Service's 1981 Cultural *Resources Management Guidelines,* also known as the NPS-Directors Order 28 (NPS-28), which stated that "the Service does not endorse, support, or encourage the reconstruction of historic structures." [38]

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[36] Ibid., 6-7, 147-150.
[37] Richard Sellers and Dwight Pitcaithley, "Reconstruction—Expensive, Life Size Toys," *Cultural Recourse Management Bulletin*, 3 (December 1979):
[38] *NPS-28 Cultural Resource Management Guideline*. <http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/nps28/28contents.htm> (accessed 14 April 2020); Rodd Wheaton, "To Reconstruct or Not Reconstruct: Decision Within Documentation," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Preservation Technology (September 1985), 5; Barry Mackintosh, "To Reconstruct or Not to Reconstruct: An Overview of NPS Policy and Practice," *CRM Bulletin* 13, no. 1 (1990).

In 1981, the NPS went in the direction of taking reconstruction completely out of the equation for any project that involved historic structure preservation. In the National Park Service's Cultural *Resources Management Guidelines* (aka NPS-Directors Order 28, or NPS-28), which stated that "the Service does not endorse, support, or encourage the reconstruction of historic structures."[39] Rodd Wheaton endorsed this view in September 1985 when he presented a paper at the annual meeting of the Association for Preservation Technology entitled, "To Reconstruct or Not Reconstruct: Decision Within Documentation," in which the author criticized the reconstruction of Fort Union on the Montana-North Dakota state line. Wheaton believed that the NPS did not have the documentation to reconstruct the fort and lacked the necessary funds for research and maintenance.[40]

William Penn Mott, Jr., who became the NPS director in 1985, disagreed with the anti-reconstruction views. Mott's main focus on interpretation and education within historic sites forced the Park Service to revise the anti-reconstruction views within NPS-28. According to 1988 management policies, a historical building that has vanished may be reconstructed if:

> 1) Reconstruction is essential to permit understanding of the cultural associations of a park established for that purpose. 2) Sufficient data exists to permit reconstruction on the original site with minimal conjecture. 3) Significant archeology resources will be preserved in situ or their research values will be realized through data recovery. 4) A vanished structure will not be reconstructed to appear damaged or ruined. 5) Generalized representations of typical structures will not be attempted.[41]

The debate took an intriguing twist in 1990, when William Hunt, Jr. wrote a letter to the editor of *Cultural Resources Management* about his involvement with the reconstruction of Fort Union. Hunt was the primary manager of the extensive archeological project at Fort Union, but confessed that he personally opposed reconstructions in general and believed that placing a reconstruction "on-site" of the original building was unethical. While he retained some ambivalence about the project that he led, his early objections gave way to a more conciliatory recognition that the project had

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[39] *NPS-28 Cultural Resource Management Guideline*. <http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/nps28/28contents.htm> NPS-28 states the basic principles of governing the management of archeological resources, cultural landscapes, historical structures, museum objects and ethnographic resources. Also see Rodd Wheaton, "To Reconstruct or Not Reconstruct: Decision Within Documentation," 5; Pitcaithley Reconstruction Files, Harpers Ferry Center, Harpers Ferry, WV. pp.5; Rodd Wheaton was an architect for the National Park Service and is now working for The Collaborative Inc, a historic preservation group based in Boulder, CO.

[40] Rodd Wheaton, "To Reconstruct or Not Reconstruct: Decision Within Documentation." 6-7.

[41] *Management Polices* (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1988), 5.7.

> had both bad and good components. On the negative side, much of the nationally important archeology resource at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site has been destroyed. On the positive side, the public now has a beautifully and carefully reconstructed mid 19th century fur/robe trading post to visit.…Nevertheless, from an overall perspective, I believe the positive contributions at Fort Union Trading Post have outweighed the negative.[42]

Paul Hedren, who was the Superintendent of Fort Union during the mid 1980s, an active booster of the park, and at times a forceful defender of the reconstruction project. Hedren was something of an oxymoron, a passionate pragmatist who admitted that even well-planned and executed reconstructions "are nothing more than crass manipulations of historic environments. Yet, the National Park Service has long had this bent." The policies of the 1970s restricted but did not ban NPS reconstructions, he noted, and the NPS has long changed the "natural environment through wildland fire programs, the reintroduction of native species and the elimination of exotic species…. The parallels are patently relevant in historical contexts." He agreed, too, that "reconstructions are expensive to create" and to maintain, but all facilities within a park have to be maintained and visitor centers built. Money must be spent anyway. Without Fort Union being rebuilt, Hedren stated, "the alternative was a grassy meadow at the end of a gravel road."[43]

Hedren's argument notwithstanding, the subject continued to rile the National Park Service (NPS) through the mid 1990s, when the Service published *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historical Properties: Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historical Buildings*.[44] This compilation of updated preservation rules and regulations states:

> 1) Reconstruction will be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a property when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture, and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the property. 2) Reconstruction of a landscape, building, structure, or object in its historic location will be preceded by a thorough archeological investigation to identify and evaluate those features and artifacts which are essential to an accurate reconstruction. If such sources must be disturbed, mitigation measurements will be taken. 3) Reconstruction will include

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[42] Dr. William Hunt, "Letter to the Editor," *CRM Bulletin*, 13:1 (1990), 15. At the time of the article William Hunt was a supervisory archeologist for the Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service.
[43] Paul Hedren, "Why We Reconstructed Fort Union" *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 23 (August 1992): 349-354.
[44] "Title 36—Parks, Forests and Public Property, Chapter 1 National Park Service, Department of the Interior; Part 68—The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties." Director's Order #28: Cultural Resource Management. National Park Service. http://www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/DOrder28.html.
http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_05/36cfr68_05.html. It is part of the NPS-28 Cultural Resource Management Guideline for the National Park Service.

> measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships. 4) Reconstruction will be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different features from other historic properties. A reconstructed property will recreate the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color and texture. 5) A reconstruction will be clearly identified as a contemporary re-creation. 6) Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.[45]

Three years later, in 1998, Michael James Kelleher wrote a thesis on "Making History: Reconstructing Historic Structures in the National Park Service," in which he explored four major reconstruction projects from the 1970s to the mid 1990s. Taking up the anti-reconstruction mantle from previous years, Kelleher observed: "If historic sites in the National Park Service are valued more for their interpretative potential than for the importance of the resources they contain, it is easy to understand why the Park Service has been willing to actually destroy authentic historic resources [archeology] in order to carry out a reconstruction." Despite all of the disagreements over reconstructions at Fort Union, Fort Smith, Fort Stanwix and Bent's Old Fort, the NPS did not remove reconstruction from the Secretary of the Interior's standards. Kelleher concluded his thesis with a simple maxim about how to address future "proposals to reconstruct vanished historic structures. Whenever this occurs," he advised, "those within the agency who might be inclined to support reconstruction should ask themselves if the recreation of history is actually the mission of the National Park Service."[46]

While the "Great Reconstruction Debate" came with some sound and fury, it never quite resolved itself beyond the codification of some new guidelines. In recent years, however, 3-D animation has presented an intriguing alternative to the physical reconstruction of historical buildings. First applied to sites in Europe in the early 2000s, NPS staff have also begun developing plans for its implementation in the United States. Fort Laramie National Historic Site in Wyoming is one of the NPS locations using this 3D preservation technology. The 3D images allow visitors to view surviving historic buildings through different time periods as well as archeological sites that have not been covered by a building (historic or otherwise). In 2009, the NPS, CyArk, and the Center of Preservation Research, run by the University of Colorado in Denver, all teamed up to bring this project to life. Fort Laramie Digital Preservation, an online resource, currently has five buildings that are augmented with 3D animation that presents highly detailed

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[45] Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historical Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historical Buildings,* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2017), 226; quotation is identical to the first (1995) edition of this compendium.

[46] Kelleher, *Making History: Reconstructing Historic Structures in the National Park Service* (master's thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1998), 3, 112.

views of exterior and interior spaces. While this technology will likely present new challenges to future interpretation, especially in matters related to the competing virtues of realia and scripted time travel, but it presently offers a way to avoid the debates that defined management and visitation at Fort Union for more than two decades.[47]

Today, a partially reconstructed fort exists at exactly the same location as the original, constructed from 1985 through 1991 with information gained through extensive archaeological investigations, historic paintings, and archival documentation. Visually accurate reconstructions of the palisade walls, Indian trade house, two bastions, and the Bourgeois House stand as a life-size stage to teach visitors about the site's significance. The entire fort is a large walkthrough exhibit that provides visitors with the feeling of a frontier post. With the partially reconstructed fort as a centerpiece, historical interpretation at Fort Union Trading Post is primarily focused on the reconstructed fort buildings, which are used to evoke stories of the fur trade, exploration, fort construction, and relationships with and among American Indians. This multifaceted approach, which is supplemented by exhibits in the Bourgeois House, which also serves as the park unit's Visitor Center, appeals to an array of audiences but tends to appeal most to fur-trade enthusiasts, western history buffs, and people visiting the site for the first time.

The Constructed Fort

National Park Service Archeologist William J. Hunt, Jr. described the first iteration of Fort Union as a modest and fairly crude structure, especially when compared to the rebuilding that occurred in the 1830s. The first tasks of the builders involved digging pits to store trade goods and constructing crude shelters for shelter against the elements and a possible raid. "The first post was small," he writes, "and its palisade was built in the traditional manner by digging a trench and inserting 'pickets' or posts of split timber" that barely withstood the strong winds on the Northern Plains. In short, the fort was rushed "to completion by taking shortcuts in construction. As a result, the new trading post was poorly built and had to be replaced within a few years."[48]

For the purposes of the 19th century fur trade, the siting of the historic fort was ideal. Access to the trading post was both overland and by water. The gravel terrace contained sufficient level ground to allow for the post's construction, with plenty of open areas to the north and west that could accommodate the lodges of Native groups that

[47] *Fort Laramie National Historic Site Digital Preservation*. <http://archive.cyarch.cyark.org/fort-larmie-intro>; Fort Laramie National Historic Site. Other historic sites in the United States that have used this technology: include Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado; the Presidio of San Francisco within Golden Gate National Recreation Area in California; Tudor Place in Washington, D.C.; and Historic Jamestowne, part of Colonial National Historical Park in Virginia.

[48] William J. Hunt, Jr., "Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Montana—North Dakota Border Historic Trading in the Rocky Mountains," in *Archaeology in America: An Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, ed. Linda S. Cordell, Kent Lightfoot, Francis McManamon, and George Milner (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009), 265.

came to trade with the AFC and each other. The main channel of the Missouri River flowed by the base of the terrace, which greatly facilitated river transport and eased the process of unloading and loading steamboats and other watercraft. Depending on the volume of water and the position of the main channel, moving cargo to and from the boats docked below the fort required a relatively short haul of 25 to 100 yards from the river's edge to front (south) gate of the fort.[49]

Though work on the fort was a near constant concern, there are four distinguishable construction phases between 1828 and 1867, and they correspond to changing economic and cultural conditions. The first construction phase (1828- ca. 1835) corresponds with the original construction and early expansion of the trading post. During this initial phase, AFC partner Kenneth McKenzie became the dominant force in the northern Rocky Mountain fur trade east of the Continental divide, and the northern Plains. At the time the fur trade centered on small furs and bison robes. The second phase (late 1830s to circa 1850) coincided with a shift toward bison robes rather than furs, and involved closer engagement and trade with tribal nations in the region. This was the period when Fort Union reached the zenith of its cultural and economic influence, as well as the time when equestrian peoples—especially after the smallpox epidemic of 1837—fully displaced horticultural peoples on the Missouri River and became the dominant force in regional trade networks. The third phase encompasses the decade of the 1850s, when Fort Union experienced a slow decline marked by intermittent shortages of trade goods, and a loss of profitability and/or decline in the demand for bison products. This period also coincided with the increasing dominance of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Seven Council Fires), which exercised pressure on the trading community and undermined Native communities that had long traded at historic Fort Union. In terms of the fort itself, this period was marked by a steady decline in the condition of the buildings and structures. The fourth phase marked the final, diminished years of Fort Union's operations in the 1860s, when the fur trade had lost economic viability. [50]

During the first construction phase, Fort Union underwent two distinct development periods. The first was a hastily built facility dating from 1828-1832. It was

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[49] Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 44.

