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American
Fur Company's
Fishing
enterprise
on Lake Superior

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Mississippi
Valley
Historical
Review
page 483
Vol 12.

The history of the American Fur Company is so little known - especially its uniqueness as an example of Big Business half a century before monopolistic and large scale tendencies are popularly supposed to have originated in the United States - that an interesting and significant episode in its development has been entirely overlooked. This was the establishment of fisheries on Lake Superior - an early instance of the maintenance of a subsidiary industry by an American firm.

Whether the fisheries scheme may be attributed wholly to Crooks is uncertain. As early as 1823 Robert Stuart, another of the company's agents, had recommended to Crooks that a plan be evolved for exchanging Lake Superior whitefish for corn, cheese, lard, and other provisions which the company bought in large quantities in Ohio. In his letter Stuart remarks that he has wished for several years to bring this barter system into operation and adds an obscure reference to what appears to have been an early attempt to operate the fisheries for commercial purposes: "Perhaps Duncan Stuart's White Fish speculation, has given you a bad opinion of that branch of the business, but

American
Fur
Company's
Fishing
Enterprise
on Lake
Superior

page 486.

rely upon its being the best of any part of the operation.

From ensuing correspondence, it is evident that Crooks looked coldly upon the proposition. The matter does not appear to have been taken up again until the company had been reorganized. With the establishment of the new concern, new policies were inaugurated. One of these made possible the commencement of the fishing business and hence needs some consideration.

For years the inland headquarters of the company for the lake region had been at Mackinac, whither every summer resorted the traders and clerks with their packs of furs and skins collected during the winter and spring. Representatives of the firm met them there, announced the policies for the ensuing year, and apportioned the provisions, which had been gathered mainly from the Ohio Valley and western New York. Having received their provisions and goods, the men embarked once more in their Mackinac boats, manned by Canadian voyageurs.

Crooks, upon becoming president, changed the inland headquarters from Mackinac to La Pointe, an old fur post on Madeline Island, about forty miles east of the present

page 486. site of Duluth, and close to the southern shore. His reason for making this change was his plan to build a vessel on Lake Superior. Mackinac boats were clumsy, slow and dangerous. They also required many boatmen. Crooks' plan was to build a schooner and dispense with the services of the boatmen, who were too numerous to be employed profitably as traders during the winter and spring. Even this policy, however, had its drawbacks. The schooner, as soon as it should be ready for service, would displace sixty-five boatmen, all conversant with the fur trade and more or less acquainted with the company's policies; and the result would be that they would be engaged by rivals, to the great detriment of the company. Crooks therefore determined to employ them in catching fish. The schooner, too, could not pay for itself merely by transporting furs and provisions. With fish to transport to the Sault, however, it would prove itself an asset to the company.

The announcement of his fishing scheme seems to have been made by Crooks in a letter of Dec. 1834, to General Charles Gratiot in Washington: "We have great hopes of adding to the usual returns of our

trade, a new important item, in the Fisheries of Lake Superior." The letter is marked "confidential", and it requests Gratiot to "inquire of the Secretary of the Treasury whether fish taken and cured within the jurisdiction of Canada on Lake Huron by American Citizens, cured with American salt, and transported wholly in American vessels, the entire capital employed being exclusively American, are, or are not subject to duty?" Then, to explain his motive for inquiring about fish taken in Lake Huron, instead of Lake Superior, he adds, "We do not at present wish it known that we have it in contemplation to establish any fishery."

This letter also indicates that as late as December, 1834, Crooks had no definite plans as to the exact location of his fishing stations. In fact, though voyageurs had traversed the lake for generations, and though Indians and traders on its shores had subsisted largely on fish caught in its waters, Crooks could learn but vaguely where fish could be caught in considerable numbers and he

page 486.

487

had the utmost difficulty in determining whether Isli Royale, reported to be famous fishing ground, was within the territory of the United States. Even an accurate map of Lake Superior was not to be had, for only one had been prepared, and all Crooks endeavors to secure a copy were unavailing. He was successful, however, in obtaining a pilot for the schooner the captain of the vessel that had surveyed the lake for the British admiralty preparatory to the drafting of the chart.

The years 1835, 1836, and 1837 saw the exploration of the lake and the establishment of the chief fishing stations. Crooks, who had been at Fort William when the change of the great inland rendezvous of the British traders to that post from Grand Portage was still a recent event, probably remembered that great quantities of fish had been taken in the vicinity of those places. At any rate he wrote thus to William A. Aitken the trader in charge at Fond du Lac: "... explore the north shore to the old Grand Portage, and even if you went all the way to the river Kaministiquia (where Fort

William stands) it will no doubt furnish us with useful information. A visit to Isle Royale if practicable for you to go entirely around it, and examine it well, will also still better enable us to determine where we ought to place permanent Posts for the fisheries." The necessary qualifications for a station, he added, were a safe harbor for the schooner and good fishing grounds.

Crooks could not have been ignorant that Fort William was beyond the international boundary; nor was he certain at the time that Isle Royale was not also within British jurisdiction. In fact, several statements by him give the impression that an understanding existed between Hudson's Bay Company and the American Fur Company, whereby the former were to have the exclusive right to the furs in the greater portion of the American territory stretching northeast from Fond du Lac in exchange for a certain sum of money and the privilege of fishing on the British side of the international line. Both arrangements, of course,

were contrary to the two countries concerned.¹⁰

Aitken's explorations in the establishment of a post at Grand Portage in the fall of 1836.

page 489

Great things were expected of this post because of its location. Crooks wrote enthusiastically about it: "Being on the north shore the Lake is rarely agitated by the prevailing winds, and the operations of the fisherman are seldom interrupted there, while the whole southern coast is constantly exposed to the heavy winds from West to North, and the sea too rough to allow the people to visit their nets sometimes for several days at a time. This happens most frequently in the very best fall fishery."¹¹

This post was placed under the direction of a half-breed, Pierre Côté, who made an agreement with the company to fish for it from 1836 - 1840 inclusive, on a five per cent commission basis. He had the assistance of two coopers, who made the barrels in which the fish were shipped to market, and of three other men in 1838 and of nine in 1839. The coopers received \$200 per year, the fishermen and boatmen from one hundred

page 489.

to one hundred fifty. He also employed about twenty Indians, whom he furnished with salt, nets, and barrels, to whom ⁽¹²⁾ he gave three dollars per barrel for fish.

page 490.

An accurate and contemporary map will be given here of this post clinging to a rocky spit of American territory, faced by sea almost as unknown and untraversed as the immense forests that stretched away behind it: ⁽¹³⁾

This fishing station extends in a Westwardly direction 45 miles to Grand Marais, having along the coast several fit places for setting nets and lines - and to Eastward as far as Pidgeon River 5 or 6 miles. fishermen are also sometimes sent to the Western extremity of Isle Royale distant 18 or 20 miles.

The establishment at this place consists of One dwelling House for Côté, situated on gentle rising ground, overlooking the Bay, a dwelling occupied by his son on the West side, and a New store fronting this last building on the East Side, forming a hollow square; Two mens houses, 1 Coopers Shop, 1 Fish Store,

Stable Barn, Root house and below, or near the beach, placed here and there without order or symmetry The dwelling houses and Store on the hill are finished in a Substantial manner and all new. There is on Sheep Island at the entrance of the Bay, an appology for a Store house to receive Salt &c from on board vessels, or to deposit Fish from the Establishments, ready for Shipment. The soil around this station is good. there is at present about three acres of it under cultivation, and laid in potatoes, the crop estimated to produce about 200 & 250 bushels.

The fisheries being extended along a barren and rocky bound coast, the collecting of the fish to Grand Portage is necessarily attended with expense and risk, besides taking away the hands from the fishing, and if the fish cannot all be brought in, they of necessity must remain exposed all winter on the beach: At Grand Marais, however there is a building of sufficient capacity to store all the fish which could not be brought away."

Three hundred to five hundred barrels

page 490

of fish were the usual result of a year's activities at Grand Portage. Whitefish and trout formed the bulk of a seasons catch. Wood for staves and hook poles were cut out during the winter, but a dozen men could hardly be kept busy for eight months getting materials for five hundred barrels. Trout did not begin to run in towards shore to their spawning grounds until August 20 or thereabouts. For two months all hands were busy setting nets and taking them up, cleaning and packing the fish in salt, and transporting the barrels to the storerooms. Then the whitefish appeared and stayed into November. The remainder of the year the company supported men who had little to do except to make nets or to cut and haul a small amount of wood. After Gabriel Franchère's visit to the post in August, 1839, he recommended that all but four men should be transported to La Pointe at the close of the fall fishing, to be available for other fishing grounds in the late fall and in the spring, and to help with the winters work at La Pointe. This recommendation was adopted the following season (14)

Franchere made the same recommendation for Isle Royale, one of the most extensive of the fisheries. The stations were established in July, 1837 and placed under the direction of Charles Chaboillez, another half-breed. His stipend in 1838 was three hundred and fifty dollars and for the work he employed two coopers at \$280 and \$200 respectively; eleven boatmen at \$120; six men who served in double capacity of boatmen and fishermen at \$120 to \$150; one fisherman at \$300 and one at \$200; four fishermen engaged for one fishing season at \$20 per month; and nine "freemen" who fished on their own account and received \$4 for two hundred pounds of fish, the company transporting their salt, barrels and fish. ⁽¹⁵⁾

The description Franchere gave of these stations in 1839 shows the island as it was at the height of its prosperity. ⁽¹⁶⁾

There are at present five different stations for fishing, occupying with himself (Chaboillez) 28 persons on wage, and five free men, disposed as follows, to wit at

page 492.

Luskawaite Bay, Ch^s Chabrilley, clerk, D Mc Kerchar and P Quinn, Coopers, and 7 pork eaters (voyageurs), employed as fishermen for the Establishment, and to boat the fish from the diff^t Stations to this place (Luskawaite Bay). 5 men are stationed as fishermen on the chain of small islands S.E. of the Bay. At Rock Harbour 21 Miles East of this 4 men are employed very lucratively. 19 Miles farther and to the North of the Island 4 more are stationed; and finally at Washington Harbour 21 Miles West of this bay, there is also four men. Three free men ... are fishing 5 or 6 miles S.W. of the Bay and the Defraute with two of the Pork eaters ... occupy a fishery situated half way between Rock Harbour and the most northern fishery ...

The buildings at this place are very good, and comprise, one dwelling house for the resident clerk, one Mess house one cooper's shop, one store house for the Fish Barrels, One large Store House, with Store attached to it, and an additional building at the West Gable,

a long Shed South and contiguous to the warehouse, for the storing of salt, and lastly, one Fish Store house.

page 492. This post was begun under difficulties. Lack of salt and of barrels hampered the first seasons activities. Only a small stand of pine was available and that had been cut by 1839. Nets of improper mesh size were sent at first and many trout and muskellunge escaped. (7)

Mississippi Valley Historical Review Vol. II #4

page 493

These two varieties and whitefish were caught in the waters about Isle Royale. The fishing season began about the middle of June and lasted until the second week in November. During that time fish to fill some two thousand barrels could be caught and packed in an ordinary season.