[50] During the archeological excavations of the 1980s, MWAC archeologists identified a beginning date for the original period of Fort Union construction at 1829, although subsequent reports document initial construction of the palisade to late 1828. See, Peterson and Hunt, Jr., *1987 Investigations*, 105; and Hunt, Jr., "Origins of Fort Union: Archaeology and History," in *The Fur Trade Revisited, Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991*, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles and Donald P. Heldman (East Lansing/Mackinac Island: Michigan State University Press and Mackinac State Historic Parks, 1994, 383-385. For a detailed biography of Kipp, see W. Raymond Wood, "James Kipp: Upper Missouri River Fur Trader and Missouri Farmer," *North Dakota History* 77 (Winter and Spring 2011), 2-35; Hunt,, Jr., *Material Culture Reports Part I,* 2-5. On the changing dynamics of American Indian populations, trade, and relative strengths, see Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 248-269.

replaced between 1833 and 1835.[51] James Kipp with the AFC's Upper Missouri Outfit may have supervised the work and possibly been responsible for the overall plan.[52] Skilled workmen (carpenters and masons) came from St. Louis, but the majority of labor was done by *Canadien* (French-speaking) engages from Quebec. The first palisade was a parallelogram measuring roughly 178 feet along the north and south walls and 198 feet along the east and west walls. Composed of square-hewn logs, split planks, and half-round logs, it was situated to avoid shallow drainages east and west of the construction site while maximizing the perimeter and utilizing the greatest amount of flat land. The 15 to 16-foot-tall palisades were constructed of pickets hewn from cottonwood, using a *poteaux-en-terre* (posts in ground) construction technique familiar to the *Canadien* and Creole laborers. In this system vertical timbers, typically hewn flat on their exterior faces, are set in long shallow trenches and secured with heavy stones and rammed earth. At the top was attached a cheval-de-frise (a portable frame covered with spikes). At Fort Union the design varied between the palisade walls. Sections on the south palisade used two alternating inner and outer rows of 5 to 8-inch-wide pickets. The north (and less substantial) palisade was built of 2 to 3 -nch-thick split planks, intermittently supported by round posts on the interior. Large square posts anchored the southwest and northwest corners. Two-story high bastions, thought to have been constructed "log-cabin style," of cottonwood, were located at opposing corners of the palisaded enclosure, and had "pointed" roofs, embrasures, and cannon. Within the palisade were a range of eight to ten log houses and stores and an ice house.[53]

The first of the many dramatic and consequential modifications occurred in February 1832 with reconstruction of the bulk of the western palisade and building range following a late-night fire. Then, between 1833 and 1835 there was a complete reconstruction of the palisades, bastions, manager's house, store, powder magazine, and probably the Indians' and artisans' house as well. It was essentially a complete replacement of the earlier post structures. The new 237 by 245-foot palisade provided protection not only from attack but also from the high winds that buffet the Northern Plains. Unlike the original palisade, the replacement rested on a stone and mortar foundation, or poteaux-sur-sole (posts on sill). The palisade was reinforced with a network of bracing and cross bracing set at roughly 12-foot intervals. This design provided no protection, however, from the rain and the courtyard became a muddy mess

[51] Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 44.
[52] [52] Ibid., 45. Kipp's involvement has not been confirmed, and the palisade's haphazard construction is not in keeping with the man's reputation. However, deteriorating weather conditions during the fall and winter of 1828 may account for this. Hunt, Jr., "Origins of Fort Union," 383-385.
[53] Thompson, Historic Structures Report, 17; Hunt, Jr.,"Origins of Fort Union," 382-385; Thiel, *1988 Archeological Investigations, Block 20*, 58-59; Peterson, *1988 Archeological Investigations, Block 15*, 79; George Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, 21; Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 47; Prince Alexander Philip Maximilian zu Wied, *The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied: April–September 1833*, Volume 2, Stephen S. Witte and Marsha V. Gallagher, trans. William J. Orr Paul Schach, and Dieter Karch (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010) 138.

during foul weather. Boardwalks documented in various paintings, sketches and photographs are presumed to have provided the relief that numerous attempts to improve site drainage failed to do.[54]

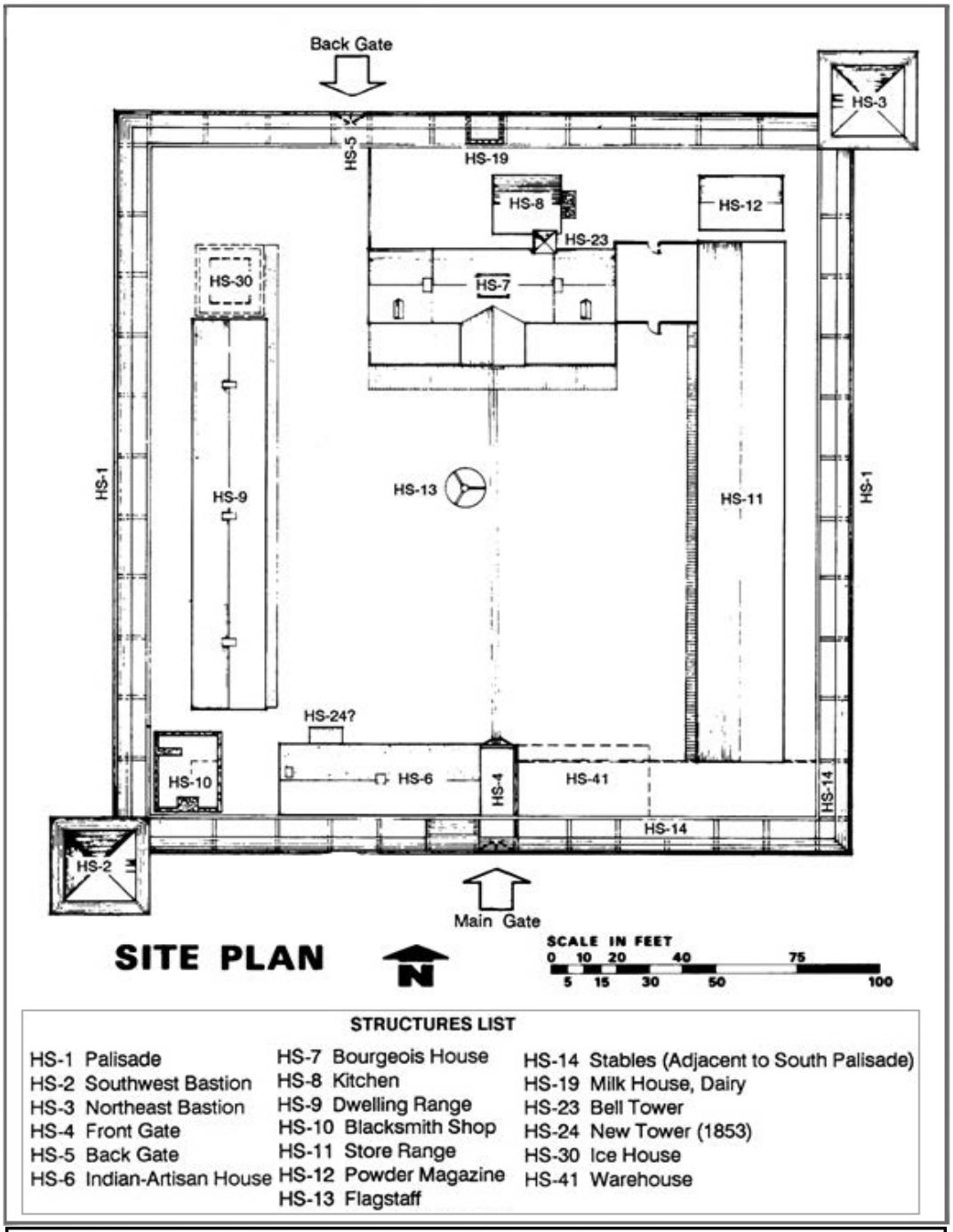


Image 11.9: Fort Union Trading Post Site Plan. Image identifies the location of various features within reconstructed Fort Union Trading Post, and their corresponding use within historic Fort Union, ca. 1851. Source: National Park Service.

[54] Peterson and Hunt, Jr., *1987 Investigations,* 110-113; Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 49; Hunt and Peterson, *1986 Excavations*, 92-94.

Massive gates hung within the new north and south palisade walls. The main entrance facing the river on the south included a strong room, an area;measuring about 12 by 32 feet with two sets of double gates at either end. This picket-lined space was created after the smallpox epidemic of 1837, and prevented unauthorized access to the fort's interior courtyard. The outer gate measured 12 feet wide by 14 feet high. An 1843 painting of a treaty of peace between unidentified American Indians and U.S. officials or AFC officers, created by French-*Canadien engagé* Jean-Baptiste Moncravie, was installed over the gates. This painting may have been removed by 1851-1852. In the western half of the north palisade was a 10 foot-wide, large, but simple back gate that led out on to the prairie. In 1834, new stone bastions replaced the earlier versions, and were described as two stories tall, with embrasures and pyramidal hipped roofs. They averaged 22 feet square and stood 27 to 28 feet tall; the lower 22 feet was built of stone. They were 3 feet thick and had whitewashed walls. Balconies were built at the top of the second stories. In 1843 a flagstaff was reported atop each roof, with a bison weathervane on the northeast bastion and an eagle weathervane on the other. Between 1853 and 1858 a third wood story was added to the southwest bastion.[55]

Immediately west of the main gate was the log 21 by 60 foot Indians' and artisans' house. The east end of this bison skin and sod-roofed building served as reception room and store for American Indians, and opened into the passageway formed by the double gates. The west end was the work area for artisans, (a tinner, blacksmith and gunsmith), then later served as an office. The two rooms shared a centrally located chimney with two hearths. A small room, or "trade shop" situated south of the reception room and within the palisade bracing, shared an opening with the reception room through which goods were exchanged. It is likely that the bracing system was used to support this room's walls, roof and floor. A second window, on the fort's exterior wall, could be opened from the trade room, for trade when security was particularly high.

Two long buildings were aligned along the interior east and west palisades. Along the west side was the 119 by 21 foot, gabled dwelling range, or apartments for employees. This range replaced an earlier range of about 120 by 24 feet, which was destroyed in the 1832 fire. Historical evidence suggests that the replacement range was built poteaux en coulisse (i.e., with grooved posts) over the existing foundation and divided into six nearly equal compartments. Along the east side a 25 by 157-foot store range contained a luggage storage room, a retail store, a wholesale warehouse, a meat

[55] This and the following paragraph are based on Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 167-169, 175-177, 181-183; Peterson and Hunt, Jr., *1987 Investigations*, 114, and 126-127.

storage room, and a fur press room. The gabled frame building was sided with weatherboards. It had a garret and a stone-lined cellar measuring roughly 30 by 12 feet.[56]

At the north end of the enclosure stood the bourgeois house and, behind it, a bell tower, kitchen, and dairy. The bourgeois house, the most elaborate fur trade era structure on the upper Missouri, was depicted graphically with two very different appearances between 1833 and 1866. Early images show a 1 ½-story house, with weatherboard siding painted white, green window shutters, and a red-painted shingle roof with four dormers. Two chimneys penetrate the roof, equally spaced at a distance from the gable ends. Its appearance was similar to late eighteenth and early nineteenth century French Colonial or French-Canadian design. On the south wall was a full-width veranda (described as a "piazza" in 1843) that used an extension of the building's roof as its cover. Turned posts supported the roof in 1843. A picket fence extending the width of the house was painted brown. The first floor contained four rooms and a central hall; the attic was apparently one open space that was subsequently subdivided into three rooms. The bourgeois house was remodeled between 1848 and 1850. Alterations included an additional story added to the central section, between the chimneys, and a gallery (also known as a widow's walk) on the top of the roof. The chimneys were extended, the veranda removed, and in its place built a narrower and centrally placed 18 foot-wide, two-story gabled porch supported by eight columns. In 1851 it was painted white with red shutters, with blue porch columns and red porch railings. Some earlier shutters were reused and enlarged for the second story windows. The roof gallery had blue posts, white pickets and red railings. The picket fence and four hitching posts were painted red. In the gable of the upper porch was painted a portrait of Pierre Chouteau, Jr. In 1864 a stairway was added to the front of the house.[57]

Archeological investigation determined the bourgeois house foundation measured 75 by 22 ½ feet, and uncovered evidence that this building, in its 1 ½- story form, was built between 1832 and 1834. Its veranda may have been remodeled up to four times. The house replaced an even earlier bourgeois house located slightly to the north, and immediately adjacent to the original north palisade. The 1832-1834 house was built on stone foundations apparently recycled from a fire-damaged building or old fireplace, or both. Construction of these foundations followed a Georgian period technique, in which the stones were laid on top of boards or timbers, as a means of providing additional

[56] Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 201-204; Wilfred M. Husted, "1969 Excavations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota: A progress Summary," National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska (1970), 19-21; Rocky Mountain Region Historic Preservation Team, 14-15, 18-19.
[57] Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 185,

stability. A similar technique was found in the design of foundation support for the remodeled porch.[58]

North and behind the bourgeois house was the log kitchen, which never appeared in any illustrations of the fort, although a maintenance description in 1864-1865 mentions the tasks of daubing and whitewashing the walls. Between the kitchen and the bourgeois house was a 10 by 6-foot bell tower that was first graphically depicted in 1851-1852. It had a pointed roof and what appeared to be a decorative lightning rod, and was probably connected to the north outside wall of the house. Archeological excavations suggested that the kitchen measured about 20 ½ by 16 ½ feet, and though there was historic reference that the floor may have been "paved," this was not confirmed in the 1986 excavations. North of the kitchen, and situated within the palisade buttresses, was the 9 by 8-foot dairy, which had a paved floor.[59]

Other larger buildings and structures within the palisade included an ice house, powder magazine, a blacksmith shop, and a flagstaff. The 24 by 21-foot log ice house located north of the dwelling range had a door in the floor and a rope ladder to access ice stored below grade. The upper floor was used for a time to store lumber. The ice house may have been demolished and reconstructed between 1847 and 1851. The roughly 24 ½ by 16 ½ foot limestone powder magazine, attributed to a stonemason named Miller, had whitewashed walls 4 to 6 inches thick, a barrel-vaulted interior, double doors, and stood north of the store range. The 25 by 20 ½ foot blacksmith shop may have had two forges in its interior, and was located west of the Indians' and artisans' house. In the center of the palisade stood a 60 to 63-foot flagstaff equipped with bracing at the base and wood climbing pegs. In 1843, it is known that at its base was a vegetable garden and a cannon, surrounded by a roughly circular "railing and panel work" fence 16 feet in diameter. The flagstaff was no longer depicted by visiting artists after 1853, and was replaced by a "new" rectangular tower in the southwest quarter of the post.[60]

Space against the palisade and under its gallery provided location for a number of smaller structures. Horse stables described in 1843 were located along the west and south palisades, measured 117 by 10 feet, and accommodated 50 horses. A charcoal house was probably included within the horse stables on the west side. Stables for bison calves were located against the north palisade behind the kitchen in 1843, as was a hen house, an artist's studio, and a cooper's shop. Less mention was made by visitors of built resources outside the palisade, although images reference a variety of structures over 30 years.

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[58] Ibid., 185-193; Hunt, Jr., *Material Culture Reports*, Part I, 60; Hunt and Peterson, *1986 Investigations*, 83-96; Hunt, Jr.,"Origins of Fort Union," 386-388; Rocky Mountain Region Historic Preservation Team, 11.
[59] Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 195, 219, 227, Hunt and Peterson, *1986 Investigations*, 102-104.
[60] Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 205-208, 241; Husted, "1969 Excavations," 22-24; Douglas D. Scott, "'This Flag-Staff is the Glory of the Fort': Archeological Investigations of the Fort Union Flagpole Remains," 1986, (MWAC), 6.

Resources located outside the protected confines of the fort included a boat yard used for construction of the small mackinaws that provided auxiliary downstream transport. The circa 1843 painting by Moncravie documents a boat dock on the north bank of the Missouri, directly in front of the fort, but this structure was not captured by other visiting artists before or after 1843. The composition of this bank of the river may have been such that a more permanent dock was unnecessary. A distillery was installed in 1833, but was in operation for only a short time, the manufacture of alcohol was suspended 1834. Charcoal kilns were described as being located south of the river in 1843, and the locations may have moved many times.[61]

Fort Union occupants planted gardens at different times within and beyond the palisades. Prince Maximilian reported in 1833 that Fort Union had no garden and was skeptical that any would prove successful. Yet by 1835 at least three gardens were planted and produced vegetables. The first seeds and sets were planted in May and included potatoes, corn, peas, red onions, radishes, lettuce, parsnips, carrots, yellow French radishes, celery, curled parsley, oyster plant, turnips, dwarf beans, pole beans, cabbage, onions, and cucumbers. A 1 ½-acre garden established in Garden Coulee is believed to be the main garden and was fenced. A garden south of the river was reserved for the sprawling and slow-to-mature crops of corn, squash, pumpkin, melons, and beets, and may have been fenced. The distillery house yard grew radishes and "tongue grass". Another small garden was created within the fence around the flag staff. In 1843 there were two gardens, one planted at the mouth of Garden Coulee and the other attached to the Fort William stockade.[62]

Use of the terrace area also included stock enclosure. Stock included hogs, oxen, cattle (milk and beef), and horses; in 1833, fort visitor Prince Maximilian reported that the interior of the fort was filthy, due to the 50 to 60 head of horses picketed in the courtyard each night. Additional stock was secured in the Fort William stockade to the east. In addition to serving as the primary horse corral, this facility was used to secure the winter's hay supply and as an auxiliary (protected) habitation area. As noted previously, the stockade would later be used as a hospital for Indian victims of smallpox. This structure is shown in Moncravie's circa 1843 painting of the fort. A second fenced area shown in the 1843 sketch is interpreted as a graveyard. This Euro-American cemetery was located about 100 yards east of the main fort.[63]

Numerous pictorial and written historic accounts document, and archeological investigations confirm, that American Indian camps dotted the prairie west and north of Fort Union. In 1851, Swiss artist Rudolph Kurz described a Nakoda (Assiniboine) camp

[61] Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 209-217, 264-266
[62] Ibid., 264; David Wishart, "Agriculture at the Trading Posts on the Upper Missouri, Prior to 1843," *Agricultural* History 47 (January 1973), 61.
[63] Alicia Caporaso, "Six Upper Missouri River Trading Posts: Trends in Organization," *South Dakota History*, 38 (Winter 2008), 322-324; Barbour, *Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 49;

in a manner that would have been familiar to predecessors. "A group of gaily colored tents," he noted, "with their attendant poles from which are suspended trophies, such as scalps, buffalo beards, strips of red cloth, etc., … men walking about, youth at their games, girls carrying water, women trudging in with wood, cleaning and scraping hides; horses grazing or near their owners' tents … a multitude of dogs.[64]

The Excavated and Reconstructed Fort

While no historic buildings or structures associated with Fort Union survive above grade, the partial reconstructions in the form of two buildings and seven structures are considered a contributing resource within the NHS' National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and National Historic Landmark (NHL) boundary. In accordance with National Register Criteria Consideration E, the reconstructions were accurately executed in a suitable environment; they are presented as part of a restoration master plan; and no other building, object or structure with the same association to Fort Union Trading Post has survived. Their design was based upon the level of detail provided in archeological, written, and pictorial records concerning historic construction and appearance. These resources are built on the location of the original structures. The justification for Criteria Consideration E is the same for the justification provided in the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Landmark nomination (NHL Exception 6). Namely, the reconstructions were designed to be as accurate as possible, were presented in a dignified manner, and were reconstructed as part of a formal design plan. This plan, the 1979 "Fort Union Reconstruction Analysis," was subsequently modified to reflect additional historical research and excavation.[65]

The reconstructions at Fort Union Trading Post NHS are maintained and managed as historic buildings and structures in the park's building inventory, but they are not represented as authentic historic property. Rather, they serve as the primary interpretive resource for the NPS unit. A number of smaller objects, historic and reconstructed, are also on-site. For instance, a number of the original stone blocks that display chisel marks are used as benches throughout the site.[66] Outside the palisade, a variety of objects, reconstructed by volunteers according to original designs (but not designed or built to the same level of exactness as the reconstructed buildings and structures), have been placed to aid with interpretation. These include pit saw frames and a huge robe press in front of the palisade that add to the historic scene. In the summer months a small grouping of canvas tipis is located outside the north palisade gate.

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[64] Thompson, *Fort Union Trading Post: Fur Trade Empire on the Upper Missouri* (Williston, North Dakota: Fort Union Association, 1994), 68.
[65] See, for example, Douglas D. Scott, *"This Flag-Staff is the Glory of the Fort": Archeological Investigations of the Fort Union Flagpole Remains, with a Contribution by John R. Bozell* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service, Department of the Interior. 1986), 20.
[66] Richard Cronenberger, "Fort Union Original Stones: Notes to Dena Sanford for NHL Nomination," 16 April 2002, National Park Service—Midwest Regional Office (NPS—MWRO).

While a variety of sources from the 1830s to the 1860s informed the design process, the NPS based the partial reconstruction of the fort on its appearance circa 1851. This period corresponded with the 1851-1852 residence of Rudolph Kurz, a Swiss artist, diarist, and American Fur Company employee who produced detailed drawings and observations of Fort Union and the people who worked, visited, and traded there. Other sources of visual documentation from the 1830s to 1866 also informed the design process. The artifact materials recovered during the 1980s excavations, and their contextual information, significantly contributed to the reconstructions. Ultimately, the reconstructions were both informed and limited by the extent of knowledge gathered from the written, pictorial, or archeological record. In instances where information was lacking on necessary detail, existing historic resources of the same era as Fort Union were visited, and architectural details copied in order to complete reconstruction. In some instances, archeological resources were also incorporated into the reconstructions. In instances where such references were silent on necessary detail, existing historic resources of the same era as Fort Union were visited, and archeological details copied in order to complete reconstruction. Observing the goal of accuracy and authenticity, the "Fort Union Reconstruction Analysis" (a document that guided the reconstruction process) delineated between historical and archeological facts and assumptions. The reconstruction team understood that their final design never existed in its exact form during its period of occupation. In addition, the design team also needed to balance historical accuracy with modern building codes and maintenance requirements. The first Fort Union reconstruction occurred in 1985 with the completion of the flagstaff and picket fence enclosure, followed in the winter of 1986-1987 with the Bourgeois House and bell tower. Reconstruction of the palisade and bastion occurred between 1988 and 1989, followed by the Indians' and artisans' house in 1990-1991.[67]

Archeology Beyond the Palisades

Beyond the Fort Union palisade, a number of archeological surveys completed between 1973 and 2010 identified additional Fort Union era surface and subsurface features on the terrace. Identificatio of these resources these occurred duringNPS monitoring of Department of Transportation projects or in association with carrying out various NPS projects. Investigative techniques used in the greater terrace area and on the

[67] Cronenberger, "Design for Permanence: Historic Accuracy and Modern Construction," *Indians & Traders: Entrepreneurs of the Upper Missouri: Fur Trade Symposium 2000 Proceedings* (Williston, ND: Fort Union Association, 2001), 136; *Fort Union Reconstruction Analysis* (Washington DC: National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1979) passim. While a Kansas limestone was used for the bastions and foundations, Cronenberger identified the possible location of the original quarry for the Fort Union construction. Drawing on the historical record, Cronenberger and two Fort Union staff members discovered a site approximately two miles north of the NPS unit, which included a limestone ledge, and "several piles of stone, neatly gathered and ready to be loaded…, [but since] covered with lichen and other surface growth." Richard Cronenberger, "Fort Union Recollections," 26 January 1988, unnumbered page 7. Copy on file MWRO.

western edge of the Garden Coulee area included pedestrian and geophysical surveys, proton magnetometer surveys, as well as reconnaissance and monitoring work. A proton magnetometer survey of the entire Fort Union site and the Fort William stockade area has been undertaken. These investigations led to the identification of a rock-lined well (Feature 18) west of the fort's southwest bastion, and the site of a sawmill (ca. 1858) outside the north palisade. Archeologists also found evidence of a substantial structure or structures just beyond the east palisade that might indicate a former corral or portions of an unknown number of small structures. Beyond the west palisade, along the terrace edge near the NPS trail leading from the parking lot to the reconstructed fort is the site of a possible lime kiln (HS-27) that was built into the west side of the slope. This earthen feature was identified during the 1986 excavations, and by 1998 was severely eroded. It consists of a large, heat-reddened bell-shaped pit.[68]

Guided by a dual focus on providing insight to "the significant role played by Fort Union as a fur trading post on the upper Missouri River," and "the central issue of reconstruction," archeological investigations in the 1970s and 1980s rarely strayed beyond the foundation-lines of the historic palisades.[69] When archeology did take place in other areas of the national park unit, it usually occurred in compliance with the Section 106 and Section 110 requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended. This requires any "project, activity, or program either funded permitted, licensed or approved by a Federal Agency [that] may take place on or off federally controlled property" to account for and mitigate "the effects of [such] undertakings on historic properties." Following passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), federal agencies were "further required to consult on the Section 106 process with … Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPO), [American] Indian Tribes," Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians to mitigate or avoid any disturbance of cultural and/or historical resources.[70]

In compliance with NAGPRA in 1990, and following the completion of the Fort Union Trading Post reconstruction in 1993, a number of archeological investigations within the boundaries of the NRHP site were triggered by the need for Section 106

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[68] Hunt, Jr., and Peterson, *The 1986 Investigations*, 11; William J. Hunt, Jr., to Superintendent Andy Banta, electronic mail message, 3. March 1998, Section 106 file, MWAC; William J. Hunt, Jr., Archeologist, to Manager, Midwest Archeological Center, "Trip report, Post-burn inventory, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (FOUS)," 19 May 2000, MWAC; Peterson and Hunt, *The 1987 Investigations*, 129-130.

[69] Quotations are from Public Law 89-458 (80 Stat. 211), "An Act to authorize establishment of the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota and Montana, and for other purposes," dated June 20, 1966; and Paul L. Hedren, "Why We Reconstructed Fort Union," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 23 (August 1992), 352.

[70] Quotations from U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, American Indian Liaison Office, "National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106: A Quick Guide for Preserving Native American Cultural Resources" (2012) <https://www.nps.gov/history/tribes/Documents/106.pdf> (accessed 12 September 2019).

compliance in regards to relevant federal "undertakings" such as the upgrade or slight re-routing of roadways, trenching for new utility lines, repairing or laying new waterlines, prescribed burns, and other projects related to improving park infrastructure that necessarily involved some degree of ground-disturbance or ecological restoration. Beginning in the early 1990s, a number of post-prescribed burn inventories revealed that the gravel terrace on which historic Fort Union was constructed (and partially reconstructed) is scattered with artifacts that are variously identified with an unspecified occupation that predates the construction of Fort Union as well as post-fort era occupations and internments that are most likely associated with the Crow-Flies-High Village site.[71]

Archeological Resources that Predate the Enumerated Periods of Significance

In addition to the archeological resources already mentioned, the NHS includes archeological resources that correspond to ancient and historic Indigenous use. Many were found during the 1980s excavations and included both architectural features and artifacts that were disturbed during the fort's initial (1828) construction; they were subsequently mixed in with fort-era cultural material. Though much of the historic Fort Union has been excavated, a great deal of in situ archeological materials also remain undisturbed. Collectively, the archeological resources have the potential to provide key insights into the use and evolution of this key geographic area over time. Along with previous studies and stored artifacts from earlier excavations, these materials have the potential to provide key insights on historic Fort Union's material culture as well as shed light on the construction, maintenance, and demise of the original fur trade post. The same is true for the Crow-Flies-High Village site and the Mondak site. Discrete areas within these sites have been disturbed at various times over the past century, but there is ample evidence that much can still be learned from further archeological study of both sites—

[71] Hunt, Jr.,"Trip Report for an Inventory of the Proposed Bodmer Overlook Trail and Bodmer Overlook Perimeter, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (FOUS). Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, 2000; Hunt and Ann C. Bauermeister, "A Post-Burn Inventory of the West Terrace, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (FOUS), Williams County, North Dakota/Roosevelt County, Montana. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska (2002); Duane Klinner, "Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site — Survey of 64 Acres; report submitted as UNDAR-West Project Number 2061 via TRNP Order no. PX1540-8-0041, Requisition/Reference No. FU071, to the National Park Service, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Medora, North Dakota, by UNDAR-West, Department of Anthropology, University of North Dakota, Belfield (1998); Scott Stadler, "Memorandum to Manager, Midwest Archeological Center (MWAC), from Archeologist, Midwest Archeological Center (MWAC) dated December 5, 2000, regarding Excavations related to waterline construction, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (FOUS), Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln.