La Pointe, on largest of the Apostle Islands, was the center of the fishing industry. Here after the new company was organized, a whole new settlement was built, including storerooms for furs and for fish, a pier for the vessel, and a cluster of dwelling houses for clerks and engagés. From time to time new

fishing grounds were found among the numerous islands that make up the Apostle group, as well as along the shore in both directions. Lyman Warren an old clerk of the company, was in charge at this station. An inspector was established here shortly after the fishing business got into full swing and there after all the fish from upper Lake Superior were inspected and shipped to the Sault at this place.

page 493

Many minor fisheries were established: at Isle Encampment, about forty-five miles northeast of Fond du Lac; at the Ance, as Keweenaw Point was called at that time; at Montreal River; at White Fish Point; at Grand Island, and possibly at other places. At the Sault many fish were taken in the rapids; pickerel were caught there as well as the other varieties. Gabriel Franchère was in charge of this station and attended to the receiving of fish from La Pointe and the shipping of all the Lake Superior fish to Detroit. For the latter operation the company's brig, the Ramsay Crooks, was utilized. This

vessel plied between the Sault and Detroit
 and other points on the lower lakes. At
 Buffalo blankets, knives, trinkets, and other
 Indian goods from New York, Philadelphia,
 and Europe that had reached that point
 page 493 via the Erie Canal, were loaded; salt for the
 fisheries was received at the same point;
 and at Cleveland corn, flour, cheese, lard,
 and other provisions were taken on for
 both the fisheries and the fur posts.

William Brewster was in charge at
 Detroit, both of the forwarding of furs,
 salt, and provisions, and of the marketing
 of the fish. He was a resourceful, energetic
 man and a stockholder as well as an
 page 494 agent of the company. In 1839 the increase
 of fishing operations made it imperative
 for him to build a new warehouse. When
 it was completed he wrote: "All of our
 Fish on hand at this time are stored in
 our new ware House, which is quite a
 sight, as the first floor is entirely filled.
 three Bble deep." (18)

On August 3, 1835, the John Jacob Astor, a
 schooner of 112 tons was launched on the
 waters of Lake Superior. By the fall of

1836 the need for additional craft was felt, especially for a small vessel that could run close to some of the rocky islets from page 494 which fish must be gathered. The schooner was busy from the opening of navigation, about the middle of May, till the close in early November. Five to seven trips from the Sault were made during that period. When only furs were to be carried the vessel plied between La Pointe and Sault. As soon as some fish had been packed, however, the vessel extended its course to Grand Portage, Isle Royale, and other points. A scow, capable of carrying three hundred barrels, was built early in 1837 to aid the 'John Jacob Astor'. Still the men in charge of the posts kept urging Crooks to build another schooner, saying the fishing business was being greatly curtailed through lack of proper transportation facilities. In November 1837, therefore the company let a contract for a new vessel and the next year saw the schooner William Brewster on the lake. Later the company also built the 'Siskawit'. These vessels mark the establishment of continuous

lines of sailing and steam craft on the lake. ⁽¹⁹⁾ Only company property and missionaries and their possessions might be transported in these vessels, but as rivals were the only others who might care to take advantage of them, the restrictions seemed just enough.

The output of the fisheries in 1835 was fair, considering the newness of the industry and the inexperience of the men. At the opening of 1836 Garren reported that he had 320 barrels on hand collected about La Pointe since the opening of the fall fisheries in the third week in November. A thousand barrels, more or less, were shipped to Detroit in 1836. Franchere at the Sault would have had more than his 107 barrels of pickerel if his seine, recently sent to him, had not broken with the weight of the fish. Ford du Lac's quota for the year was about three hundred barrels and the new post at Grand Portage yielded over a hundred. ⁽²⁰⁾

Crooks made a tour of the lake in 1836 and felt so well pleased with the state

page 495 of the fisheries that he wrote his associates in New York: "There is therefore much more encouragement than ever to prosecute the fisheries with vigour . . . Next year should give us 2000 Barrels, & 1838. 2500 to 3000." (21)

The yield for 1837 was almost exactly what Crooks had anticipated, despite untoward circumstances and lack of proper facilities. The unprecedented lateness of the season prevented the spring fishing from being successful. As most of the pickerel were taken ordinarily at the Sault in seines at the opening of navigation and as the ice left the lake at a late date in 1837, the number of barrels of that variety was but 170 that year. After the pickerel run was over, Franchère sent his men, as usual, to White Fish Point, but no better success awaited them. At La Pointe the season opened as a rule in March, but on June 9. Warren wrote that the lateness of the season had quite ruined the spring operations.

page 495

Even as late as Sept 7 the season
bade fair to be an entire failure.

page 495. On that date Brewster wrote that he
could not understand why he had received only
996 barrels of fish from Lake Superior. The
fall fishing, however, was always the most
lucrative and in 1837 it retrieved a bad
situation. By early November Brewster
could write, "Our Fisheries are yield-
ing liberally this Season." (22)

page 496. Though he was satisfied with the number of
fish taken, Brewster was very indignant
over the carelessness in packing and inspecting
demonstrated by the great quantity of fish that
spoiled in 1837. In two letters to Crooks he
gave vent to his wrath. In one of them he
announced: "We had better abandon the
fisheries entirely, than to continue to be
so grossly imposed upon, by those having
charge of the business." The other stress-
es the importance of exercising the utmost
care in the business, especially in
acquiring a reputation for handling first
grade products, because rumors have
reached him of the organizing of a rival fish
company. (23)

Most of the inspection difficulties had passed by the end of 1837. When the fisheries were begun, the inspector for all the companies and other fish from Lake Superior was located at the Sault. Again and again Franchere complained of his laziness, his inattention, and his animosity towards the company. Finally Franchere writes that a petition for the inspector's removal has induced that gentleman to be "as active in the discharge of his of his duty as I could wish." (24) Meantime a request had been made to Governor Dodge to appoint an inspector at La Pointe and when the request was granted in 1837 Warren received the appointment. (25) Thereafter fish were not delayed at the Sault for inspection while the Ramsay Crooks lost valuable time waiting for the cargo.

The sales of are an interesting part of the story of 1837. Because of the panic of that year, cash sales were practically an impossibility. At very good price for siscowet in an ordinary season was \$14 a barrel; for whitefish and trout, twelve; and for pickerel, eight - all at short credits. By July 6 Brewster had sold 200 barrels, mainly trout, at eleven dollars on four months' credit with interest after ninety days. By the eleventh

page 496.

page 497.

of the month he had sold four hundred barrels at the same rates. On August 16 he writes: "I am fearful that Fish will for some time go off very slow. Provisions are falling, especially Flour, which was sold today at \$6.50. The price of Meats has not declined, and I think they will not this fall. I do not think it best to fall from \$11. for Fish as we have so much the Control of the Market in them, that we can get that price, as well as less." By Oct 24 the logic of events in that extraordinary year had obliged him to change his mind, for he writes: "I think I shall have to reduce the price. Cash sales, I cannot make. I am offered \$10.50 for what Fish I have on hand, about 800 bbls at 6, 7 & 8 mo with interest after 4 mo which I think I shall accept. It is long Credit, but owing to the State of the times, I think it is as well as I shall do." Still later in the year the price dropped to ten dollars.

If we judge from Crook's statement that the yield 1839 was twenty percent more than that 1838, the number of barrels for the latter year must of been in excess of four thousand⁽²⁶⁾. In this figure is undoubtedly revealed the effect of Crook's visit to the lake in the summer

of 1838, which resulted in a thorough reorganization of the business. So much carelessness, maladministration, and extravagance were discovered that both Warren and Aitken were discharged. In the place of the former, under whose control were most of the stations, Dr Charles W. Borup was appointed. About the same time, too and probably as a result of Crook's visit John Livingstone succeeded Franchère at the Sault.⁽²⁷⁾ After the summer of 1838 the fisheries were administered with much greater wisdom and results were seen in the doubling and trebling of the number of fish taken.

Until the new fashion for silk hats and the coming into favor of mink had spoiled the market for muskrat furs, the country tributary to Lake Superior was considered one of the richest fur-yielding areas within the present area of the United States. In view of this fact, a statement by Crooks at the close of his tour of inspection becomes of some weight as indicating the importance which the fisheries were assuming for the company. Crooks writes: "Of our future prospects in this region I shall only be able to speak advisably

when I have the pleasure of seeing you in New York; and until muskrats get again into favor, our dependence for profits in trade of Lake Superior will mainly be determined by the results of the fisheries. ^{"(28)"}

Had number of fish taken been the criterion of success, the years 1839 and 1840 would have satisfied Crook's fondest hopes. By Oct. 5, 1839, 3000 barrels had already been shipped from La Pointe, with prospects of 1000 yet to come, and the Sault had sent 1200 and three to five hundred more were expected. As an index of the value of the season's business to the company, the fact that Brewster towards the close of the year asked for insurance on thirty thousand dollars worth of fish stored in his warehouse at Detroit holds some interest, especially as sales had already been made for some of fish taken that year. ⁽²⁹⁾ So great, in fact was the yield of fisheries in 1839 that the feature which was to characterize the business for the remaining two years of its existence became apparent before the close of the year, - that is, the attempt to create a market throughout United States for Lake Superior fish.

The idea grew slowly. First the New York market was tested with some six hundred barrels. In a letter of instruction regarding the sale of this lot, Brewster advised that
 page 498. a market be sought "among the manufacturing and mining interest," as well as in the city.⁽³⁰⁾ On the same day he wrote to an Oswego salt factory inquiring about a market for fish among the salt boilers. "We have got to find a vent for them somewhere," he wrote to Crooks, explaining that he had on hand three to four thousand barrels more than the usual Michigan and Ohio markets could absorb. The most fruitful suggestion, however, was Franchère's. He was now financial agent in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, where it was striving frantically to corner the fur and skin market.⁽³¹⁾ On April 20, 1840, Franchère wrote that several merchants at Evansville and Vincennes were very desirous of trying some Lake Superior fish. Accordingly a few barrels were sent and his success
 page 499. in disposing of them led Franchère to advise the company to sell its surplus fish through Ohio, the Wabash country and

M H B.
Vol 4
P 377
fisheries

La Pointe is on the island now called Madeline Island. A letter in the American Fur Company papers (see ante 723) from Crookes to William Atkin, Dec. 12, 1835, announces the change of the location of the principal post from Mackinac to La Pointe. The reasons given are that the change makes unnecessary old experienced boatmen to carry outfits clear to Mackinac and return and that the fisheries will center at La Pointe. The Rev. Sherman Hall, missionary at La Pointe, gives the following description of that place as he found it in 1831: "This is the name of the trading establishment on Magdalen Island near the Southern Shore of Lake Superior. It is headquarter of one of the Departments of the American Fur Co. The principle traders connected with the department at Magdalen Island are Messrs. (Lyman) Warren, (William) Dingley, (Charles ~~W~~) Oakes, (Samuel) Ashmun, (John) Holiday & Butterfield. Warrens post is at the island; the others are from 100 to 200 miles distant.

at the island are about 150 permanent residents, exclusive of children. Gardens can be cultivated and vegetables raised. There is some (live) stock at La Pointe."

M.H.B.

Vol 4

P 377

The manuscript which contains this statement is among the Hall Papers in the possession of Mr. Ernest Butterfield of Concord New Hampshire, photostatic copies of which are owned by the Minnesota Historical Society.

page 180.
The Geology
of Minn.
Vol. I.