especially when done in concert with historical research and the insights of associated Native peoples.[72]

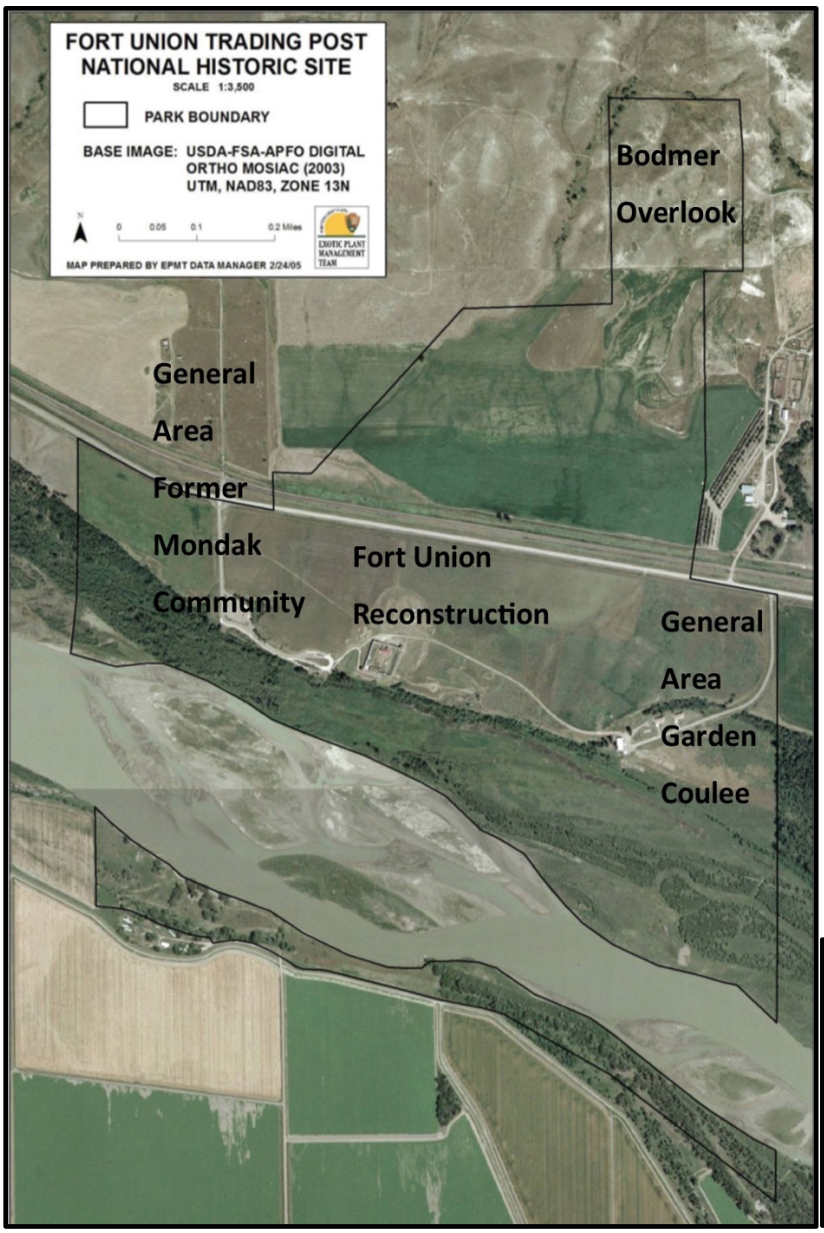


Image 11.10: Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. Image identifies statutory boundaries, use areas, specific features, and terrain within the NPS unit. Source: NPS.

Throughout the historic site there are locations that include debris scatters, other artifacts, and magnetic anomalies that merit further investigation in the future. Some are recorded sites, others are not. They include American Indian encampments, a lime kiln, at least one cemetery, and a boat yard. Many are characterized by a broadly scattered and diffuse assemblage of American Indian artifacts that have been recorded during various

[72] Finney, *An Archeological Overview and Assessment*, 2-5; and Kaitlyn Chandler, *Fort Union Ethnohistory: Final Report, September 29, 2014*, prepared for National Park Service Midwest Region [M.N. Zedeño, Principal Investigator and Editor], 20-24.

archeological investigations. They include flakes, pieces of shatter, core and biface fragments, and at least one fragment of a stone pipe. While such materials are often associated with protohistoric , prehistoric or historic American Indian occupations, there have also been numerous prehistoric objects identified—some dating to 1050 BCE (before current era) or earlier. Archeological information indicates that people related to the area's horticultural earthlodge dwellers occupied the terrace edge sometime between 1400 and 1700 CE (current era), possibly in temporary encampments. It is also likely that the fort site's favorable location near the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers also sustained communities of pedestrian nomads who predated the occupations of horticultural villagers by centuries and millennia. During the excavations of historic Fort Union, a wide array of lithics, ceramics, and other small artifacts were recovered. Based on the nature of the materials and the strata where they were most frequently encountered, many of the lithic materials correspond to the Late Archaic Perio), while the ceramics and associated lithics are representative of the Mortlach complex which is most prevalent in northeastern Montana, northwestern North Dakota and southern Saskatchewan—and is likely ancestral to historic and contemporary Nakoda (Assiniboine) communities in the region.[73]

[73] On potential Nakoda (Assiniboine) connections to the Mortlach complex, see Dale Walde and David Meyer, "*Pre-contact Pottery in Alberta: An Overview," Manitoba Archaeological Journal, 16: 1-2 (January 2010): 154-159.* "BP" signifies "Before Present;" "Common Era," or CE, is the chronological equivalent of Anno Domini, or AD. On the historic and ongoing importance of the NRHP site and the Confluence area for contemporary Native communities, see Chandler, "Fort Union Ethnohistory: Final Report, September 29, 2014" passim; and Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study,* 42-52, 67-72, 75-85, 88-99, 103-113, 117-127, 135-143, 147-154, 164-175, 216-234.

Epilogue

Whitewash History and Reflecting on the Confluence

On a bright and sunny day, the reconstructed Fort Union Trading Post gleams brighter and whiter than its historical predecessor ever did. Although fur company employees applied whitewash to protect the palisades, bastions, and interior structures from the elements, the historical fort would have very rarely, if ever, looked as bright and crisp as it has over the past three decades. The effect can be startling to first time visitors, who often assume the reconstructed fort is an original historic structure. Of course, the goal of NPS management is not to trick or confuse visitors, and they are readily told that the fort is an in situ partial reconstruction of what the fort looked like in the early 1850s. Nevertheless, the fort still gleams like an apparition from a forgotten past—and is presented as such. The reconstructed Fort Union Trading Post freezes, interprets, and presents the way things were during the fur trade era from 1828 to 1867. Reconstructed in order to resurrect "the Flame of History," the National Historic Site (NHS) presents historic Fort Union as a "bastion of peaceful coexistence."[1]

In keeping with this theme, Fort Union Trading Post NHS invites visitors to celebrate cultural interaction while taking in a living history presentation, views of the Missouri River, and the surrounding uplands. In short, Fort Union can seem like an island in time that simply disappeared after 1867. This circumstance can lead some to play a wistful game of "what if?" What if the American West was more like Fort Union, and European Americans collaborated with, rather than cheated or fought against Native peoples? There are no answers to such a question, because it is not grounded in historical events. Nevertheless, Fort Union provides a place for visitors to ponder futures that never were. Such games are important, and especially at a site where historical personalities, commercial activities, and material cultures are so richly presented. How the fort corresponds to the subsequent 150 years of history, or reflects on the many thousands of years that the ancestors of the people who traded at Fort Union lived in the region people living in the region, is not clearly addressed. Consequently, this Epilogue endeavors to make the case that the processes that led to the establishment of historic Fort Union, the subsequent cultural and ecological changes that the Upper Missouri fur trade wrought on the peoples and landscapes of the region, and the persistence of a boom and bust regional economy that remains almost entirely based on resource extraction, are the core legacies of Fort Union's historical significance.

[1] Quotations and other references to interpretation in this paragraph are from "Fort Union at Fifty, 1966-2016: An Online Exhibit" <https://www.nps.gov/fous/learn/historyculture/fort-union-50th.htm> (accessed 16 June 2020).

In the "Introduction" of this Historic Resource Study, the author critiques the application of Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier thesis" to the on-site interpretation of Fort Union Trading Post NHS. In particular, it was noted that Turner's idea that the frontier was the multi-generational crucible of American identity is now widely regarded as a distasteful relic with no explanatory power. However, it is important to acknowledge that Turner also defined the frontier as a recurrent economic system that shaped the economic, material and social life of the United States. In an essay titled "The Middle West," Turner described an economic and industrial process by which the Great Plains were more fully incorporated into the national economy and its political systems in the late 19th century. Almost like an ingredients list, he noted that the "transcontinental railroad, the bonanza farm, the steam plow, harvester, and thresher, the 'league-long furrow,' and the vast cattle ranches, all suggested spacious combination and systematization of industry."[2] Turner made no mention of the 19th century fur trade, in part because it predated the subjects noted above and because it was already central to his essays on the Colonial and Early National periods in eastern North America. Nevertheless, it could certainly be added to his "resource frontier" list of the Plains. Like the agrarian and industrial transformations of the "Middle West," the fur trade profoundly rearranged the ecology and helped clear the slate for new legal, political, economic, and cultural definitions of the landsape. As Sebastian Braun notes, "resource frontiers do not simply extract resources and then disappear without a trace. They extract resources and leave a fundamentally changed environment. On the northern plains, the resources have taken diverse forms: in no particular order, fur, gold, water, hides, land, uranium, buffalo bones, coal, and, for quite a while now, oil."[3]

<u>In the New Nexus of National Commerce</u>

From the early 18th century until the early 19th century, the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence was situated in a broad network of travel, exchange, and commerce that radiated westward across the Northern Plains, southward to the Gulf of Mexico, northward to the Canadian prairies, and eastward to the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. With the growth of the Missouri River fur trade in the decade after the War of 1812, the Confluence became more closely connected to St. Louis and the American Fur Trade. This singular orientation continued through the entire existence of Fort Union, and persisted at a diminished level through the 1870s as Fort Buford became a strategic site in the prosecution of the so-called "Indian Wars" of that era. Unlike Fort Union, Fort Buford was also supplied by overland wagon trains until the early 1880s and then, after the Northern Pacific Railroad had completed its track through Dakota Territory, by rail

[2] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Middle West," in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press), 143.
[3] Sebastian Braun, "Revisited Futures: The Bakken, the Plains, Potential Futures, and Real Pasts," in *The Bakken Goes Boom: Oil and the Changing Geographies of Western North Dakota*, ed. William Caraher and Kyle Conway (Grand Forks, ND: The Digital Press at the University of North Dakota, 2016), 93.

and wagon train, or rail and steamboat. This arrangement eventually shifted to the Great Northern Railway Line in 1887, which passed near the soon to be decommissioned Fort Buford.[4]



Image E.1 & E.2: Bison Hides and Bones at Rail Sidings. Image on the left (E.1) shows bison hides ready from shipment from Dodge City, Kansas. Image on the right (E.2) is a pile of bison bones and skulls that will be shipped to a fertilizer plant. Sources: (E1) National Museum of Natural History; (E2) State Historical Society of North Dakota.

While the steamboat transformed the fur trade, and made the bison robe trade a viable business pursuit, the railroad would radically transform all commerce on the Northern Plains. Instead of St. Louis, Chicago became the locus and the prime meridian for an east-west axis of commerce and transportation. By the late 1870s and early 1880s, all western railroads directed traffic through the booming city of Chicago, which quadrupled to more than one million people and became the second largest city in the nation just two decades after the Great Fire of 1871. Much of this explosive growth came from the forests, grasslands and mountains of the West, which were converted into food, lumber, houses, jobs, factories, machines and capital. To borrow from Carl Sandburg's famous poem "Chicago," the West *made* the city into the meat packer, the "Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation."[5] The dramatic rise of Chicago should also remind us that the "winning of the West" was an industrial conquest, and it played out with special force on the Northern Plains. The near extinction of the bison is a case in point. The final slaughter of the once great herds occurred because, in the early 1870s, a new tanning process created a huge market for

[4] Greg Gordan, "Steamboats, Woodhawks and War on the Upper Missouri River," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 61 (June 2011), 30-47; Mark Harvey, "Securing the Confluence: A Portrait of Fort Buford, 1866-1895," in *At the Confluence: Now and Then* (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 2003), 46-47

[5] Carl Sandburg, *Chicago Poems* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1916), 3-4. For a superb study of Chicago's central importance to the history of the Great Plains, see William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), *passim*.

bison hides. Supple but strong, they were trimmed and stitched to become machine belts for factories in the Eastern United States and Europe.[6]

The stripping of bison hides, the surveying of railroads, and the rush of miners to the Black Hills were the primary causes of the Great Sioux War (aka Black Hills War) of 1876-1877, and the main concerns of the soldiers at Fort Buford. The vortex of interests and processes that led to these developments were profoundly destructive, and mostly unfathomable to people on all sides of the conflict. Suddenly, a new system of valuation had taken root on the Northern Plains where everything, it seemed, could be measured in terms of industrial processes and capital outlays. The value of an entire hillside, and the effort required to tear it down, could be determined by a precise rubric: $18.94 per ounce of gold. A live bison had no cash value, but dead it was worth $3.50 minus the cost of the bullet and the price charged by the railroad to transport a stack of hides to a factory in Pennsylvania. And a sack of flour was worth whatever a hungry miner would pay for it. Such transactions, and the commercial networks that made them function, profoundly reshaped the social and physical environment of the entire region in a very short space of time, and ultimately set the course of development for the next century and more. Some of the calculus would also have to account for the costs associated with the building and supplying Fort Buford, maintaining and drilling troops, and providing rear support to troops campaigning on the plains. [7]

Mining Grass in a World without Bison

In the 1880s the vast expanses of lands that were previously occupied and utilized by Native nations and bison suddenly became a wealthy investors dreamland. This was certainly the case for men like Theodore Roosevelt and the Marquis de Morès, who owned vast herds in the Little Missouri Badlands to the south of the Confluence area. Roosevelt and de Morès also represented a particular type, or caricature, of the men who were drawn to the business: the East Coast Dandy who wished to become a rugged outdoorsman, and the French nobleman in search of profit and adventure.[8] Like their fellow ranchers, both men viewed the "fenceless" open-range system as a commons that was broadly shared by a cluster of monopolies. Given the inherent tension in monopolists

[6] Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 218-224; Martha Geores, *Common Ground: The Struggle for Ownership of the Black Hills National Forest* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 34-39.
[7] Historical gold prices tabulated by the National Mining Association, "Historical Gold Prices, 1833 to Present" <www.nma.org/pdf/gold/his_gold_prices.pdf> (accessed 12 June 2020). Bison hide price from Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 157.
[8] Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York City: Random House, 2010), 188, 193-197, 267-268, 299-304. Theodore Roosevelt, "Ranch Life in the Far West," *The Century Magazine*, 35 (February 1888): 495, Roosevelt, "Hunting in the Cattle Country," Magazine of Travel, no. 1 (January 1895): 71; D. Jerome Tweton, "The Marquis de Mores and His Dakota Venture: A Study in Failure," *Journal of the West*, 6 (October 1967) 521-534. Also see James K. Brisbin, *The Beef Bonanza; or How to Get Rich on the Plains* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1881).

looking to share the same resource, every rancher came to the same conclusion about how to increase their wealth. In short, each concluded "that the only sensible course … to pursue [was] to add another animal to [the] herd."[9]

In the early years of the open-range era, this system worked fairly well, and roughly aligned with dictates of ecology and the market. Because the native grasses of the plains had evolved in concert with grazing, and bison populations had declined markedly over the previous decades, much of the grass in the region was particularly lush. By the time cattle had come up the trails from Texas in the late 1870s, they quickly put on fat and muscle that rapidly increased their market value. Moreover, the new grazing initially caused the short grasses to thrive, which further sustained the herds through summer and early fall. When first grazed in spring or early summer, the grasses that are favored by bison and cattle immediately put out a dense new growth to continue the process of photosynthesis and sustain the development of flowers and seed. During the first years of the open range era, this basic dynamic of grazing and rapid regrowth seemed almost miraculous, and ranchers accorded an almost magical productivity to the grasses of the western Dakota Territory. [10]



Image E.3: Cattle Caught in a Blizzard. Drawing by Charles Graham from a sketch by Henry Worrall." Source: *Harper's Weekly*, 27 February 1886.

As would happen throughout the region, the magic did not last. In a classic example of what Garrett Hardin called "the tragedy of the commons," overstocking of the grasslands destroyed the basic resource that made the western Dakotas so attractive for

[9] Harold E. Briggs, "The Development and Decline of Open Range Ranching in the Northwest," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 20, (March 1934): 521-528; Palais, "History of Stock Raising," 92-97.
[10] Barbara Beving Long, "Open Range Ranching in North Dakota, 1870s-1910s: Context Study" (Lakeland, Minnesota: Rivercrest Associates, Inc., 1996), 7-10; See, for instance, *Range Ecology of Bison on Mixed Grass Prairie at Wind Cave National Park: A Final Report* (Ames, IA: Iowa Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, Iowa State University; University of Wyoming-National Park Service Research Center, 1980), *passim*.

ranching. Given the logic of the marketplace, which provided a high rate of return for a relatively modest investment in cattle, increasing herd size was a rational decision. As Hardin put it, every rancher was "locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit—in a world that is limited." Unfortunately, the pursuit of one's "own best interest" in a world of supposedly free grass only brought "ruin to all." When an especially hard winter hit in 1885-1886, the undernourished cattle were left to die en masse as freezing winds brought sleet that crusted over heavy snow drifts. Unable to find shelter, whole herds simply laid down together and died.[11]

Homesteading

The open-range was not a commons in a strict sense. Using homestead laws, large ranching operations were able to file claims on critical watering sites that allowed them to effectively control access to vast, adjoining acreages of grass. Nevertheless, there was plenty of overlap between the various ranges used by the largest ranching operations and most everywhere was open to all-comers in the wetter summer months when seasonal streams or springs sustained cattle. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as ranching became a less speculative business with more attention to range and herd management, homesteading started to become more widespread in western North Dakota and eastern Montana. In McKenzie County, to the south of the Confluence, a primary trigger for this homesteading movement was the allotment of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. In an effort to create more acreage for European American homesteaders and, ostensibly, to make Native peoples learn the habits of self-reliance, market agriculture, and self-discipline, the U.S. Congress passed the General Allotment Act in 1887. Also known as the Dawes Act, after U.S. Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts, allotment completely undermined Native conceptions of natural resources, land ownership, and the primary importance of community bonds over individual desires. In these regards, the Dawes Act was a colossal failure. However, the advocates for allotment achieved their primary goals. Namely, the fracturing of Native communities and the acquisition of vast swaths of land. The resulting landscape was a checkerboard of private properties, with some "allotted" to Nueta (Mandan), Hiraacá (Hidatsa), and Sahnish (Arikara) families or individuals, and the rest opened to homesteading or direct purchase by U.S. residents or citizens.[12]

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[11] Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968): 1244; Also see Briggs, "The Development and Decline of Open Range Ranching in the Northwest," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 20, no. 4 (March 1934): 528-536; Palais, "History of Stock Raising," 28-29; and James Sherow, *The Grasslands of the United States: An Environmental History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 103-108. Hardin's article has received a great deal of criticism over the past several decades, but it holds up very well as an explication of the open-range system and its catastrophic end. See Brett M. Frischmann, Alain Marciano, and Giovanni Battista Ramello, "Retrospectives: Tragedy of the Commons after 50 Years," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 33 (Fall 2019), 211-228.

[12] See *MHA Nation History*, sections "Allotment," and "Change," <https://www.mhanation.com/history> (accessed 16 June 2020). The formal title of the law is "An Act to Provide for the Allotment of Lands in



Image E.4: Allotment in Severalty (Dawes Act): Upper half of a poster advertising the homesteading opportunities of the Dawes Act, ca 1911. The man pictured in the image is Padani Kikipi S'ni (Not Afraid of Pawnee) of the Ihanktonwan Dakota Oyate. Source: U.S. Department of the Interior.

While homesteading had been a legal mechanism for acquiring land since the passage of the Homestead Act in 1862, and would be augmented by subsequent legislation, almost no properties were acquired to the west of the Missouri River until the late 1880s. This changed with the passage of the 1902 Reclamation Act, which President Theodore Roosevelt championed as a key instrument for converting arid landscapes into fertile croplands. The Lower Yellowstone Project (1904) along the Montana-North Dakota border, and the Buford-Trenton Project (1907) in Williams County, were among the first reclamation projects in the United States, and are still in operation today.[13] The original Homestead Act underwent several new iterations over several decades, as would-be land owners, boosters, railroad companies, and politicians dreamed of making the drylands bloom. Most of these projects were successful in the short term, but reached their peak of productivity in the 1920s. This was partly the result of better and more extensive irrigation, and federal programs that supported the widespread use of plowing to improve soil fertility in the short term. The degree to which these programs achieved expectations is difficult to determine, since they coincided with several years of ample rain throughout the Southern and Northern Plains. When the severest drought in recorded history hit in the late 1920s, however, and gave rise to the "Dust Bowl" conditions of the 1930s, farms were abandoned and irrigation canals filled with dust and dry weeds. Much as had occurred during the Open Range era, hopeful signs and easy expectations collided with the hard limits of climate and ecology.[14]

Severalty to Indians on the Various Reservations" (aka General Allotment Act or Dawes Act), *Statutes at Large* 24, 388-91.

[13] See *Lower Yellowstone Irrigation Project*, The Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University < https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Learn-About-TR/TR-Trail/Theodore-Roosevelt-in-North-Dakota/Lower-Yellowstone-Irrigation-Project> (accessed 16 June 2020); and *Buford-Trenton Project*, Bureau of Reclamation < https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=487> (accessed 16 June 2020).

[14] Collectively, the Homestead Acts include the following: Donation Land Claim Act of 1850, Homestead Act of 1862, Southern Homestead Act of 1866, Timber Culture Act of 1873, Kinkaid Amendment of 1904,

Dam Nation

When President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected President in 1932, he intended to promote federal infrastructure projects that would employ large numbers of people, bring electricity and clean water to rural areas, prevent flooding, and, in some parts of the country, generate hydropower. The two regions of the country where all of these priorities came together were the Pacific Northwest and the Tennessee Valley, but Roosevelt was also committed to major dam projects in the Missouri River Basin. The latter became widely familiar to most Americans when Margaret Bourke-White's dramatic photograph of the Fort Peck Dam construction project on the Upper Missouri River was featured on the cover of the first issue of *LIFE* Magazine. The appeal of such projects, and the many federal dams that were built over the next few decades, can hardly be underestimated. Besides the host of benefits that included irrigation, flood control, navigation, and the generation of cheap public power, dam construction would provide jobs for tens of thousands of the unemployed and foster immediate economic growth in the areas around the dam sites. Along with these many pragmatic considerations, the giant engineering projects had transcendent qualities all their own that seemed to inspire and amaze the whole nation. As Roosevelt put it in January 1935, dams were a perfect embodiment "of what we want to be, of what we want to accomplish as a people."[15] Perhaps the only thing remotely comparable to the excitement generated by the dam projects of the New Deal were the NASA programs of the 1960s and the Apollo 11 landing on the moon.[16]

While dams excited the nation as a whole, they posed an almost existential threat to Native communities along the Middle and Upper Missouri Rivers. By the early 20th century, the Mandan Hidatsa and Arikara (MHA) Nation had lost about a million acres of their tribal holdings through treaties with the United States and the Allotment process. With the advent of New Deal dam building, they also lost substantial acreage on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation; namely, the fertile bottomlands near the Missouri River and the lower stretches of its tributaries. Despite these losses, the imposition of government regulations and oversight, the legacies of past epidemics, and the tensions between Christian missionaries and traditional leaders, the people of the MHA Nation had achieved self-sufficiency through their extensive crops in the bottomlands as well as the resources they drew directly from the river. In the parlance of federal officials in the Office of Indian Affairs, the MHA Nation had achieved "complete economic independence" by 1949. Later that same year, however, the Pick-Sloan flood control

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Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909, Stock-Raising Homestead Act of 1916, Subsistence Homesteads provisions under the New Deal in the 1930s.

[15] Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "Men and Nature Must Work Hand in Hand"—A Message to the Congress on the Use of Our National Resources. January 24, 1935," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1935*, Vol. 4 (New York: Random House, 1938), 59-62.

[16] Paul C. Pitzer makes this case in his book *Grand Coulee: Harnessing a Dream* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1994), xi.

project of the Army Corps of Engineers closed the gates of Garrison Dam and began to inundate 152,000 acres of the most diverse and productive agricultural lands in North Dakota. In addition, they lost access to sacred sites crucial habitats and resource use areas. tragic irony abounded in every aspect of this development, it is worth noting that all this fertile land was inundated as part of a large flood control project that would protect downriver farmlands in Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri. In short, the MHA Nation endured a permanent flood and deep cultural loss so that farmers working with federal farm subsidies could consolidate vast swaths of land without having to worry about the Spring Pulse of the Missouri River inundating their lands.[17]

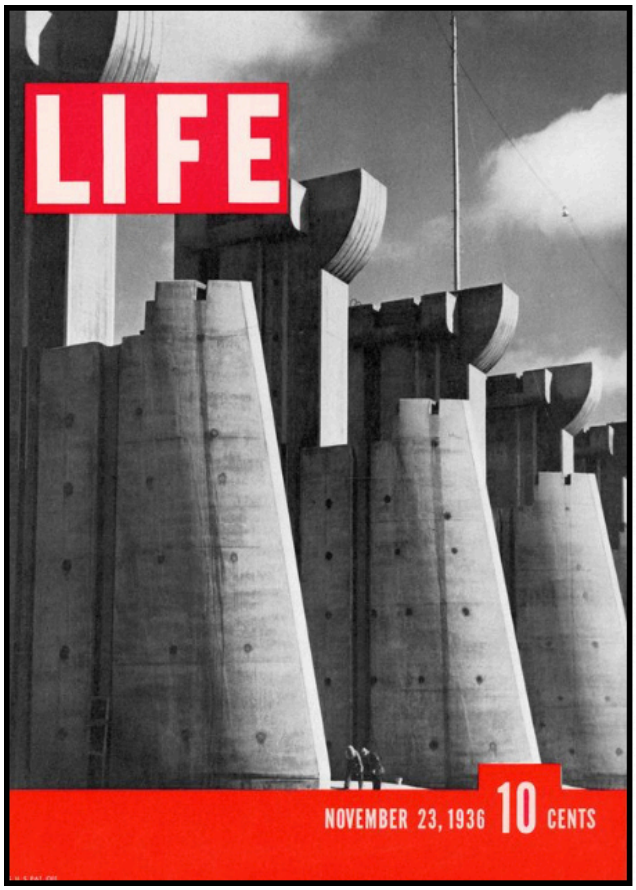


Image E.5: Cover of the first issue of *LIFE Magazine*. Port Peck Dam under construction, 1936. Source: Public Domain. As proved the case with various federal infrastructure projects from railroads, homesteads, canals, and programs like Allotment and education, the engineering of the major rivers of North America invariably harmed Native communities.