The red sandstone from Fond du Lac, St. Louis county is of the Potsdam formation, and extends along the south shore of lake Superior eastward, forming the bluffs of the Apostle island and of the mainland at numerous points. At Siskiwit bay, near the west end of lake Superior, the rock is of the same formation, presumably, as the quartzite that has been described near New Ulm and in Pipestone county. The layers are tilted, at Fond du Lac, toward the southeast. They are associated with, and overlies, a vast amount of soft red shale which passes sometimes to a shaly red conglomerate, the same that in other places about lake Superior is in contact with the igneous rocks and becomes copper bearing. This red sandstone is well known in Milwaukee, Chicago, and Detroit. The quarries in it further east furnished the red sandrock used in the Milwaukee court house, and a great many brown stone fronts in that city and Chicago were obtained from it. It was formerly quarried on the south side of Siskiwit Bay, on Isle Royale, and sold in Detroit as 'Isle Royale Brownstone.' While it consists largely of quartz, the grains are

page 181

not so firmly cemented or united as to render it objectionably hard except when it has been subjected to metamorphic agencies, as in Superior county and in some of the analogous knobs seen in the northern part of the state. On Isle Royale, when quarried, it is fine-grained and rather brittle, being more metamorphosed than at Fond du Lac. At some points it has a mottling of red and grey, as at St. Marie, at the eastern end of Lake Superior, where the ship canal is cut in it and largely built of it. At Fond du Lac it has also a mottling of green, particularly at the quarry on Mission creek. In some places it is so loosely cemented as to crumble and be rendered useless for building, and in others it contains pebbles, and even stones several inches in diameter, of white quartz or even becomes wholly conglomeritic. Nearly all these features can be seen at Fond du Lac, but there is still at that place a great abundance of fine stone of the best quality. Its strength under pressure is from five to eight thousand pounds per square inch, tested for the

survey by Gillmore.

At Fond du Lac this stone, while in general of reddish brown color, is variously marked with spots and stripes of lighter shade. It also has occasional grains of quartz as large as a pea, or even as large as a hen's egg, distributed especially through the lighter colored portions, but not much of it is conglomeritic. Sometimes flattened lumps of red shale from two to five inches across are seen arranged in belts coincident rudely with the stratification. The strata are of all thicknesses up to three or four feet and very large blocks are obtainable. The principal quarry is owned by Mr M Boyle. It is situated in the bluff of the St. Louis river a short distance above Fond du Lac, at the first rapids and was first opened by Mr M. E. Chambers in 1870. The stone appears and has been worked on both sides of the river, but the principal excavation is on the Minnesota side from twenty to forty feet above the water, near St. Paul and Duluth Railroad. It is also opened on Mission Creek, north of Fond du Lac,

by James G. McDonald, where some very fine stone has been taken out. The product of this quarry is sent to Winnipeg, where a Manitoba College is trimmed with it.

page 181

This sandrock is seen in the Clark Geology and Hunter blocks at Duluth, but the principal structure of this material in the state is the Westminster church in Minneapolis. It has been used as trimmings in a few buildings both in Minneapolis & St. Paul.

The Geological and Natural History Survey of Minn.

Mem in
3 Centuries
Vol 4
page 310.

Stage
Routes.
transportation
American
Fur Co.

The first pioneer of inland transportation in Minnesota was Norman W. Kittson, who in 1843 established a trading post at Pembina in connection with the outfit of the American Fur Co at Mendota. Heretofore the importing of goods, and exporting of furs to and from the Red River country were through the circuitous, difficult and dangerous Hudson's Bay route which was navigable only two months in the year. In 1844 wishing to transport his purchases of fur to Mendota, Mr Kittson constructed what afterwards became known as the Red River or Pembina cart. This curious vehicle was two wheeled, constructed of wood and leather of rude workmanship and would carry 600 or 700 pounds. They generally cost about \$15. To this cart was fastened an ox or pony geared with broad bands of buffalo hide. Several carts were managed by one driver by tying each one to the tail of the preceding cart and guiding the head ox or pony. When traveling a caravan

could be heard for miles, the axles being innocent of grease produced a horrid creaking. The drivers were "Boise Bruces", dressed in civilized garments, adorned with brass buttons and barbaric ornaments. The first year there were six carts engaged in trade, the number increased until 1851, when William H. Forbes became a partner of Mr. Kitterson, and what was known as the "St Paul outfit" was organized to carry on the supply business. The distance from St Paul to Pembina was 748 miles; the route generally traveled, was via Otter Tail and Sank Rapids; though earlier trips were made via Big Stone Lake and Traverse de Louis. A down trip would generally consume from thirty to forty days. It was not until 1867 that they ceased their annual trips to St Paul. In that year the St Paul and Pacific railroad was running to St Cloud and for a year or two that city became the terminus. The completion of the Northern Pacific railroad to Red

River of the North drove these primitive prairie carts out of existence.

In 1854-1855 William Nettleton established a line of stages from St Paul to Superior, Wisconsin, which had been laid out in 1853 by St Paul parties though there were not even a wagon road to the town. An important factor at this time was Colonel Alvaren Allen.

Every other day a coach left for Superior City Wisconsin. In the Spring of 1859 the business of these two stage companies, Allen & Chase and the Burlank and Blakely company were consolidated and the Minnesota Stage company was formed. The Stillwater and the Superior routes also became centralized in this company.

The Selkirk, built by James J. Hill and Alexander Griggs in the spring of 1871, was the next boat to appear in the Red River of the North trade. At the opening of navigation in 1872, the fact was disclosed that all boats were under

the management of Norman H. Kittson and were called the Kittson Line.

In 1874 the steamboat monopoly was charging such outrageous prices for transportation, that the merchants of Winnipeg induced parties to organize a new company to be called the "Merchants Line". The following year two new boats the Minnesota and the Manitoba, belonging to this line appeared on the river. On June 11 of that year, the Manitoba and International had a collision, and the former was sunk, she was, however, raised but soon afterwards with the Manitoba was seized for debt. The business of company being in bad shape, Mr Kittson in 1876 bought out the control of the boats and they were run in connection with this line, which had been reorganized and was called the Red River Transportation Company. The principal boats of this line were the International, Minnesota, Manitoba, Dakota, Selkirk and Alpha.

The extending of the St. Paul and Pacific railroad, (Pembina to Crookston) in the summer of 1876, materially diminished the distance though it increased the volume of the steam boat freight and passenger business.

transportation

The following summer the railroad was extended to Fisher's Landing and on December 28 1878, the Tusk layers joined the rails of the St Paul and Pacific, at the international boundary line, and the days of the steam boat transportation on the Red River of the North were over.

page 316
Minn. in
3 - Centuries

Iron
mining

History
of the
Great
Northwest.
page 59.
and its
men of
progress.

pub-1901

Hugh J. McGrath
Wm. Stoddard

The first mention of iron ore in northern Minnesota occurs in the report of J. G. Norwood, in 1850. Mr. Horace V. Shinnell says: "Minnesota's iron industry is of recent date but phenomenal growth. Though it is only fifteen years since the first carload of ore was digged in our northern wild, the industry has grown with amazing rapidity, until today an almost incessant stream of purest hematite is kept moving toward the furnaces of the east." In 1880 the population of St. Louis County was 4,504. There was not a settlement north of Duluth. In 1900, the population of this county was 82,932. In this year the production of iron ore, which began in 1884, was 5,878,908 tons. Of this, 4,613,766 tons were produced on the Vermillion range.

The iron mines of Minnesota, so far as they have been developed, are situated in St. Louis county, north and northwest of Lake Superior. The two iron belts run about twenty miles apart, and extend in an easterly and westerly direction. On the south,

Iron Mining

and hence nearer to Lake Superior and the ore shipping ports, is the Mesabi range, whose rocks may be traced from Cook county on the east, through St. Louis and into Itasca county on the west, - more than 150 miles. The Iron ore of the Vermilion range is not nearly as regular and well defined, but the rocks of that general formation, also extend from Cook into Itasca through St. Louis county, - a distance of more than 125 miles. The ore deposits are not continuous, but are scattered along in groups, at regular intervals. On the Vermilion range, there are two groups of mines, situated at Ely and Tower, respectively, these places being 23 miles apart. The shipping point for these mines is Lake County, 68 to 90 miles distant from the mines.

On the Mesabi range, the groups of mines are centered around the cities of Bimabik, Mc Kinley, Sparta, Eveleth, Virginia, Mountain Iron, and Hibbing. The ore from this range is hauled by rail about 75 miles to Duluth and Superior. The iron ore from the iron mines of Minnesota

Iron Mining

is carried by rail and water to ports on Lake Michigan and Erie and thence by rail to furnaces in Ohio and Pennsylvania. The amount of capital invested in Lake Superior Iron mining is estimated at \$250,000,000. This includes the investment in mines, docks, railroad transportation, and lake fleets.

As methods of handling and mining ore have improved, prices have declined; the margin between the cost of production and selling price has grown smaller and smaller, and earnings have been made on larger outputs and greater economy of operation. The prices paid for ore delivered at Cleveland and other lower lake ports have fluctuated much - reaching their highest point (\$12 per ton) for Bessemer ore in 1873. From that time prices have declined. In 1891, this ore brought \$6, and in 1895, \$2.75 to \$3.50 per ton. Non-Bessemer ore brought in 1895 \$1.90 to \$2.30 per ton.

Inasmuch as several of the mines ~~on~~ the Mesabi range are owned by the state of Minnesota, it is evident that the state has a pecuniary interest in their development.

Iron
Mining

The royalties paid from such mines into the state treasury in 1899 and 1900, at the legal rate of twenty-five cents per ton, amount to \$33,669.91.

Maps

Source I

William A. Aitken
Biography I - 317

II - 55-59-125

American Fur Co.

I - 326 - 551 - 354 - 271 trading stations

II - 54 - 59 - 113 - 117 - 211 - 219 - 281 - 294 - 371 372

IV 310

St Louis Co.

II 488 - 489



Page 378 Vol 4. Minn. Hist.

Note - The Voyageur's Highway
Minn. Historical Society

page 40



Hudson's Bay Company Trading Sites and Rival Posts in the
Minnesota Country





author?

Duluth.

page 643

Several villages that became parts of the present city of Duluth have been duly noted, with the dates of platting and derivation of their names, in the chapter on St. Louis County, these being Fond du Lac, Oneota, Rice's Point, Portland, Endion, Lakeside, and Lakewood in this order from west to east.

The earliest of the plats comprising the central part of this city was named Portland, being filed for record Sept. 8, 1856.

Oneota had an earlier plat, surveyed by Henry W. Wheeler, filed April 16, 1856.
Next

St Louis
County.

Fifty years
in the
North
West
Folsom
page 486.

St Louis county takes its name from St Louis River, the river itself having been named by some of the early French traders or Jesuit missionaries, possibly by Duluth or Buade.

The county is bounded on the north by Rainy Lake and the British boundary, on the east by Lake county, on the south by Lake Superior, St Louis River and Carlton, and on the west by Aitkin county. The surface is variegated, much of it being broken with deep ravines. It is well watered by streams tributary to Rainy Lake and Superior, and by innumerable small lakes. Portions of it are heavily timbered with pines and hard-woods, and the northern portion is traversed by a rich mineral belt extending through Vermillion Lake region. The settlements are chiefly along the shores of Lake Superior and St Louis River, and on the shores of Vermillion Lake. The falls and rapids of St Louis River are noted for their wildness and grandeur.