[17] Raymond Cross, "'Twice-born' from the Waters: The Two-Hundred-Year Journey of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Indians," in *Lewis & Clark: Legacies, Memories, and New Perspectives*, ed. Kris Fresonke and Mark Spence (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 117-142; Robert Kelley Schneiders, *Unruly Rivers: Two Centuries of Change Along the Missouri* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 172-187; Roy W. Meyer, "Fort Berthold and the Garrison Dam," *Journal of the Northern Plains*, 35 (Summer/Fall 1968) 321-325. The Spring Pulse refers to the heavy flow of water that follows a large snow melt in the upper basin. For companionate scenarios among other tribal nations along the Missouri River, see Michael L. Lawson, *Dammed Indians: The Pick-Sloan Plan and the Missouri River Sioux, 1944-1980* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982).

Bakken Boom

In terms of resource extraction and business models, the truest heirs of the American Fur Company and the Upper Missouri Outfit of Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Co. are the various oil corporations that are operating in the Bakken Formation that underlies Fort Union and a broad swath of the Northern Plains. Like the fur trade, the oil business is composed of highly competitive companies that frequently merge and break apart in accordance with the movement of global markets. In the case of the Bakken, the adoption of new technologies like hydraulic fracturing (generally referred to as "fracking") have allowed for converting shale deposits into oil that can be extracted from the ground. Much as new tanning methods led to a marked increase in the hunting of bison, petroleum derived from fracking has rapidly become one of the largest sectors of the U.S. oil industry. The first oil boom in the Bakken began in the 1970s and reached its peak in the mid 1980s, then slowly diminished through the 1990s, with occasional spikes as new technologies developed or war-related drops in overseas oil production made the Bakken a temporarily viable enterprise. By 1999, however, "there wasn't a single rig drilling new wells in the state."[18]

The latest, largest and longest lasting oil boom began in 2007, dwarfing all of the previous waves of development in western North Dakota. As a rapidly increasing number of flaring wells created nighttime hellscapes, some communities in Williams and McKenzie counties began to feel under siege. As the number of wells multiplied, and job seekers poured in from across the United States, make-shift "Man Camps" popped up in the oil fields where workers lived in overpriced and often slap-dash dormitories. Established communities tried to mitigate some of the rapid changes taking place in the region, but they vulnerable to a new form of financial inequality that divided long time neighbors who either had or did not have an oil lease within their landholdings. In recent years, oil companies have begun eyeing the possibility of accessing large amounts of water from Lake Sakakawea (the large reservoir created by the Garrison Dam).[19]

As Native people had done during the fur trade era, and long before that, the MHA have worked to navigate their way through converting a loss (in this case, the inundation of their former homes and croplands) into a means for rebuilding their communities by selling water to the oil companies to be used in the fracking process. The MHA Nation Tribal Council, along with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) also began leasing and monitoring leasing sites on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, and

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[18] Quotation from Chip Brown, "North Dakota Went Boom," *New York Times*, January 31, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/03/magazine/north-dakota-went-boom.html?_r=0>(accessed 14 June 2020).

[19] Spotted Bear and Cross are quoted in Stephen Andrews, "creation stories: survivance, sovereignty, and oil in MHA country" < https://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/transmotion/article/view/488/1448> (accessed 16 June 2020).

inspecting waste water sites to make sure they do not ruin ground water supplies or pollute Lake Sakakawea. As Cory Spotted Bear notes, the oil boom presents an opportunity for the MHA, but only if people do not lose their heads, and only if tribal members work to keep various opportunities and demands "in balance." Raymond Cross, a Nueta legal scholar, reasons that the oil boom might present an opportunity for a fuller balancing of "the existing civil compact between the Indian and non-Indian peoples" and usher in a higher degree of self-determination and a more autonomous voice in the arenas of politics and governance. [20]

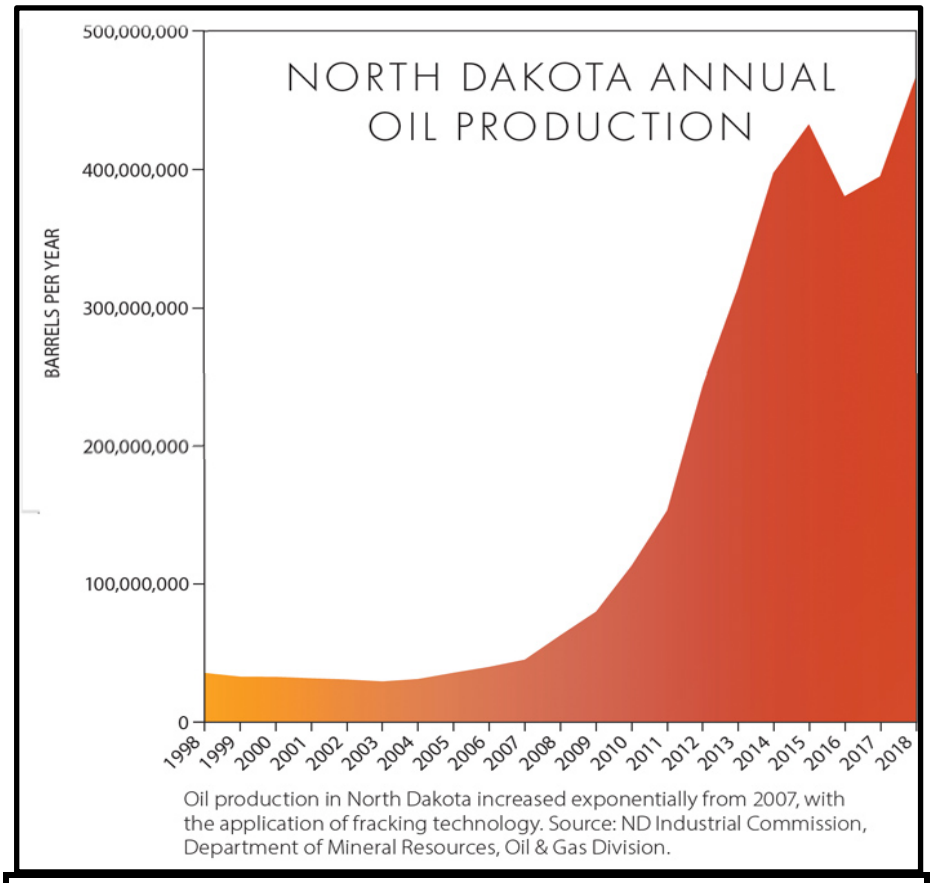


Image E.6: Annual Oil Production. Source: North Dakota State Water Commission, North Dakota Fracking and Water Use Facts (Bismarck: North Dakota State Water Commission, 2019).

Success in these matters did not have an orderly beginning. The Bakken oil boom swept onto the Fort Berthold Reservation with remarkable swiftness, and it took a few years of catch-up before the MHA and the Bureau of Indian Affairs had developed and implemented a process for selling oil leases by 2010. In doing so, they opened a flood gate to the oil companies and the thousands of workers who poured onto the reservation

[20] See for instance, the "Mission Statement," "Vision Statement," and related documents at the *MHA Energy* webpage < https://www.mhanation.com/mha-energy > (accessed 16 June 2020).

to open hundreds of new well sites. By 2016 the number of producing wells on reservation lands numbered 1,426, and they collectively produced one-sixth of all the oil flowing out of North Dakota and generated $760 million. Tribal members received some of that wealth, and the tribal government evenly divided tax revenues with the state. In the years since these developments began, the MHA has made new moves toward bolstering tribal sovereignty, as based on treaties, the ability to develop their nation and national economy through oil revenues, and their growing experience with exercising greater authority over non-tribal members. To sustain these gains, and ensure a more central role in their new economy, the MHA Nation has chartered oil companies as well built the MHA Nation Clean Fuels Refinery.[21]

While the Bakken boom has brought an improved financial situation to many Nueta, Hiraacá, and Sahnish families in western North Dakota, and has led to a fuller exercise of tribal sovereignty by the MHA Nation Tribal Council, the experience remains a mixed curse and a mixed blessing. The high number of non-Indian people now living and working on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation have resulted in a proliferation of man camps, an increase in drug abuse, theft, and sexual violence against women, and homelessness from terminated employees. These problems are further compounded by the MHA's overtaxed health and social services system, and federal prohibitions against tribal police department from enforcing laws against non-tribal members, regardless of the severity of the crimes. In the midst of these lawless "frontier" conditions, toxic waste was illegally dumped on reservation lands, waste water spills went untended, and young women (aka "stolen sisters) were abducted and taken away. The reservation soon harbored pathologies it had never engendered, and was prevented from effectively addressing.[22] Industrial booms and their concomitant social pathologies are as old as industrialization itself, and they no doubt found purchase in the often violent and high-stakes world of the fur trade. One need only reflect on Manuel Lisa's disregard for the life of Antoine Bissonnet, the rapes and serial pedophilia that characterized Toussant Charbonneau's life in the fur trade, or the pathologies of François Deschamps, his wife, and their sons.[23]

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[21] Sierra Crane-Murdoch, "The Other Bakken Boom: America's biggest oil rush brings tribal conflict," High Country News, 23 April 2012, <http://www.hcn.org/issues/44.6/on-the-fort-berthold-reservation-thebakken-boom-brings-conflict/view> (12 June 2020);

[22] Crane-Murdoch, "On Indian Land, Criminals Can Get Away With Almost Anything," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 22 February 2013, < http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/02/onindian- land-criminals-can-get-away-with-almost-anything/273391/:> (accessed 16 June 2020); Deborah Sontag and Brent Mcdonald, "In North Dakota, a Tale of Oil, Corruption and Death," *New York Times*, 28 December 2014 <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/29/us/in-north-dakota-where-oil-corruption-andbodies-surface.html> accessed 16 June 2020).

[23] On Charbonneau, see for instance, Francis A. Chardon, *Chardon's Journal at Fort Clark, 1834-1839*, ed. Annie H. Abel (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 271.

The economic booms that accompanied the various "Midwest" resource frontiers that Frederick Jackson Turner described for the Northern Plains were all preceded by the fur trade. And like the fur trade, all of these various frontier enterprises followed a similar dynamic and pursued a common goal: to transform raw materials into things that could be sent to distant markets at a relatively low cost, and garner a sufficient profit in a metropolitan market place. Consequently, to define and place value on a resource frontier is to remove its resource from its original context. A pelt, a chunk of ore, or a specialty crop must first be considered in the contexts of the communities that desire the resource and possess the political and economic wherewithal to bring it to their population center. Such a calculus abstracts a commodity and disassociates it from the human communities where it is found, but therein lies the first step in creating additional value. Such abstractions keep resource frontier communities from gaining access to national or metropolitan markets without first developing a singular relationship with a wholesaler, who in turn becomes the designated procurer of the resource for powerful clients. The result is a diminution and, often enough, disintegration of small or rural communities that are unable to acquire the full market value of their produce, and are thus forced to quit a resource frontier or rapidly deplete it in an effort to salvage some part of their original investment.[24]

As Sebastian Braun notes, "there is a connection between inequality, dependence, poverty, and frontier resource extraction: the first three create a society where the strength of local communities is diminished, and are thus more likely to be dependent on the continuation of the frontier economy and producing for distant markets. Put another way, resource frontiers are manifested in "economic and political patterns that take advantage of and create more inequality. They persist until one of two things happens: either the resources are depleted and capital leaves, or some beneficiaries successfully appeal for government price assistance or new infrastructure projects that put resource frontiers in closer proximity to the centers of commerce. In the first case, local communities are left with depleted resources and nothing to show for it. In the latter case, the resource frontier receives higher returns for its products but must abide the economic and political principles of a more regulated marketplace. Such a transformation cannot hold for long, however, unless the resource frontier can become part of a more diverse and stable industry. This latter lesson has been learned by the MHA Nation, as it tries to gain control over its resource base, the extraction process, and the social problems associated with a mostly untethered employee base. Similarly, the State of North Dakota is developing plans to build subdivisions and schools in the Williston Basin to attract families to attach their futures to a growing economy. So long as that vision is liked to a

[24] This and the following paragraph are informed by Sebastian Braun, "Revisited Frontiers: The Bakken, the Plains, Potential Futures, and Real Pasts," in *The Bakken Goes Boom: Oil and the Changing Geographies of Western North Dakota*, ed. William Caraher and Kyle Conway (Grand Forks, ND: The Digital Press at the University of North Dakota, 2016), 91-116

single finite resource, the current boom will most likely follow and age-old script and become a bust. This, then, is the dynamic that has defined western North Dakota and the Northern Plains since 1828.

Dancing Across the Medicine Line

> *There are origin stories associated with all of these places; the breaks all around this area have spiritual significance. Origin stories say that the rocks are the male Creator and the earth the female Creator. These rocks are very powerful and our people came to pray to the Creator and to leave offerings here. These rocks often have petroglyphs and pictographs on them. A petroglyph on a rock adds a new life to it, a new spirit. The spirits live all around here, and that is why there are so many cairns, medicine wheels, rock rings and all kinds of archaeological sites in this area.*[25]
>
> Nakoda (Assiniboine) Elder on the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Area
>
> *The trappers, the traders, the explorers, the military, they all came through here, they passed through here. But we lived here. We had names for places around here, for the river and the hills and the mountains that are often ignored.*[26]
>
> Apsáalooke (Crow) Consultant on the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Area

It took more than a generation after Clark's passing before the conditions he sought to foment and control began to unravel on the Upper Missouri River and the Northern Plains. By the mid 1860s, a series of conflicts between the U.S. Army and American Indian nations marked a signal change throughout the Northern Plains borderland. The violence rent a swath of destruction through Native communities and provided the *coups de grace* to the commercial fur trade. With fur bearing animals already scarce, and bison herds in decline, the AFC and its successors withdrew from the region and sold its physical assets to the federal government. To the north, the HBC remained headquartered at Fort Garry—but the Company's focus turned northwestward to the subarctic where fur-bearing animals were more abundant and Native peoples less bothered by the conflicts in the heart of the borderland.[27]

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[25] Quoted in M. N. Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study for Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, and Theodore Roosevelt national Park: Final Report—December 8, 2006* (Task Agreement No. J606804112, DSCESU Cooperative Agreement CA-1248-00-002), 227.