The scenery on its northern boundary,

St. Louis
County

page 487

Fifty years
in the NW.

including the Dalles of the Rainy Lake waters, is not surpassed or even equaled at any point east of the Rocky Mountains. The geological formation consists largely of primitive or igneous rocks, trappean, basaltic and granite, and the scenery has a peculiarly grand and sombre appearance. Notwithstanding the igneous character of the formation there is excellent farming lands on plains and intervalles, while the more abrupt and rocky portions are rich in iron and the precious metals. The region about Vermillion Lake has become a centre of mining operations. The region is rich in iron ores. Gold has been discovered. A mineral region abounding in gold, silver and iron extends from Vermillion Lake to Thunder Bay. St. Louis county was organized in 1856. The territorial governor appointed the following officers: Clerk of district court, J. B. Culver; sheriff, J. B. Ellis; register of deeds, R. H. Barrett; auditor, J. E. Brown. The first board of county commissioners elected were C. E. Martin, Vose Palmer and

St Louis
County

page 487.

3
Z. J. Brown. The first meeting was held at Portland, January 4, 1858. At an adjourned meeting held January 20, 1858, the commissioners drew a grand and petit jury. The meetings were held sometimes at Portland and sometimes at Duluth. At a meeting held April 5, 1858, the county was divided into four towns. Duluth, Martin, Carp River and Carlton. At an adjourned meeting three assessors' districts, six school districts and four road districts were formed. The records do not show any previous division into districts or precincts, nor does the name of any clerk appear until the meeting of September 14th, when A. B. Robbins attests as clerk. At a meeting held Sept. 23, 1858 the village of Anecota was established. November 1st, E. H. Brown was appointed clerk in place of A. B. Robbins. November 14th a bill allowing R. H. Barrett compensation for services as clerk prior to Sept. 1st was passed. His name does not appear prior to this entry.

St Louis
County.
page 487

The records show that court was held in 1859, S. J. R. Mc Millan officiating as judge. also that a road was made from Onesta to Buchanan and the mouth of the Knife river, through Fremont, Portland and Endion, following a trail to Lester's river and across French river to Monteguma, and another from Onesta to Fond du Lac. The town of Milford is mentioned as accepting the report. The assessment for St Louis county for 1859 amounted to \$96,836.76. At a special meeting of the county commissioners held Jan. 10, 1860, a resolution was adopted asking the legislature to grant authority to St. Louis county to issue \$150,000 to aid in building the Lake Superior & Mississippi rail road. The legislature granted the request and twenty year bonds were issued. We append a list of county commissioners to the year 1863: E. C. Martin, Vose Palmer, Zach L. Brown, 1858; E. C. Martin, Vose Palmer, W. E. Wright, 1859; W. E. Wright, S. D. Forbes, Sidney Luce, 1860; E. F. Ely, Joseph Culver,

St Louis
County
page 488

(first meeting) 1861; E.F. Ely, Harvey Fargo, Levi B. Coffrey (second meeting), 1861; E.F. Ely, R.B. Carlton, H. Fargo, 1862; H. Fargo, R.B. Carlton, E.L. Swannstrom 1863.

Names of villages that appear in old records of the board have entirely disappeared. Those villages nearest to Duluth have been absorbed by that vigorous young city. We find a record, bearing date 1859, authorizing an election to decide upon the question of the removal of the county seat from Duluth to Port Byron. There is no record of the result of the election, nor is Port Byron found on a recent map.

St Louis County.

Duluth the county seat of St Louis County, was the first point settled. J. B. Culver came to where it now stands, Oct 12, 1856

After Mr Culver made the first settlement, came William Nettleton, Sidney Luce, Luke Marvin, Watoman Green, Nicholas Decker, F. H. Ryder, Newel Ryder Horace Saxton and J. Brown. The first election was held in the fall of 1856, in what was then known as Nettleton's Claims Shanty.

The first court was held by Hon Judge Mc Kelday in 1857. When Duluth was first settled, there was a small settlement at Onecota, west of Duluth on the Northern Pacific Railroad.

The county is heavily timbered with pine. The soil is principally clay with occasionally sandy loam. J. B. Culver was first clerk, and was also elected to the office of Mayor.

Dr V. Smith, at this date is mayor of the city. Wm Epler and Miss Jennie

Goodman were the first parties married in St Louis County. The first death was that of Miss Mary Culver.

The city of Duluth has a population of about 4000. There are 11 churches now built, and 6 public schools, together with a number of manufacturing establishments, which are

PLEASE DO NOT
DISTURB.

History
of mind.

Vol I Aristotle

page 665-676

increasing from year to year. The day
is not far distant when the city of Duluth
will be the great commercial city and
harbor of the North West. It is comparatively
speaking, but a day old, and has now
erected, and in the course of erection, an
elevator capacity capable of storing 700,000
bushels of grain, and shipped from its
port in the year 1873, 2,232,376
bushels wheat, 150,023 barrels of flour,
while in general merchandise there has been
shipped 22,753,401 lbs.

In receipts during the same year they
have received in general merchandise
25,331,604 lbs., 50,915 barrels of salt,
60,612,000 pounds of coal.

The Northern Pacific.

drainage

The Geology
of Minn.
page 135
Vol. I.

The St. Louis and Lake Superior drainage system includes 8,552 square miles, not counting any portion of Lake Superior itself. Taken altogether this is the most elevated and most hilly portion of the state. Its waters descend, with frequent cascades, from over 2200 feet above the sea to 602 feet, the level of lake Superior, the most rapid fall being within five or ten miles of that lake, and sometimes within two. The upland is a high rock plateau marked by three mountain ranges; a large part of the northern-most or Giant's range, however being tributary to the Rainy River system. The waters of this system have at present no visible over-land communication with those of the Mississippi; but in glacial times, when the volumes of all the streams and lakes were many times greater than now, and Lake Superior stood five hundred feet above its present level, or 1100 feet above the ocean, it had a continuous water channel through the Moose and Kettle rivers to the St Croix and thus to the Mississippi. It appears, therefore, that anciently the whole drainage of the interior of North America may have been carried to the ocean through its main water way the Mississippi.

Fond du

Lac

page 491

50 years

in the N.W.

Located at the head of navigation on St. Louis river, and at the foot of the rapids, is a point of considerable historical interest, it having long been in use as a trading post. It has been a place of outfit and departure for trading expeditions for two hundred years. The old stone trading house of the Astor Fur Co still remains. It is surrounded by about twenty buildings of more recent date. It is now better known as a station on the Northern Pacific railroad. It was surveyed in 1856 by Richard Ralf and platted into village lots. The plats were signed by James A. Mankland, attorney for the proprietors. Fond du Lac is now a village of some magnitude.

(50 years in N.W.
when written.)

Tour to the
Lakes
Thos L McKenny
original
Volume 1826
page
267.

About ten miles from what may be called the capes of the bay of Fond du Lac, the lake is bounded on its south shore with a wall of red sand stone, cut out by the action of the waters after the manner of Pictured rocks, and into all the variety of figures which distinguish those wonderful formations. These rocks are not more than thirty feet high, but here too are vases, and urns, and castles, and arches, and pillars; and some so perfect, especially some of the vases as to have the appearance of all the contrivances of art, not only in their formation, but in the ornamenting of them with shrubbery. Evergreens grow out of them in such order as to convey the impression that they must have been planted there. Art could be benefitted by some of these for models. This line of rocks, which extends about five miles, was not seen by Governor Cass and Mr. Schoolcraft in 1820. It appears they passed this part of the coast in a hard rain.

The
Geology
of
Minn.
p. 122.
Vol I
1872-82.

(PI)
Lake Superior is 602 ft above the sea;
and a narrow tract bordering the shore
of that lake, including the valley of the
St. Louis river as far as Fond du Lac,
is the lowest land in the state.

Geology
of Minn.
p. 113
Vol I
1872-82.

The eastern boundary of the state was
defined by congress in the "enabling act"
of Wisconsin, approved August 6th, 1846,
in substance as follows: from the waters
of Lake Superior "to the mouth of the
St. Louis river; thence up the main
channel of said river to the first rapids
in the same above the Indian village,"
according to Nicollet's map; thence due
south to the main branch of the river
St. Croix; thence down the main channel
of said river to the Mississippi; thence
down the centre of the main channel of
that river to the Northwest corner of the
state of Ill."

Geology
Vol I
1872-82
p. 182
plate # 21.

Plate H. Explanation
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Mpls.
Erected 1881-1882
Built wholly of the brown sandrock
quarried at Fond du Lac.

M.H.B.

Vol 4

page 242

Local

Boundaries

Newton county : created in 1855 and
originally named Doty County, included
about half of the present territory of
St Louis Co but dropped out of sight
when the latter county was created.

Fond du Lac
early settler

page 73.

Minnesota

Historical

Collection

Vol XVII.

Carlton County.

This county, established May 23 1857, with a further legislative act of Feb 18, 1870, and organized Sept 26, 1870 was named in honor of Reuben B. Carlton, one of the first settlers of Fond du Lac, at the head of lake navigation on the St Louis river, near the line between St Louis and Carlton counties. He was born in Onondaga county, New York, Mar 4, 1812 came to Fond du Lac in 1847, as a farmer and blacksmith for the Ojibway Indians; was one of the proprietors of the townsite of Fond du Lac, being a trustee under the act of its incorporation in 1857, and was a member of the first state senate, 1858. He owned about eighty acres adjoining that village and the river, on which he resided until his death, Dec 6, 1863.

The village of Carlton, the county seat of this county since 1886, was also named for him; and he is further commemorated by Carlton's Peak near Tofte in Cook County, the most prominent point on the north shore of Lake Superior in Minnesota, forming the western end of the Sawtooth Range.

Fond du Lac Reservation

page 79
Minn.
Historical
Collections
Vol XVII

The reservation for the Fond du Lac bands of the Ojibway people, established by a treaty at La Pointe Wisconsin, September 30, 1854, comprises the present Knife Falls and Perch Lake townships, with the edges of the adjoining townships in this county, and thence reaches north to the St. Louis river, thus including a tract in St. Louis county equivalent to about two townships. The name Fond du Lac, meaning the farther end or head of the lake was applied by the early French traders and voyageurs to their trading post on the north side of the St. Louis river, where its strong current is slackened by coming nearly to the level of Lake Superior, which, in its extension of St. Louis bay, is about two miles away. The same name was given also to this river, called "R. du Fond du Lac" on Tranquelin's map 1688 renamed St. Louis by Vaugondy's map in 1755.

St Louis
County

page 476

Minnesota
Historical
Society
Collections

Vol XVII

1920.

This county, established by the legislative acts of Mar 3, 1855, and Mar, 1, 1856, is named from the St Louis river, the largest entering Lake Superior, which flows through this county. The river was probably so named by Verendrye (born 1685, died 1749), who was a very active explorer, in the years 1731 and onward, of the vast country from Pigeon river and Rainy lakes to the Saskatchewan and Missouri rivers, establishing trading posts and missions. The King of France in 1749, shortly before the death of Verendrye, confirmed on him the cross of St. Louis as a recognition of the importance of his discoveries, and thence the name of St. Louis river appears to have come. On Franquelin's map (1688) and Buache's map (1754), it is called the Rivière du Fond du lac; and the map by Vaugondy (1755) and Carver's map (1778) are the earliest to give the present name. St Louis county has the distinction of being the largest county in this State, having an area of 6,811, 75 square miles. St Louis was born in Poissy, France, near Paris, April 25, 1215, and died near

St Louis
County
page 476.

Tunis, Africa August 25, 1270. From 1226 he was King Louis IX of France, his mother Blanche being regent during his minority. He undertook a crusade to the Holy Land in 1248, from which after a terrible war, he returned to France in 1254. His second crusade was undertaken in 1267, for which he finally sailed from France on July 1, 1270; but in this expedition he died by an illness, less than two months later. He is commemorated by the name of the city of St. Louis,

Duluth

page 481

M H S C.

Vol. XVII

in my possession, which might mention the name of some early missionary or noted explorer in the Lake Superior country, but I had then but a few books and not of the kind required. Mr Wilson set about his task to earn the reward of the dead of the two lots in the great city. He visited the homes of citizens that he expected might be possessed of a library, and in search found among some old books belonging to George E. Nettleton, an old English translation of the writings of the French Jesuits, relating to them selves and the early explorers and fur traders of the Northwest. In this he ran across the name of Du Luth, along with others of those early traders and missionaries who visited the head of the lake in the remote past. With other names, that of Du Luth was presented by Mr Wilson to the proprietors at their meeting one evening in the home of George E. Nettleton, and after discussion of the relative merits of the several names submitted, the name Du Luth was selected."

(M H S Collections, Vol IX p. 254)

Duluth. On the first plat of Duluth, surveyed by Richard Relf and recorded May 26, 1856, the name appeared in its present form.

page 481. Daniel Greysolon Du Luth was born at St. Germain-en-Laye, a few miles west of Paris, in 1649; and died at his home in Montreal, Feb. 25, 1710.

His surname was otherwise variously spelled, as Da Luth, Du Lhud, and Du Luid. It seems most suitable to adopt the spelling here first given, which written as a single word, is borne in his honor by this great city, built on or near the site of his convocation of many Indian tribes in the early autumn of 1679.

With seven Frenchmen, Du Luth made the canoe journey to Lake Superior in 1678, for the purpose of exploring the country farther west, occupied by the Sioux and Assiniboines, among whom he spent the next two years, endeavoring to bring them into alliance with the French fur trading. In the summer of the second year, 1680 Du Luth met Hennepin and his two French companions and secured their liberation from captivity with the Sioux of Mille Lacs.

Duluth

page 481

The sobriquet of Duluth, "the Zenith City of the Unsalted Seas," was originated by Dr. Thomas Foster (b. 1818, d. 1903), who established the first newspaper in Duluth in 1869. It was an expression in an enthusiastic speech by Foster at a celebration of July 4, 1868, by Duluth and Superior people, in a park on Minnesota Point. It has been sometimes erroneously attributed to a very famous speech in Congress, Jan. 27, 1871, by James Proctor Knott (b. 1830, d. 1911) who was a member from Kentucky, ridiculing Duluth in connection with the bill for a land grant to the St. Croix and Superior railroad company.

"Twin Ports" is a name frequently used for these adjoining great cities of Duluth and Superior, as the term "Twin Cities" is applied to Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Duluth township adjoins the east boundary of the county including the former sites of Buchanan and Clifton.

Fond du
Lac

page 483.

M H 80.

Vol XVII

Fond du Lac, bearing a French name that signifies "Farther end of the lake," or as we should commonly say "Head of the lake," was a trading post of the Northwest Fur Company in 1792. - being then on the south or Wisconsin shore of St. Louis where it comes to the still water level of Lake Superior, twelve miles distant in a straight line from the Minnesota Point. Later the post of this name occupied by the American Fur Company was on the opposite or Minnesota side of the river on a part of the village site which was platted in 1856, now included in the Duluth city area.

American Fur Co. Post.

Fond du Lac.
St. Louis.

↓ Early settlers

Geology - climate - boundaries etc.

Fond du Lac - Duluth - St. Louis Co.

Stage Routes transportation

St. Louis

American Fur Co.

↓ Fur Trade

↓ Fur Agents

Northwest Co.

American Fur Co.

↓ Fishing

↓ Fisheries

↓ Iron Mining

↓ Quarries

Treaties

Florence Rovainen Koski.

I.

Treaty

Fond du
Lac

page 631.

50 years
in the
Northwest
Folomv

page 632

Aug. 2, 1847, at Fond du Lac of
Lake Superior, the Chippewa Indians
of the Mississippi and Lake Superior ceded
to the United States the country beginning
at the junction of the Crow Wing and
Mississippi rivers, thence up the Crow Wing
river to the junction of that river with
the Long Prairie River; thence up the
Long Prairie River to the boundary line
between the Sioux and Chippewa Indians,
thence southerly along said boundary
line to a lake at the head of Long
Prairie River; thence in a direct
line to the sources of the (Wat-tab)
river thence down that river to its
junction with the Mississippi river;
thence up the Mississippi river to the
place of beginning.

Isaac Verplanck
Henry M Rice.
Commissioners.

The Case
Treaty
of
Fond du Lac
ref.
Minn in 3.
Centuries
Volume II
page 274.

as the Ojibways were scattered over a great extent of country it was agreed at the Prairie du Chien treaty that they should be convened that year (1826) on the shores of Lake Superior for a special treaty. The place selected was Fond du Lac. Lewis Cass and Z. L. Mc Kenney were appointed the commissioners on the part of the United States. This was the first formal Indian treaty on the soil of Minnesota.

July 28 with flying colors and martial music, the United States Commissioners, in their barges approached the big trading station at Fond du Lac. For the first time the Indians of that region heard the strains of Hail Columbia and Yankee Doodle, and for the first time many of them saw the flag of the stars and stripes. The council met Aug 2, and was in session for several days. Among the Indians in attendance was an old Ojibway woman from Montreal River. She wore around her neck her husband's British medal, and instead of wampum, as she was very poor, she laid on the treaty table some grass and porcupine quills.

1826 - Treaty

In presenting them she said "I come in the place of my husband. He is old and blind, but yet he has a mouth and ears and can speak and hear. He is very poor, and he hopes to receive a present from his American father." (always "a present, a present! Give me, give me!")

After the usual feasting and speech-making, and the necessary patient listening and long suffering generally, the treaty was concluded and signed August 5 and ratified by the Senate in February following. By one article the Ojibways, fully disclaimed all connections with Great Britain and acknowledged the authority of the United States. A number of British medals were surrendered. The Ojibway bands of Minnesota represented at the treaty were the River St Croix, Rainy Lake, Sandy Lake, Leech Lake, Snake River and Crow Wing bands.

This work not being published until after the ratification of the treaty, it is inserted here in its ratified form.

(1)

Thomas
L. McKenney.

Treaty*

Four to the
Lakes

917.43

M 19

U of M.

Between the United States of America and the Chippeway tribe of Indians; concluded August 5, 1826.

John Quincy Adams,
President of the United States of America
To all and singular to whom these presents shall come, greeting:

Whereas a treaty between the United States of America and the Chippeway tribe of Indians, was made and concluded on the fifth day of August, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-six, at the Fond du Lac of Lake Superior, in the territory of Michigan, by Commissioners on the part of the United States, and certain Chiefs and Warriors of the said tribe, on the part and in the behalf of said tribe, which treaty is in the words following, to wit:

Articles of a treaty made and concluded at the Fond du Lac of Lake Superior, this fifth day of August, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-six, between Lewis Cass and Thomas L. McKenney, Commissioners on the part of the United States,

Treaty.

2

and the Chippeway tribe of Indians.

Whereas a treaty was concluded at Prairie du Chien in August last, by which the war, which has been so long carried on to their mutual distress, between the Chippeways and Sioux, was happily terminated by the intervention of the United States; and whereas, owing to the remote and dispersed situation of the Chippeways, full deputations of their different bands did not attend at Prairie du Chien, which circumstance, from the loose nature of the Indian Government, would render the treaty of doubtful obligations with respect to the bands not represented; and whereas, at the request of the Chippeway Chiefs, a stipulation was inserted in the treaty of Prairie du Chien, by which the United States agreed to assemble the Chippeway tribe upon Lake Superior during the present year, in order to give full effect to the said treaty, to explain its stipulations, and to call upon the whole Chippeway tribe, assembled at their general council fire, to give their formal assent thereto, that the peace which has been concluded may be rendered permanent.

therefore:

Article I. - The Chiefs and Warriors of the Chippeway tribe of Indians hereby fully assent to the treaty concluded in August last, at Prairie du Chien, and engage to observe and fulfil the stipulations thereof.

Article II. - A deputation shall be sent by the Chippeways to the treaty to be held in 1827, at Green Bay, with full power to arrange and fix the boundary line between the Chippeways and the Winnebagoes and Menomonees, which was left incomplete by the treaty of Prairie du Chien, in consequence of the non-attendance of some of the principal Menomonee Chiefs.

Article III. -

The Chippeway tribe grant to the government of the United States the right to search for, and carry away, any metals or minerals from any part of their country. But this grant is not to affect the title of the land, nor the existing jurisdiction over it.

Article IV. -

It being deemed important that the half-breeds, scattered through this extensive

country, should be stimulated to exertion and improvement by the possession of permanent property and fixed residences, the Chippeway tribe, in consideration of the affection they bear to these persons, and of the interest which they feel in their welfare, grant to each of the persons described in the schedule hereunto annexed, being half-breeds and Chippeways by descent, and it being understood that the schedule includes all of this description who are attached to the government of the United States, six hundred and forty acres of land, to be located, under the direction of the President of the United States, upon the islands and shore of St. Mary's river, wherever good land enough for this purpose can be found; and as soon as such locations are made, the jurisdiction and soil thereof are hereby ceded. It is the intentions of the parties, that, where circumstances will permit, the grants be surveyed in the ancient French manner, bounding not less than six arpens, nor more than ten, upon the

river, and running back for quantity; and that where this cannot be done, such grants be surveyed in any manner the President may direct. The locations for Oshauguscoday-wayqua, and her descendants, shall be adjoining the lower part of the military reservation, and upon the head of Sugar island. The persons to whom grants are made shall not have the privilege of conveying the same, without the permission of the President.

Article V. -

In consideration of the poverty of the Chippeways, and of the sterile nature of the country they inhabit, unfit for cultivation, and almost destitute of game, and as a proof of regard on the part of the United States, it is agreed that an annuity of two thousand dollars, in money or goods, as the President may direct, shall be paid to the tribe at the Sault St. Marie. But this annuity shall continue only during the pleasure of the Congress of the United States.

Article VI.

With a view to improvement of the Indian

youths, it is also agreed, that an annual sum of one thousand dollars shall be appropriated to the support of an establishment for their education, to be located upon some part of the St. Mary's river, and the money to be expended under the direction of the President; and for the accommodations of such school, a section of land is hereby granted. But the payment of the one thousand dollars stipulated for in this article, is subject to the limitation described in the preceding article.

Art VII. —

The necessity for the stipulations in the fourth, fifth and sixth articles of this treaty could be fully apparent, only from personal observation of the condition, prospects and wishes of the Chippewais, and the Commissioners were therefore not specifically instructed upon the subjects therein referred to; but seeing the extreme poverty of these wretched people, finding them almost naked and starving, and ascertaining that many perished during the last winter, from hunger and cold,

they were induced to insert these articles. But it is expressly understood and agreed, that the fourth, fifth and sixth articles, or either of them may be repealed by the President and Senate, without affecting the validity of the other articles of the treaty.

Article VIII. —

The Chippeway tribe of Indians fully acknowledge the authority and jurisdiction of the United States, and disclaim all connexion with any foreign power, solemnly promising to reject any messages, speeches, or councils, incompatible with the interests of the United States, and to communicate information thereof to the proper agent, should any such be delivered or sent to them.

Art IX. —

This treaty, after the same shall be ratified by the President and Senate of the United States, shall be obligatory on the contracting parties. Done at Fond du Lac of Lake Superior, in the territory of Michigan, the day and year

above written, and of the Independence
of the United States the fifty first.