[26] Ibid., 225. The Yellowstone River (first referred to as Roche Jaune by French trappers) has always been known to the Apsáalooke (Crow) as Iichíilikaashaashe Aliakáate (Elk River).

[27] The literature on U.S. Army engagements with American Indian Nations on the Northern Plains during this period is voluminous. For a brief but insightful overview, see White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991) 94-99. On the HBC shift to the northwest, see Arthur J. Ray, "Periodic Shortages, Native Welfare, and the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1930," in *The Subarctic Fur Trade: Native Social and Economic Adaptations*, ed. Shepard Krech III (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), 12-15.

These shifts within the HBC, as well as the violence to the south, also coincided with significant changes in Canadian politics. In 1867 the Dominion of Canada was established as a self-governing unit within the British Empire, and two years later the new Government of Canada purchased Rupert's Land from the HBC. This effectively ended the Company's quasi-official relationships with First Nations and Métis peoples, and transferred all jurisdiction over "Indians and lands reserved for the Indians" to the new government. French-speaking Métis, who were not regarded as "Indians," grew alarmed when the new government began a cadastral (i.e., grid, or Township and Range) survey of the Red River Valley—with their home territories were slated to be sold as private property to migrants from the east. These developments gave rise to the year-long Red River Rebellion –which resulted in a measure of self-rule for the Métis but could not prevent a subsequent round of more extensive land surveys.[28]

Parallel developments occurred in the United States, where Township and Range surveys spread across North Dakota in the 1870s. With the 49th parallel as a baseline for both the United States and Canada, a cross-border template of square parcels spread westward from the prairies to the plains. The routes of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Northern Pacific Railroad, and Great Northern Railroad were also surveyed and constructed in the last few decades of the 19th century, slicing across the Northern Plains borderland. As both nations sought to extend federal authority, military strength, and new markets on an east-to-west transect across the Northern Plains, the north-south connections that once defined the borderland were replaced by east-west rail connections to major political and economic centers. These changes were not geographic abstractions, but exercises of political and economic force that were bent on the annihilation of space and time. In the case of the Northern Plains, that meant abstracting and integrating the region into economic and political processes of two young nation states.[29]

[28] Thomas Flanagan, *Metis Lands in Manitoba* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1991), 1-28, 199-224; Graybill, *Policing the Plains: Rangers, Mounties, and the North American Frontier, 1875-1910* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 71-74, 77-79, 81-85; Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 86-90. Also see James William Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013), 79-107.

[29] Andro Linklater, *Measuring America: How and Untamed Wilderness Shaped the United States and Fulfilled the Promise of Democracy* (London: Walker Publishing Company, 2002), 160-175; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 38-52; D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. 2, *Continental America, 1800-1867* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 533-546; Beth LaDow, *The Medicine Line: Life and Death on a North American Borderland* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 14-21.



Image E.7: Official railroad map of Dakota issued by the railroad commissioners, November 1st, 1886. Map shows U.S.-Canadian Border, with gridded land surveys. A spur from the Great Northern Railroad mainline can be seen running northwest by the Turtle Mountains, near the center of the image. Source: Library of Congress.

The most active and iconic exercise of federal power came through the actions of the Canadian North-West Mounted Police (Mounties) and the U.S. Army. Both of these armed forces would be lionized for decades, as exemplars of masculinity, national pride, and firm justice. Such attributes were celebrated in news stories and popular fiction, and received iconic treatments in early and mid-twentieth century cinema. The Mounties first gained renown in the 1880s when they crushed a rebellion Métis, Nehiyaw-Pwat (Plains Cree), Nakoda (Assiniboine), Siksika (Blackfoot) and Lakȟóta (Lakota, aka Teton Sioux) peoples who sought to exercise their autonomy within the Department of Saskatchewan and their basic rights of self-determination. In the United States, multiple campaigns, punctuated by unprompted massacres, were directed against Native Nations on the Plains from the late 1860s to the late 1870s. The most egregious exercise of military force occurred in January 1870 on the Marias River, about 40 miles south of the 49th parallel. An early dawn assault on an unprotected encampment of Piikáni (aka Blackfeet) resulted in nearly 200 deaths—mostly of children, women, and elderly relatives—the thefts of a large horse herd, and destruction of property. In the aftermath, the survivors and other Piikáni relatives moved to north to seek shelter among their Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) to the north of the 49th parallel.[30]

Profoundly disrupted and diminished by state violence, American Indian, First Nations, and Métis communities continued to live within the borderlands—where they maintained their social, material and cultural associations with each other. In the process, they flaunted the purpose of international border and, like the Trickster of so many Métis,

[30] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 154-165; Graybill, *Policing the Plains*, 84-92; *Hogue, Metis and the Medicine Line, 172-182;* Jesse Thistle, "The 1885 Northwest Resistance: Causes to the Conflict," *HPS: The Jornal of History and Political Science Journal* 3 (2014) <https://hpsj.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/hpsj/article/view/39584/35870> (accessed 30 May 2019). For a broad overview of U.S. campaigns against American Indians on the Northern Plains, see Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 109-112, 114-116, 118-125, 178-188. For a more recent Piikçni (Blackfeet) perspective on the Marias Massacre, see James Welch, *Fool's Crow* (New York: Viking, 1986), 289-313.

Ojibwe, Nehiyaw-Pwat, Nakoda, Niitsitapi, and Lakȟóta stories, made it into the Medicine Line –an invisible divide that fostered a new play-off system between the demands and enticements of two nation states. By moving within and across two federal jurisdictions, borderland peoples were able to avoid specific challenges on one side of the Medicine Line and seek out opportunities on the other side. Within Canada, a well-known example of this strategy involved Gabriel Dumont and the Métis who supported him during the North-West Rebellion. When their movement collapsed in the spring of 1885, many fled Saskatchewan by way of the Cypress Hills for refuge among fellow Métis in the Territory of Montana. Some eight years earlier, Tȟatȟáŋka Íyotake (Sitting Bull) led a large community of Lakȟóta to the Cypress Hills on the other side of the Medicine Line to avoid surrendering to U.S. troops in 1877. Tȟatȟáŋka Íyotake eventually moved back across the Medicine Line in 1881 and was briefly incarcerated at Fort Buford. Dumont eventually returned to his home in Batoche, Saskatchewan, but not before touring with *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show* in 1886 –a year after Tȟatȟáŋka Íyotake completed a tour of the United States and Canada with the famed showman.[31]

Seven generations after the closing of Fort Union and the advent of the so-called Northern Plains "Indian Wars," the borderland remains a mostly undivided homeland for the people who know it best. In accordance with international laws and multiple treaties, Native peoples continue to live on both sides of the border with few or no restrictions on their movements. Members of nearly every Indigenous nation in the borderland region also maintain relationships with kin on both sides of the border, and large gatherings are invariably "international" affairs. Distinct Métis communities are also situated in Montana, North Dakota, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. In the United States, where the federal government does not recognize the Métis as distinct peoples, interlocking networks of kinship have allowed generations of Métis communities to "own themselves" and "know who they are" while hiding in plain sight. This is particularly true for the descendants of people who fled south after the North-West Rebellion. Other Métis communities were also incorporated into existing reservations, namely the Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana and the Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota—where Michif (an amalgamation of Nehiyawewin [Plains Cree] and *Canadien* French) is an official language. By far the largest Nakawē (Plains Ojibwe)-Métis community is The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians who possess sovereign lands on the Turtle

[31] Bruce Vandervort, *Indian Wars of Canada, Mexico, and the United States, 1812-1900* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 215-229; LaDow, *The Medicine Line*, 46-40, 65, 68-71, 186; Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 170-184; Joseph Manzione, *I Am Looking to the North for My Life--Sitting Bull, 1876-1881* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 37-55, 140-153. For a concise overview of Trickster's in Northern Plains Indigenous cultures, see Amanda Robinson, "Trickster", in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/trickster> (accessed 30 May 2019). On the time that Tȟatȟáŋka Íyotake and Dumont spent with Buffalo Bill, see *Gabriel Dumont, Gabriel Dumont Speaks*, trans. Michael Barnholden (Vancouver, BC: Talon Books, 2009), 24-26; and Utley, *The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994, 279-282).

Mountain Indian Reservation in Belcourt, North Dakota. Just twelve miles from Fort Union Trading Post NHS, the Trenton Indian Service Area is mostly composed of people who were made landless when federal officials drastically reduced the size of the Turtle Mountain Reservation in the late 19th century. In response, a number of families moved toward the Missouri River where they took up lands that would later be designated off-reservation trust lands of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians. Lastly, it is important to note the latest community of Nakawē-Métis to gain federal recognition and a land base within the United States. These are the citizens of the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana who, on December 20, 2019, now possess a small reservation near Great Falls, Montana, and the full exercise their sovereign treaty rights and the various relationships they entail with the federal government.[32]

Living History

In the one hundred years between the end of Fort Union and its partial reconstruction, people who traded at the Confluence have always been in the region. Many of these people are Métis associated with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, as well as the Hiraacá, Nueta, and Sahnish of the Fort Berthold Reservation, the Nakoda of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, the Apsáalooke of the Crow Indian Reservation and many of the various relations of these peoples. More than the reconstructed fort, however, most visits to the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site are regarded as returns to the Confluence. The distinctions that are made in this divided sense of the location are readily apparent in the commentary of Native consultants. One person noted that the importance of the place long predated the fur trade.[33]

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[32] American Indian Law Alliance and Aboriginal Services of Toronto, "Border Crossing Rights Between the United States and Canada for Aboriginal People," *American Indian Law Alliance* (September 2016) <https://ptla.org/border-crossing-rights-jay-treaty#Cross%20Border> (accessed 3 June 2019); Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), and Nicholas Curchin Vrooman, *The Whole Country was....One Robe: The Little Shell Tribe's America* (Helena: Drumlummon Institute and Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana, 2013). For brief overviews of U.S. and Canadian military expeditions and policies in the Northern Plains, see Loretta Fowler, "History of the United States Plains Since 1850," 280-283, and David McCrady, "History of the Canadian Plains Since 1870, 313-318; both in *Handbook of North American Indians: Plains*, 13:1. On the saga of the communities within the Trenton Indian Service Area, see Gregory S. Camp, "The Dispossessed: The Ojibwa and Métis of Northwest North Dakota," in *At the Confluence: Now and Then*, ed. Susan Dingle (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 2003), 62-79. In regard to the federal recognition of the Little Shell Tribe, see "A big moment finally comes for the little Shell: Federal recognition of their tribe," *Washington Post*, December 21, 2019 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/a-big-moment-finally-comes-for-the-little-shell-federal-recognition-of-their-tribe/2019/12/20/72f5ee86-204d-11ea-bed5-880264cc91a9_story.html Accessed> (12 May 2020).

[33] Quotations and statements from consultants are all drawn from M. N. Zedeño et al., *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study for Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park: Final Report—December 8, 2006* (Task Agreement No. J606804112, DSCESU Cooperative Agreement CA-1248-00-002), 216-228.

It is neither coincidence nor vision that made the American Fur Company choose this place to build a fort. The Indians had known for a long time that this was a meeting place for many tribes. The traders just took advantage of it.

Still others noted personal, community, and historical associations

A lot of important things took place here. The Light, an Assiniboine man who went to D.C. in 1832 was killed here by one of his own band members. He put fear into his people and no one wanted to touch him. There were times when things were rocky, as 500 to 1000 [warriors] could show up at once. Carpenters had to build [burial] scaffolds. Blue Capotte built a Sun Dance lodge camp here to try to smooth things out. Others intermarried while camping out here. We shared some ceremonies. To the west of the fort, Sitting Bull showed up once with 300 warriors in full regalia. All these things and more happened at the confluence.

The clan mothers on my Hidatsa side [told me] that my great-great-grandfather Joe Youngbird was born out here… Last year I went and fasted and made a tobacco pack and wondered where I was going to put it up. They told me what tree to look for and stuff, and said I could do that up here, because we were up here and my grandpa was born up here. It is part of our area too. This is what I think when I think about my attachment to this land. Iron Bear was also here, he was in the party that went to Fort Laramie, a war chief and direct ancestor of my [Arikara] father.

Just south of here there are a lot of Hidatsa sacred sites—holes in caves where they went into and changed into animals. The Arikara had some of these too but further south. This was a good place to trap eagles. There are a lot of things about women here but I don't talk about it, they should.

The Confluence Area was and remains a site where individuals fast and receive powerful visions.

The story goes that a man was looking for an animal to use for a drum in the Okipa ceremony, and Lone Man was helping him. He asked for the turtle to try drumming on his shell and the turtle was able to withstand it. The best turtle would be a sea turtle and he had to go to the gulf. The sea turtle said he wouldn't give the man permission, but gave permission to build an effigy in his likeness. So the man used an oak tree and a bison hide to make an effigy. The turtle spirit would then go into the effigy [and the man] would have his drum. There are many effigies in these hills but their original purpose is not well known. The turtle effigies had something to do with the fog and Crow's Heart knew about it. Crow's Heart visited an effigy around here.