Lewis Case

Thos. L. McKenney

American
Fur Co.

page 54

Minnesota
in
three
centuries

In 1826 the authorities of the fur companies filed with agent Taliferro a list of their established trading posts in the Minnesota country and received licenses therefor.

The American Fur Company's trading stations were called, Fort Colhoun, at Leech Lake; Fort Columbia, at the upper sand hills on the Cheyenne River; Fort Biddle, on Crow Island; Fort Rush, at the mouth of the Chippewa River; Fort Pike at Red Lake; Fort Rice, at Devil's Lake; Fort Greene, below Big Stone Lake; Fort Snathard, at the forks of the Red Cedar River; Fort Lewis, at the Little Rapids of the St. Peter's near the present site of Carver, and Fort Benton, at Sandy Lake.

The names of these trading posts were reasonably magnificent and impressive, and high sounding, but the places them selves were really modest and unpretentious. There was no pretense of a real "fort" - that is to say, a fortification about them. They were built for trade in time of peace; not for defense under the circumstance of war. Commonly a trading post consisted of one or two log buildings

page 54

page 55

Minnesota
in
Three
Centuries
page 55
Volume II

① ④
1833-34

according to the records of Major
Zalioferro, the following were the
Indian traders licensed by him to trade
in the Minnesota country in 1833-34
Alexis Bailly, at Mendota; Joseph R.
Brown, on the Minnesota at the mouth
of the Chippewa, and Oliver's Grove at
the mouth of the St. Croix; Louis
Provencale and Philander Prescott,
Traverse des Sioux; Jean Baptiste
Faribault and James Wells, at the
Little Rapids of the Minnesota, near
Carver; Hazen P. Moores, Lac Traverse;
Joseph Renville, Lac qui Parle; Benjamin F.
Baker ("Blue Beard") Fort Snelling; Joseph
Renville Jr.; Little Rock on the Minn - Little
Rock on the Minn, (five miles below where
Fort Ridgely was subsequently built;)
William A. Aitkin, Fond du Lac; Alfred
Aitkin, Sandy Lake; John Aitkin Prairie
Pierce; Ambrose Davenport, Gull Lake;
William Davenport Leech Lake; Allan
Morrison, Mille Lac; George Bonga, Lac
Platte; J. H. Fairbanks Red Cedar Lake;
Lyman M. Warren, La Pointe, Wisconsin;
Oscar Wolf-Bornup, Yellow Lake. The
factory or headquarters of the American
Fur Co was in charge of Alexis Bailly
in 1833, but in 1834 he was superseded
by Henry A. Sibley. The trading
posts in the foregoing list from

page 55
Volume 2
Mann in
3 centuries

William A. Atkins, at Fond du Lac to Borup's, at Yellow Lake, were in the country of the Chippewas; the others were in the Land of the Dakotas, or Sioux.

1833⁽²⁾
34

Territorial
Control
page 55

7.

In 1805 the country previously called "Upper Louisiana," was organized into Missouri Territory. In 1820, after the admission of Missouri as a State, the country beyond its northern boundary, comprising what is now Iowa and all of Minnesota west of the Mississippi, was, for several years, without organized government; but in 1834 Congress attached this great expanse of territory for governmental purposes, to Michigan. In 1836 Wisconsin was organized, comprising all of Michigan west of Lake Michigan. In 1838 Iowa Territory was formed, embracing all of the old Missouri Territory beyond the north boundary line of that State.

Up to about 1840, however, what is now Minnesota was practically a "No Man's Land." There were so few white people in the country that there was no attempt at exercising civil jurisdiction over it. The only laws enforced were the rules of the fur companies and the law of the sword administered by

page 56

page.
56

the commandant at Fort Snelling.

(3)

MADE IN U.S.A.

WATER BOND

WATER BOND

Commandant

with but one story and one room each. The trader or his clerk usually slept in his store. A few of the post were more formidable in character. at Lake Traverse there were several buildings, and the main house had a palisade wall. The factory of the Columbia Company, at Mendota was a somewhat elaborate structure in its arrangement, as was becoming to the headquarters of the great corporation.

author?

Curing
Skins by
Indians

The drying or curing of skins is done by the women mostly, unless the men should be on a hunt alone; then, of course they have to cure the skins themselves. After the hide is taken from the animal it is brought home and the women take the flesh off with a bone, carried with them for that purpose, sharp at one end. This meat when taken off is about as thick as the skin itself, and is generally roasted by the women and eaten after the hair is shaven off with a very sharp knife. Then small holes are cut all around the skin, and strings run through which are lashed to the poles of the lodge inside; the fire dries the skin in one night; in the morning it is taken down and folded to the size of the pack, convenient for traveling, say one foot by eighteen inches. When they dress the skin they take the grease off as tanners do, then dip it into water wherein are brains of deer, boil it, and stretch it on four square poles tied and pushed into the ground. They then commence scraping with an implement made either of bone, horn, or iron. A fire is kept up to dry slowly. The women scrape until dry, repeating the dipping and scraping a second and third time, wringing

curing
skins

The
Indian
Tribes of
the U.S.

page 70
Vol. I

Author?

out the water each time, before the skin is stretched. If it still remains hairy or stiff, it is drawn over a cord as large as the finger for some time as hard as they can pull. Sometime this is the last process except smoking, this is done by sewing it into a bag and hanging it over smoke of a small fire of rotten sticks for ten minutes, when it is ready for use. An Indian may bring in a deer in the morning, and before bedtime his wife will have some moccasins made of the skin.

Author?

The Fur
Trade

" In 1783 several of the principal merchants entered into a partnership to prosecute the fur trade, and in 1787 united with a rival company, and thus arose the famous Northwest Company, which for many years held lordly sway over the immense region in Canada and beyond the great western lakes. Several years later a new association of British merchants formed the Mackinaw company, having their chief factory or depot at Mackinaw; and their field of operations was south of their great rivals, - sending forth their light pirogues and bark canoes by Green Bay and the Fox and Wisconsin rivers to the Mississippi, and thence down that stream to all its tributaries. In 1809 John Jacob Astor organized the American Fur Co., - he alone constituting the company; and in 1811, in connection with certain partners in the North-West company and others, he bought out the Mackinaw company and merged that and his American Fur company into a new association called the South-West company. By this arrangement Mr. Astor became proprietor of one-half of all the

The
Fur
Trade

page 151

History of
the Great
Northwest

Author?

interests which the Mackinaw company had in the Indian country within the United States: and it was understood that the whole, at the expiration of five years, was to pass into his hands, on condition that his company should not trade within British dominions."

After the war of 1812, congress prohibited British fur traders from prosecuting their enterprises within the United States.

Prairie du Chien was, in 1815, a rendezvous for the fur traders of the upper Mississippi. The idea then prevailed in the United States that the Indians would be satisfied with the most inferior goods in exchange for their furs and peltries. This was an error, and one that brought upon American traders as well as the government the ill-will of the Indians. The blankets furnished by the British traders were of superior quality, as were also the calicoes and cloths, while those furnished by the Americans were inferior. The American tobacco furnished to the Indians, however, was better than that procured from the British. The Sac and Fox Indians brought from Galena in addition to their furs - bars of lead,

The Fur
Trade

History
of the
Great N.W.
page 16.

moulded in the earth and weighing from thirty to forty pounds each. It was not an uncommon thing to see a Fox Indian arrive at Prairie du Chien with a hand sled loaded with twenty or thirty wild turkeys for sale.

About this time, through the influence of John Jacob Astor, the secretary of was designated certain points throughout the Indian country as trading points, and licenses to trade were confined to these points. This was done to favor Astor's company, "for if a license was granted to some adventurous trader not connected with that company, he was permitted to trade only at some designated point already occupied by that opulent and formidable corporation; and the consequence was that the company would drive away the opposition trader by selling goods at half their real value." After the departure of the trader, who was unable to compete with them, the old prices were restored, and the company soon made up the loss, incurred in the process of stamping out competition. It is evident that monopolies and trusts were not invented at the close of the nineteenth century.

The Fur
Trade

History
of the
Great
N.W.
page 16

But the company sometimes met its match in a trader too shrewd to be driven out of business. An Agent of the American Fur Co. company at one time reported to a United States military officer that a fur trader by the name of William Farnsworth was violating the law by selling whiskey to the Indians. The commandant sent an officer with a file of men to destroy Farnsworth's whiskey and drive him out of the country. Upon arriving at the place, the officer informed Farnsworth of the object of his visit; the latter expressed his astonishment that any one should have made such a complaint against him. He invited the officer to search thoroughly and see if he could find any whiskey. He freely confessed that he kept a little good brandy for himself and his friends, but he declared he never sold any, and invited the officer to take a little of his choice liquor. He took some. Farnsworth then asked if he could offer some to the soldiers, which request was granted, and the soldiers were helped to a bountiful supply. The officer stood bravely by the brandy bottle and sent his men to search for the whiskey. They peered about in the vicinity of the cabin, and after refreshing them-

The Fur
Trade

page 16

Hist of the
Great
NW.

selves once more with the brandy, reported that they could find no whiskey, and that they believed it was pure malice that prompted the fur company to charge Farnsworth with selling whiskey to the Indians. The report was satisfactory to the officer. Farnsworth entertained the party with supper, lodging, breakfast, and an abundance of brandy, and they parted good friends - the generous trader not forgetting to supply his departing guests with several bottles of the delightful beverages that had added such pleasure to their visit. During this search Farnsworth had four or five barrels of whiskey buried close by his house.

The fur company now tried another plan. A large party of Indians was employed to go to his house and seize his goods and whiskey if he declined to give them up. In the winter of 1820-21 they made their appearance and frankly told their business, adding that they were brave men determined to accomplish their purpose. Farnsworth replied that he too was brave and would put their boasted courage to the test. He then produced a keg with the head out and nearly full of gunpowder. Carefully inserting

The Fur trade page 17. Hist of the Great NW.

the lower end of a lighted candle in the powder so that the light came within six inches of the explosive material, he coolly lit his pipe and sat down beside the Indians saying he would soon see who the brave men were. The Indians soon rushed from the house in terror, where Farnsworth cautiously removed the candle, fearing lest a spark would drop. After this exhibition of bravery the Indians became very friendly with Farnsworth and the fur company did not undertake to molest him again.

No exact statistics are obtainable to show the magnitude of the fur trade of the Northwest. Vast numbers of buffalo, wolf, fox, beaver and other fur bearing animals roamed over the prairies or were found in the woods and streams of the vast region lying between the Great Lakes and the Rocky Mountains. Some conception of the extent of the trade in furs and peltries coming from the Northwest may be formed from the following statement, which shows the weight or number of such articles exported from Philadelphia alone in the year 1824:

Deer skins,	250 000 lbs.	beaver fur,	25,000 lbs.
Buffalo robes	17,000	bear skins	8000

The Fur Trade
 otter skins 4,500 raccoon skins 25,000
 muskrat skins 81,000 mink skins 1000
 fox & wolf 1,500 fisher & marten skins 400

page 17. At the same time British traders were taking annually from our northern frontier 120,000 beaver; 30,000 marten; 20,000 muskrat; 5000 fox; 4000 otter; 2000 bear; 2000 mink; 5000 buffalo; 6000 lynx; 4000 wolf; 1000 elk; and 12000 deer skins.

To have a clear idea of the fur trade, it is necessary to know something of the manner in which it was carried on. The great depot which formed the center of the fur trade in the Northwest was Mackinac Island or Michilimackinac (The Great Turtle) as it was called by the Indians. This island is in the strait that connects Lake Michigan with Lake Huron.

The goods destined for the supply of the northwestern Indians left New York in May, and reached Mackinac in June. Here those who procured the goods met those engaged in selling them to the Indians. A thousand different persons from every part of the Indian country

The Fur
Trade

assembled here. The most remote outfits, or stocks of goods bought by the retailers, were destined for Lake Winnipeg (Manitoba), Big Stone Lake (Head of Minnesota or St. Peter's River), Leech Lake (northern Minnesota) and for immediate points. The entire country between the longitude of Lake Michigan and that of the Red River of the North and from the latitude of the mouth of the Illinois river to the Canadian border drew its supplies from that point. Through all this immense region, trading establishments were scattered. The traders going to the most remote points left Mackinac in July and the others in August. The goods were transported upon the lakes and rivers in batteaux and canoes, and reached their destination in October. The Indians now leave their villages and scatter throughout the country in hunting camps. An industrious hunter would under favorable conditions, collect a pack of peltries worth, at the trading post, from eighty to one hundred dollars, for which he was paid in blankets, provisions, tobacco, gun ammunition, gaudily colored calico and other cloth and, etc.

The Fur
Trade
page 17

The furs and pelts being collected at the trading posts were taken to the central depot at Mackinac in the same manner as the goods were carried in the opposite direction, and were there disposed of to large traders.

In addition to the business done by American fur companies and traders, the Hudson's Bay company, a British corporation, carried on an immense trade in the great Northwest.

"A few years since, in the solitudes of the West, two European tourists were struck by the frequency with which they encountered a certain mystic legend. Eager to solve its meaning, they addressed a half-breed loungee at a small station on the Canadian Pacific Railway. 'Tell us, my friend,' they said, 'what those three letters yonder signify. Wherever we travel in this country we encounter,'

"H.B.C." "We have seen the legend sewn on the garments of Indians; it has been painted on the canoes; it is inscribed on bales and boxes. What does 'H.B.C.' mean?" "That's the company," returned the native grimly, 'Here Before Christ.'"

The Hudson's Bay company was chartered by Charles II in the year 1670 and it is

The Fur
Trade

still in existence. The king granted to his cousin, Prince Rupert, and to seventeen nobles and gentlemen, the exclusive right to establish settlements and carry on trade in the vast region called Rupert's Land, which comprized all the territory whose waters flowed into Hudson's Bay. It was a country as large as all Europe. They were authorized to maintain ships of war and forts, and to carry on war with any prince or people not Christian. The company was also made absolute proprietor of all lands and all mines which had not already been granted to others. The posts of this powerful company were established not only in the region now known as Canada or British America, - they extended in the Red River country in Minnesota and North Dakota, as well as into the Oregon country, where they formed the basis of the British claim to sovereignty in the first half of the nineteenth century.

page 18

It will be instructive here to to glance at the methods employed by the Hudson's Bay Company and other companies and small traders in dealing with the native

The Fur
Trade
page 18.

hunters and trappers. Each factory or trading post was surrounded by a stockade, within which were warehouses for storing furs and the goods bartered for them. Traders and their assistants were heavily armed. The Indians brought their goods (skin of deer, bison, beaver, marten, fox, etc., and feathers of birds) to the post, and delivered them through a small aperture in the side of the storehouse, as a tourist hands his money through a window at a railway station. The price (in goods) given for furs was in the discretion of the trader and was influenced by policy and by the rivalry of French and American traders. When the Indian presented himself at the trader's window he was by no means sure what his furs would bring. He often journeyed two months in the depth of winter to bring to the post a small bundle of peltries, for which he received, perhaps a string of beads, a blanket, a hatchet, a little tobacco and a pound or two of powder.

The Fur
Trade

page 18
History
of the
Great
N.W.

author?

If he demurred to the small price offered, his furs were passed back to him through the aperture. This was merely a form. In theory

the Indian was free to dispose of his goods where he could obtain the best price for them; practically he must sell them to the company or starve. The gross profit to the company on the goods used in Indian barter was often 300 per cent. or more. At first the Indians were content with beads and toys, but it became the policy of the company to render them more efficient as hunters by supplying them with the implements of the chase. Six or seven beaver skins would buy a blanket, three a shirt, fifteen a gun.

The Northwest was frequented in these early days by individual French traders known as *couvreurs des bois* (forest rovers) whose activity in trade tended to injure the company's business. A tribe would be gathered at a post to sell their furs, when a report would spread like wild-fire among them that the French *couvreurs* were giving a pound of powder for a beaver, instead of demanding three beavers as the company did. In an instant there was a stampede, and a rush was made for the rival trader, who was perhaps fifty miles distant. To these Indians fifty miles for a single pound

The Fur of powder was nothing.

Trade The Hudson's Bay Company had its posts on
page 18 the head waters of the Mississippi, the Red
River of the North and the Missouri river,
in other words they occupied the country now
History of comprising western Minnesota, North Dakota
the Great and Montana. Not only this, - their trade
Northwest extended over the whole of Washington,
Oregon, and California to the Sacramento
river. American enterprise occupied this
region with permanent settlements, and American
diplomacy secured our title to it in the treaties
of 1783, 1818, and 1846.

The North-
west
Fur Trade
Stevens
page 116

338.1
884
a.

While traders from Michillimackinac were pushing down into the Illinois country and across the Mississippi into Spanish territory, the merchants of the North-West Company were extending their commerce ever farther into the vast region beyond Lake Superior. Efficient business methods, the native ability of the founders, and the occupation of a territory comprising what was probably the richest fur-bearing region in North America, all contributed to the success of the company and its affairs prospered increasingly as time went on. A detailed account of the trading activities and the explorations carried on by the organization during the period under consideration would require much more space than can be allowed here; but some idea of the geographical extent of the company's activities may be gained from the fact that in 1789, the erection of Fort Chipewyan was begun upon the shores of Lake Athabasca. Hand in hand with the commercial exploitations of the Northwest went the discovery of new lands, lakes, and rivers; and high in the list of North American explorers stands the name of Alexander Mackenzie, first a bourgeois and afterwards a partner in the Great Company.

The North-West company was composed II.
of some of the most powerful of the merchants
of Montreal, men who not only put forth
mighty personal efforts in order to ensure
the success of their business, but used every
political influence of which they were capable
in order to build up a monopoly which should
be secure against all rivals, foreign as well
as British. Soon after the founding of the
company in the winter of 1783 - 1784, certain
of the partners turned their attention to the
matter of the communication leading to the
country, beyond Lake Superior. Under the
terms of the Treaty of 1783, there was some
doubt regarding the Northwest boundary
of the region ceded to the United States;
but it was nevertheless quite evident
that Grand Portage, the rendezvous
of the company at the west end of Lake Superior,
was within American Territory, a circumstance
which gave the merchants no little uneasiness.
Apprehensive lest upon the surrender of
the posts their communications with the Far
Northwest might be cut off, they made
plans to seek out a new route to take
the place of that by way of Grand Portage,
meanwhile; fearing lest the effort might
be unsuccessful, they requested that in

The
North
West
Fair
Trade
—
Stevens
page
117

case the posts were surrendered, it should^{III} be stipulated that both British and American traders should be free to use the old carrying place at Grand Portage. They declared that there was no trade on the American side of the boundary which they would not gladly relinquish in return for such a privilege, thereby displaying remarkable consideration for the interests of the Michillimackinac and Detroit merchants! If a new route should be discovered, however, they desired that they be given exclusive rights to its use. They likewise propose to explore at their own expense the vast region between 55 and 65 degrees north latitude, stretching westward to the Pacific Ocean, asking in return that they be given a monopoly of the trade northwest of Lake Superior for a period of ten years. A new route from Lake Superior to the watered communications of the Northwest by way of Lake Nipigon was actually discovered in the summer of 1784. Haldimand, nevertheless did not feel authorized to grant either of these requests for special privileges, but promised to lay the case of the merchants before the British ministry. apparently no such exclusive

page
118

THE
North
West
Fur
Trade
Stevens
page
118

⁷⁴
privileges as those requested were ever
granted. All evidence points to the
continued prosperity of the North-West Co.,
however. Thus in the last quarter of the
18th century were laid the foundations of
the powerful organization which succeeded
in hold the field against one rival after
another until it met its match in the
Hudson Bay Co.

MBH
Book II
P- ~~12~~
113.

The French continued to control the fur trade ^(I) in this region until 1760 when, by the fortunes of war, France lost her American colonies, Canada and her dependencies passing under the dominion of England. English merchants and trading firms at once superseded the French trading companies. The beginning of the American Revolution found the Montreal merchants firmly established in the Northwest. Their supremacy in this region, however, did not go unchallenged. Already traders from New York were making vigorous efforts to gain some share in the fur business - efforts which the war for independence for a time terminated, but which at its close were renewed; while in the North the Hudson's Bay Company was opposing all attempts to encroach on what it very properly considered its territory. The need of concerted action in order to exclude American Traders, on the one hand, as well as a desire to eliminate competition, led to the formation of large trading companies. The Northwest Company, organized in 1783, by absorbing gradually smaller rival concerns, by the year 1804 gained exclusive control of the region beyond Lake Superior, including much of the territory nominally belonging to the United States which was still dominated by the English by virtue of their retention of the military posts along the Great Lakes and in the Mississippi Valley.

M.B.H.
Book II
page 113

II

The Michillimackinac Company was organized in 1806 for the control of the trade in the upper Mississippi south of the region controlled by the Northwest Company. This company met with little success. The operations of the government trading factories established by the United States at various points on the frontier and the growing business of the American Fur Company, organized in 1808 by John Jacob Astor, contributed to its failure. In 1810 the company was dissolved. Two of the trading firms forming the partnership immediately organized a new company, which in the following year joined with the American Fur Company in a new concern called the Southwest Company. These trading firms were also shareholders in the Northwest Company; and an agreement was entered into by which the latter company was to confine its trade to the Indians of the British dominions, and the Southwest Company, to those south of the boundary. The disorganization of the fur trade during the war of 1812 led to the dissolution of the Southwest Company. The passage by Congress in 1816 of a law prohibiting foreign traders from operating within the territories of the United States marked the withdrawal of the British trading companies from the Mississippi Valley. The American Fur Company succeeded them in the control of the fur trade, and thereafter for many years, under various

Continued
from
page II.

engaged in the fur commission business ^{III}
in N.Y., which was the means of placing
at my disposal the finest furs in the
world.

Fur Trade
Vol II p 444
M H B.

It is not at all beside the mark to say that it was the climate of Minnesota and of the states to the east that brought the French explorers here so early. In the first place, the rainfall was sufficient to fill the many lake basins formed as the result of geologically recent glaciations, so that it was possible to travel long distances by canoe. Then, the abundance of lakes, the presence of large forest and prairie tracts, and the long, cold winters, all served to furnish an ideal habitat for animals bearing furs of highest quality. It was for furs that Radisson and Groseilliers first came into this region; on their return from their second trip, in 1660, they are said to have reached Montreal "in sixty canoes loaded with furs worth \$40,000." From that time on until 1850 furs were the leading product of the region that later became Minnesota; and the fur trade, it should be stated, occupied a leading place here for a much longer time than any other single industry.

M.H.B.