Consultants also gave specific recommendations about interpretation and activities within the National historic site. One

> *suggested an update of the annual Fort Union events, such as the rendezvous, to show more of the significance of the traditional resources and activities that took place in the park area. [And also noted that] traditional trade relations were different than trade with the American Fur Company and this should be highlighted in the exhibits.*

Consultants also offered constructive suggestions about presentations and exhibits, and made special note that they

> *would like to see exhibits and interpretive signs that explain in some detail the pre-fort significance and uses of the area. They stressed that trade was but one activity that was conducted here. The full range of tribal uses needs to be displayed, including, for example, the Indian and English names of native plants and animals, and Indian place names when possible. The consultants noted that lack of knowledge about a resource, being this archaeological or natural, leads to its destruction. People need to learn so that they can respect.*
>
> *One Apsáalooke (Crow) consultant noted that having empty tipis is a bad omen and calls death; traditionally tipis had to be smudged before they were left for any period of time, and contemporary Crow people still smudge their houses before going on travel.*

Like most visitors, and no doubt their forebears, the consultants

> *were particularly taken with the trading house. They observed, however, that the interpretive materials and exhibits are geared to entertain Western tourists. They recommended that more educational materials that explain in greater detail the history of the northern tribes around the area of Fort Union should be prepared. There is much less known about them than about the traders and the history of trade at the fort. This was a metropolis in the Indian world and that needs to be emphasized more.*

For the National Park Service, the return of a federal presence to the Confluence in the 1960s did not come with historical associations, commercial aspirations, or expectations of military success. Rather, it involved the reconstruction of a past that had been defined as integral to a collective national ethos. In the process, the National Park Service placed another layer over the ancient histories and associations that Native peoples have sustained since time out of memory. Dedicated to presenting a physical representation of a four-decade period that has been interpreted as a time of peace and collaboration between Native peoples and European Americans, the NPS has sustained a vision of the fur trade as an arena of exchange and collaboration where all-comers were able to meet their differing needs. There is a germ of truth in this notion, but the preceding study largely reveals the fur trade as a destructive force that corroded societies, ecologies, and engendered new realms of crisis and violence. Like all extractive industries, whether connected to furs, pelts, hides and robes, or wheat bonanzas, gold, oil shale, or dams and reservoirs, the long-term beneficiaries live far from the site of extraction.

Recommendations

This study began with two conceits. First, that the most important historical figures are the peoples with the longest associations to the Confluence area, the fur trade, and the borderlands region. And second, the economic and political implications of the historic Fort Union Trading Post are best understood in the context of the North American fur trade (as opposed to the history of a particular nation state) and the borderlands that extend from the Red River of the North to the western reaches of the Milk River. It is with those conceits in mind that I make the following recommendations for interpretation at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site and any subsequent historical, sociological, or anthropological studies that may be entertained by staff, university students, or curious scholars of any stripe. The first set of recommendations reflect my perspective as a Métis scholar. The second set relate more specifically to National Park Service needs and goals.

1) A Rails. Wheat. Cattle, Dams, Comparative study of the fur trade and Fort Union with the dynamics of the Bakkan oilfields and associated man camps on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation or other locales in the region.

2) A collaboration with Parcs Canada and Canadian scholars of the fur trade to more fully assess the distinctions, connections, and similarities between U.S. and Canadian fur trade histories and their interpretation.

3) A sustained outreach to the Ojibwe and Métis community of the Trenton Indian Service Area. This is one of the oldest communities in the region, and is largely comprised of descendants of people who traded and worked within the Canadian-U.S. borderlands fur trade. Of all the people in Williams Country, the history of Fort Union is more theirs than anyone else's.

4) The commission of studies on ways that the National Park Service can more fully engage with, and support, Native peoples who come to the Confluence area as cultural residents rather than visitors.

5) Finally, to shift interpretation toward people like Nancy Kipling/Madame LaBombarde. Stories like hers provide insights on life outside but near the palisades, at other AFC posts, between cultures, and between political dominions. Through it all she –and untold numbers of women like her—perseveres in a world where choices are few. Yet, she is also the forebear of hundreds of people who still live in the borderlands of the Northern Plains.

The following recommendations are categorized by resource management and thereunder by discipline. Completion of recommended plans, reports, and studies will provide managers with up-to-date science and scholarship for resource preservation and other decision-making; collaborating with tribal, public, and private partners; and engaging visitors and students through diverse, relevant, and inclusive interpretation and education programs.

Resource Management:

Archeology

Develop a report that synthesizes all information discovered and recovered during Fort Union's 1986-1988 archeological excavations; absence of a synthesis report prevents managers from fully understanding the scope, extent, depth, and significance of fundamental archeological resources and information recovered as mitigation for their destruction because of the fort's reconstruction; that absence in turn impairs decision-making about how best to preserve unexcavated in-situ archeological resources that remain within the fort site. This report should be completed as soon as possible to ensure preservation of institutional knowledge that will be lost as the excavating archeologists retire and/or pass away.

Complete archeological site evaluations and, as appropriate, Determinations of Eligibility and/or National Register nominations that document the authenticity, associative values, and significance of post-fort sites and features within the park's boundaries such as the Garden Coulee (Crow Flies High Village) site, the Mondak townsite, and the earth lodge feature on the riverbank in front of the reconstructed fort. This earth lodge feature is the sole surviving remnant of the Great Northern Railway's 1925 Upper Missouri Historical Expedition, which included the largest intertribal gathering since the 1851 Fort Laramie treaty council at Horse Creek in Nebraska.

Cultural Landscapes

Develop a Cultural Landscape Report that identifies and documents the characteristics, integrity, authenticity, associative values, and significance of the park's National Historic Landmark-contributing cultural landscape and provides data-based treatment recommendations for preserving, managing, and interpreting that landscape.

Complete a Visual Resource Inventory to document the visual characteristics of the park's cultural landscape and viewshed (beyond the park's boundaries) as well as evaluates and ranks significance of those viewsheds for future management decision-making; data can also be used to inform development of a Cultural Landscape Report as well as interpretation and education programs that facilitate visitor enjoyment and understanding of the viewshed's values to tribes as well as its national significance.

Historic Structures

Develop a Historic Structures Report to document the reconstruction of Fort Union, a contributing resource to the Fort Union National Historic Landmark district. The report should document reconstruction planning, describe the fort's buildings and structures as built, plus include measured drawings; identify construction materials; document and

assess current conditions and risk; identify maintenance needs; and make data-based treatment recommendations that align with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Ethnography
Partner with each traditionally associated tribe to complete special studies to identify, evaluate, and preserve traditional cultural properties and ethnographic resources within the park such as landscapes, plants, archeological sites and features, artifacts/museum objects, and stories related to not only the historic fort but also the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers' confluence area.

Museum Collections and Archives
Complete cataloging of archeological artifacts recovered during the 1986-1988 Fort Union archeological excavations and then produce one or more material culture reports that provide park managers, tribal partners, scholars, and the public with data about the scope, contents, and significance of the collections as a whole or of specific material or item types.

History
Write a special history study that explores the unrecognized and often conflicting roles of Fort Union and Fort Union-affiliated employees in organizing, being the site of, contributing to, or facilitating treaty councils with tribes; in representing the interests of tribes to the government at treaty councils (e.g., as interpreters); and in distributing annuity goods.

Write a special history study from primary sources, including tribal oral histories, that identifies and develops biographies of tribal leaders, both men and women, who participated in or resisted participation in the fur trade at Fort Union.

Write a special study that explores and documents the contributions to science and scientific collections—plants and wildlife, geology, paleontology, cultural anthropology/ethnography—of Fort Union and the fur trade on the Upper Missouri.

Interpretation and Education:
Partner with tribes to plan, design, and develop new museum exhibits that integrate and share their historic and contemporary values and perspectives about the region and fur trade.

Partner with tribes to develop educational materials about tribes—their cultures and histories and relationships with the area—that can be shared with park visitors on-site as well as presented to and/or used in tribal schools.

Organize and host scholarly symposia on different cultural and natural history themes/topics—e.g. tribal history, fur trade family genealogy, food sovereignty, water—that are similar scope to Fort Union's 1990 and 2000 fur trade symposiums.

Expand scope of park interpretation and education program to include diverse and inclusive in-person programs and non-personal services (e.g., media) that explore and

engage audiences in learning about tribal partners, park resources (e.g., archeological resources, museum collections, cultural landscapes), and natural history.

Update park living history programs to provide accurate, authentic, and relevant history of tribes, tribal peoples, clothing, etc. Programs should be developed with, include, and—ideally—be presented by representatives from the tribes traditionally associated with the area and fort.

Develop and implement standards for interpretive program evaluation that distinguish between history and heritage, assess level and thoroughness of resource knowledge and research, and are designed ensure the accuracy, authenticity, and relevance of in-person programs and non-personal services materials and special events.

Ensure park bookstore sells representative examples of current relevant scholarly works—books, articles, and documentaries--as well as literature, film, and music that represents or shares the historic and/or contemporary cultures of the peoples who lived, worked, or traded at Fort Union.

Future Research:
Complete a study to determine and document the cultural affiliation and traditional association with Fort Union of the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana, which received Federal Recognition in December 2019.

Conduct research to identify and document the family/genealogical histories of the individuals and families who worked, lived, and/or traded at Fort Union and then invite descendants to participate in special events and programs to share their stories, as they desire, with the public. Use information to update park living history programs so they include and portray individuals who lived and worked at or visited Fort Union.

Select Bibliography

Archives and Special Collections

Kansas NARA

North Dakota State Historical Society Archives

North Dakota State University Special Collections

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Montana Historical Society

Hudson's Bay Company Archives—Archives of Manitoba

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Minnesota

Digital Collections

- American Memory from the Library of Congress:
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The primary published sources for this study generally come from two types of sources. The most common are multi-volume collections that were compiled by antiquarians, editors, historians, and government officials in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These were usually published under the auspices of state historical societies, by U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, or as part of the professional catalog of tireless researchers like Earnest A. Cruickshank and Reuben Gold Thwaites. Most of the rest of the published primary sources come from volumes relating to the published correspondence, official reports, memoirs, or recorded memories of historical figures, Native leaders, literate fur traders, military officers and Native leaders. While many of these works were not compiled or published until late in the subject's life, or even posthumously, they still function as primary sources.

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Since the publication of Washington Irving's *Astoria: Or, Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains* (1836), the history of the fur trade within the current boundaries of the United States has largely been informed by a distinct national consciousness and the political boundaries of the national state. Rather than studying the fur trade on its own geographic terms, generations of scholars, fiction writers, and "history buffs" have represented the fur trade as the genesis of one transcontinental nation (Canada) and a regional footnote of another (the United States). Such national distinctions underscore how historians and students of history can reify national borders as fixed ideas and boundaries that distinguish nations and reinforce their sense of a unique national history and culture. Collectively, the North American fur trade histories written by Canadian and American scholars forms an unresolved and open-ended historiography that variously reaffirms national borders and the overlapping boundaries of culture, commerce, and territorial jurisdictions that both defined and were flaunted by fur trade enterprises. In part because the fur trade occupies a nebulous space in the histories associated with each nation's development, both Canada and the U.S. celebrate two variations on a common archetype. Namely the Voyageur and the Mountain Man, who both embody the racial, sexual and social crossings of cultural boundaries, and provide a virile and heroic symbol within each nation's popular origin story.

While these symbols still find purchase in both nations, the more trenchant anomaly in fur trade historiography has been the implied inevitability and stability of national borders and bordered states by invoking national myths of state-making. Over the past few decades, however, fur trade historians have crafted their histories within the context of borderland studies, which takes as a given that boundaries (whether political, economic, cultural) are fractured and contingent spaces that nominally divide but do not define the regions they bisect. This is as true as the waters of the Northern Great Lakes, the Northern Plains, and the Rocky Mountains. It is also true of the history of the fur trade, which multiple peoples creating a common dynamic for interaction and exchange in areas where central authority was almost non-existent.

While there is a rapidly growing body of scholarship on the history of the fur trade in various historical and contemporary borderlands of North America, including the American Southwest, the Pacific Northwest, the Rocky Mountains, the Southeastern United States, the Northern Great Plains, and the Great Lakes, some of the best scholarship has come out of Canada. Some of this reflects the history of Canada, and the

broader sense of national ethos that identifies the fur trade as central to the nation's origin story. This fur trade history also serves as a kind of reconciliation process, whereby Canadians of various stripes have sought come to terms with—and begun to embrace—the cultural, political, and economic diversity of their nation's history, the primacy of First Nations and Métis peoples in this national reassessment, and the wealth of historical materials embedded with the National Archives and the oral histories of Indigenous Canadians. These contemporary contexts are present in the following list of secondary sources, and are increasingly become central to any serious study of the fur trade in the United States and especially the Northern Plains and Great Lakes.

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The past few years have seen a wealth of superb historical scholarship on subjects related to the War of 1812, Indigenous communities in the Great Lakes region, North American borderlands, settler colonialism, the U.S. Early Republic, British colonial Canada, military history, environmental history, American Indian removal, fur trade culture and commerce, and a host of related fields of study. Though a fair portion of these works understandably coincide with the bicentennial of the War of 1812, most are inspired by relatively new trends in what is broadly referred to as “cultural studies.” This includes work in cultural anthropology, colonialism, political economy, Indigenous studies, studies of violence, cultural ecology, and various sub-genres within these disciplines. Insights from this scholarship has informed the present study in numerous ways. These works—alongside more than a century of scholarship on the peoples and events covered in this historic resource study—highlight some of the myriad processes that collectively shaped communities, landscapes, values, and actions. Instead of discrete subjects or topics, recent scholars have emphasized the connections between various groups and situations during the historical period that David Curtis Staggs has called “The Sixty Years War for the Great Lakes.” Moreover, this scholarship suggests an even broader history; one that recognizes persistence within dynamic change and traces a deep history and an ongoing legacy that situates the lower River Raisin a broad constellation of places and peoples.

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