Vol I

page 297

Fond du Lac
Trading
post

II

The Aikin Independent Age published in its issues of Dec. 25, 1915, and Jan 1 and 8, 1916, under the title "Old Timer Tells of Early Days" a mass written by Cleveland Stafford, a pioneer of Aikin, who died Dec. 15, 1915. Stafford's account is full of valuable data concerning the early history of northwestern Minnesota, his descriptions of early travel routes being of especial interest. He was engaged in the fur trade in the early territorial days, and collected furs from the Indians of the northern part of the territory, making trips from Fond du Lac to Leech Lake as well as Crow Wing and down the Mississippi to St. Anthony Falls. Later he hauled freight by team from Superior to Fort Ripley. He lived for a time in Mpls and knew many of the men prominent in its early history. In the latter part of the mass many incidents connected with the early history of Aikin and the surrounding northern country are given.

exhibit

Vol I page 353

My next visit was to the principal fur trading post of the American Fur Co, located at Mendota, which since 1834 had been under the management of Henry H. Sibley. He supplied me with specimens of the best furs in his possession, and gave me a letter to Ramsey Crooks, formerly president of the Company, but at this time

Fur Trade
Minnesota
M # B.
Vol 3
page 117

In 1834 the American Fur Co. was reorganized. John Jacob Astor retired and Ramsay Crooks became president of the new company which retained the old name. At this time Sibley found himself at a turning point in his career. He received an offer of a position as cashier of a bank in Detroit and a similar offer from a bank in Huron and had almost decided to accept one of them when the way was opened for him to become a partner in the fur company. As a clerk at Mackinac he had become acquainted with the traders who annually reported with their furs at the company headquarters. Two of these traders, Hercules L. Dousman and Joseph Bolette Sr., had been engaged in the fur trade for many years with headquarters at Prairie du Chien. They now proposed to Sibley that he join them in making an agreement with the American Fur Company by which the company would advance the goods and the men give their time in extending operations on the upper Mississippi among the Sioux. According to their plan, Sibley would establish new headquarters on the St. Peter's River and have charge of all operations in that vicinity. The two friends pictured the wild life on the frontier in such glowing terms that Sibley was influenced to decline the bank offers and to link his fortunes with the Indian country destined to be Minnesota.

Book

II

M H B.
Minnesota
History Bulletin
page 114

owners and titles, was commercially and ^{III} politically the greatest single force in the development of the region of which Minnesota forms a part.

Book

4

M H B.

page 193.

With the announcement in an article in the Minneapolis Tribune for Sept 4 (1921) that the old wooden fort erected at Fond du Lac more than a century ago is being demolished, the early history of the post of the American Fur Company at this place is briefly recounted.

M H B.

Book # 4

P. 68.

Miss Anna E. Spates of St Paul has recently presented some papers of her father, the Rev. Samuel Spates, who came to Minn. as a missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1839. From the Ebenezer Manual Labor School for Indian missionaries in Morgan County, Ill., he was sent to Little Elk River, and he served subsequently at the missions at Fond du Lac, Sault Ste Marie and Sandy Lake. Indians, half-crazed by liquor, drove the missionary and his family from the latter place in 1855, and he devoted the remainder of his life to the ministry among the white people of Minn. The papers consist of some scattering autobiographical notes, a number of letters written from Sandy Lake in the early

Cont
on
page
IV

MH12.

Book
4

P. 68

cont from

P 3

page

370.

MH12.

Book 4

note

fifties, and a fragment of his diary, in IV which he gives an account of a canoe trip from Sandy Lake to La Pointe in the fall of 1841.

McLeod's statement might lead the reader to believe that fisheries on a fairly extensive scale had not already been established in Lake Superior. As a matter of fact, Ramsey Crooks, on reorganizing the American Fur Co. in 1834, had initiated a fisheries policy for that organization which was only second, if indeed not equal, in importance to the fur-trade policy of his business. In the very letter which Charles W. Borup recounts the visit of Dickson's party to his post at La Pointe the following statement is found: "Our fishing promised fair after you left. They had at Fond du Lac 200 barrells and in 15 days we got at our place 82 barrells" See Borup to Crooks, Oct 22, 1836 in the American Fur Co., Papers. in the possession of the New York Historical Society. A photostatic copy of this letter is in the possession of Minn State Historical Society. at the time that McLeod was penning these remarks.

Page

370

MHB

Book 4

in the Lake Superior Region Crooks
was making a survey of the fisheries
and the fur trade.



1
Papers of John Jacob Astor and his son withdrew from
American the American Fur Company in 1834. It was
Fur reorganized immediately under its old name
Co. as a corporation under the laws of New York,
L. S. Note after a proposal for incorporation in
page 521 Michigan had been considered and rejected
Vol 32 because of the fear that a tax would be levied
Am. Hist there on its capital stock. Ramsay Crooks
Review. a survivor of the Astorians and long Astor's
right-hand man in the fur trade, was elected president.
Eight stockholders are mentioned in the first dividend
statement. Offices and warehouses were maintained
in the Vesey and Pearl streets neighborhood,
the center of commercial New York; and outfit
and department headquarters were located
at Prairie du Chien (Western Outfit), Mackinac
(Northern Department), LaPointe (Northern Outfit),
Sault St. Marie (St. Marys Outfit), and Detroit
(Detroit Department). Other stations and sub-
stations dotted the wilderness from Detroit to
Devils Lake, the most notable being those
at Grand River, Fond du Lac, (modern Duluth)
Chicago, Sandy Lake, Green Bay, Milwaukee,
and the mouth of the Minnesota River. All
business was carried on by means of the outfits
and departments. Goods were bought in Europe

and America for each unit and debited to it on the company's books. Opposite these entries were placed the credit items of the number of packs of furs and robes shipped by the unit to the New York office. page 522 The trade for the region west of the Mississippi was mainly in the hands of Pratte, Chouteau, and Company (after 1838 Pierre Chouteau, jr., and Company) of St. Louis. As Bernard Pratte was Crook's father-in-law, a family tie united the two companies. The American Fur Company marketed the furs and robes of the St. Louis firm and purchased its articles for the Indian trade. Since the factors of Pratte, Chouteau, and Company were found scattered from the Canadian border to Texas and beyond the Rocky Mountains, and since the American Fur Company controlled the area east of the Mississippi, the scope of the American Fur Company may be said to have covered the entire fur-producing area of the United States.

That the fur trade was a profitable business, the papers of the company leave no room to doubt. As late as 1840 William Brewster, a stockholder and agent of the company at Detroit, collected three hundred thousand dollars' worth of furs and skins in his warehouses in one season. Apparently, too, they were drawn only from southern Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. From the letter that tells of

this collection one can get an idea of the profit of the business. Of the three hundred thousand dollars to be derived from the sale of these furs, Brewster wrote page 522 that he expected to clear seventy-five thousand. In the same year the company planned to declare a dividend of twenty-five percent., and presumably it did so. In 1836 its dividend was ten per cent. and in 1837 it was fifteen per cent. Thus the American Fur Company was doing a thriving business in the late 'thirties.

From another angle, that of the degree of competition that the company encountered, one arrives at the same conclusion regarding the prosperity of the fur trade. During the period from 1838 to 1842 the whole Ohio valley was a scene of cutthroat competition. The latter epithet is ordinarily reserved for describing business methods that characterized the opening of the era of "big business." It is used advisedly, however, in referring to the tactics of the American Fur Company and its rivals, for one of the conclusions to be derived from reading the correspondence and studying the books of the company is that here was an instance of big business half a century before its time.

During the period above mentioned the company's chief rivals were T. G. and G. W. Ewing,

page 523

a fur house of Fort Wayne; a German concern represented by a man named Hotte; and a certain (Appenheim), apparently the representative of another German house. The agents of the first concern all but came to blows with Crook's representatives at Dayton, Perrysburg, Vincennes, Peru, Evansville, Fort Wayne, Logansport, South Bend, and other places in the Ohio valley. The grim determination of each side to win the struggle may be sensed from George Hunt's letter of May 27, 1839, in which he wrote that the Ewings had eleven byyew out against him in the vicinity of Madison, Indiana. Brewster's zest for the "war of extermination," as Crook characterized this struggle with the Ewings, was contagious - so much so that Crook had to put a damper on the ardor of his representatives, admonishing Brewster that no questionable policy should be pursued by the company's agents. Nevertheless, Brewster in one of his letters could not refrain from gloating over his success in securing a collection of furs for which Hotte had made a contract. He also wrote that he represented to certain fur collectors in Ohio that the company would ruin them if they did not make a permanent arrangement with it. "Buy everything you can lay your hands on without fear, except beaver and muskrats,"

May 19
1838

was Crooks own advice in the spring of 1838; and in August he wrote to his London correspondent and agent, Curtis M. Lampson that he did not expect a certain shipment of deerskins to bring more than cost, as they were purchased merely to prevent Hottel from getting them. The explanation for this reckless purchasing of furs and skins was the realization by Crooks that the American Fur Company must control the fur market of the United States if Lampson was to control the Continental sale for it. In other words, the company aimed to become a monopoly.

Relations of traders and Indians to the company's chief rival in the sale of furs

American
Fur Co.

1815-1822

page 697

The South West Fur Company's greatest difficulty in 1816 was not the reluctance of the United States Indian Agents to grant licenses to British Subjects, but rather the rivalry between the two great Canadian Companies, the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company. In September, 1816 some employees of the latter organization, under the commands of the Earl of Selkirk, seized goods, "amounting in value to several thousand pounds," which were under the charge of James Grant, who was to manage the South West Fur Company's trade in "the Department of Fond du Lac within the Territories of the United States," located "on the headwaters of the Mississippi." Selkirk's men then arrested Grant and one of his clerks, William Morrison, and likewise detained another clerk, Eustache Ruessin, together with "Seventy Kegs of Liquor and various other articles of Merchandise" at Fort William. Selkirk's motif for this illegal act was said to have been desire for revenge on the North West Company for certain of its actions against himself, while

American
Fur Co
1815-1822
page 697

also wished to monopolize the trade of that region for the Hudson's Bay Company. The result, according to the injured parties, was that the trade of the department, the returns from which in previous year had been \$25000, was ruined, and that most of the seized goods were probably lost; also that the concern was bound "to pay to Eight Clerks & thirty to forty Canadians" a "large sum" for services which would now prove of no avail. Astor urged Monroe, as Secretary of State, to take steps to punish this insult and take revenge for the confiscation of the goods by sending a military expedition against Selkirk's post from Machilimachin, Prairie du Chien, or Green Bay to seize the goods which Selkirk had illegally brought into the United States. Astor further suggested that the foray could be directed and assisted by Indian guides and Canadian voyageurs and interpreters furnished by the South West Fur Company. However the government did not see fit to adopt such drastic measures.

John Jacob
Astor
American
Fur Co
Vol II
page 706
707

With a year of experience as agents of an independent company behind them, with a consciousness that governor of Michigan Territory was their friend, with a knowledge of the backing both in capital and prestige which Astor could furnish, Crooks and Stuart were ready for the campaign of 1818. It will be remembered that in the summer of 1817 they had mentioned their intentions of winning over the Indian agent at Mackinaw, Major Puthuff. Apparently they did not succeed, for on January 24, 1818, they wrote Astor a long letter which was chiefly an attack on Puthuff, whom they accused of charging \$50 apiece for licenses, of favoring other traders as against the American Fur Co, of failing to check smuggling and the sale of liquor to the Indians, and of generally lacking single-mindedness in the performance of his duties. Puthuff was in a bad position. He had angered other Indian agents and factors and even