HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY POSTS IN THE MINNESOTA COUNTRY

Fur-trading posts were relatively numerous in the Minnesota country in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, though they belonged, not to the Hudson's Bay Company, as is often believed, but to the Northwest Company, the X Y Company, and the American Fur Company. Only a small number were Hudson's Bay Company posts. That company had but few forts in the region except along the international boundary between Canada and Minnesota and in the Red River Valley. It is mainly with these areas, therefore, that this paper treats.

The Hudson's Bay Company did not enter the Minnesota field until late in the eighteenth century. The Northwest Company pre-empted the region about the time of the American Revolution and the Hudson's Bay Company did not at first meet its rival's challenge in a district so far south of its normal field of operations. Consequently, it was not until competition became very keen that the Hudson's Bay Company reached beyond the boundary line.

The Rainy Lake country and the Pembina region saw the first posts of the company in the Minnesota area. In the autumn of 1793 John McKay established a fort at the outlet of Rainy Lake, then universally called by its French name, Lac la Pluie. It was situated on the Canadian side of the Rainy River below the falls and the large and important fort of the Northwest Company. McKay explains the importance of the rival fort in his diary:

1 McKay's Diary, September 26, 1793, in Hudson's Bay Company Archives, London, B.105/a/1. Since much of the information on which this article is based was found in the company's archives, the author takes this opportunity of acknowledging the kindness and courtesy of the governor and committee in permitting the use and quotation of this material.
This fort is not merely kept up for the trade it makes. It's a rendezvous for the people of the Rabarcan [Athabasca] and slave Lake as they cannot get to the Grand Portage and return the same year. Besides this is the post where the Canada N.W. Company procures most of their canoes for the inland business.

With a single gap of some twenty years, the Hudson's Bay Company had a post on the Rainy River until very modern times. Though it was not actually on Minnesota soil, its trade was with the Indians south as well as north of the border. Moreover, it was the headquarters of several outposts, some of which were established within the American lines. After 1797 the company seems to have been without a post on Rainy River until 1818, when Robert Dickson inspired the erection of one. Some missionaries who went to the Red River in 1818 reported thus of this fort:

The Hudson's Bay Company's post is not yet well organized; everything is in its infancy. It has a beautiful location, but it is not finished; it is under construction. The Company did not begin to build in this place till last spring. The two forts are fifteen or twenty arpents apart.

The diaries and reports from the Rainy River post are numerous and very interesting. The Hudson's Bay Company's report for Lac la Pluie for 1822-23, the second season after its union with the Northwest Company, was written by Dr. John McLoughlin and is a mine of information about the post. There were at the post twenty-four engagés, a guide, two interpreters, three clerks, a chief trader, and a chief factor, McLoughlin. These men dealt with Indians both north and south of the line, whom McLoughlin lists in great detail. He names 107 men, 118 women, and


3 Father Joseph N. Provencher to Bishop Joseph O. Plessis, July 6, 1818, in the Archiepiscopal Archives, Quebec. The original letter is in French.
Posts of the Hudson's Bay Company and Its Competitors in the Minnesota Country

[From Grace Lee Nute, The Voyageur's Highway, 40 (St. Paul, 1941).]
230 children, and gives the hunting capacity of every brave mentioned as well as his hunting range, telling whether it is north or south of the line. He records that the chief fur-bearing animals are martens and muskrats. "Beaver . . . has been diminishing for these several years past, especially on the South Side of Rainy Lake—Rainy Lake River and Lake of the Woods."*

The journals of the Rainy River post end with the season 1837-38, but it was continued until the trading season of 1897-98, when the settler's frontier reached the Rainy Lake area and it was no longer possible to carry on the fur trade there. The name was changed to Fort Frances in honor of Governor George Simpson's bride. She was with her husband at the fort on September 25, 1830, when "a flacon of Spirits was broken & Spilled on the foot of the [flag] Staff, and the Fort named Fort Frances in honour of Mrs Simpson's Christian name." Following this ceremony, "all the Whites gave three Hearty Cheers—and the Indians fired above 300 Shots." §

About 1830 a colorful character arrived in the Rainy Lake region, an American Fur Company rival of whom the diarists at Fort Frances have much to recount. This was a well-educated Danish physician, Dr. Charles William Wulff Borup, later a pioneer banker in St. Paul, where his descendants are still prominent. Many were the Indians, traders, and missionaries whom his technical skill served in the wilderness, now at Rainy Lake, now at La Pointe on the south shore of Lake Superior, while he continued to trade furs as his main means of securing a livelihood. § The diarist at the company's post on Rainy Lake has many humorous and rather disparaging yarns to recount about

*McLoughlin's report is in the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, B. 105/e/2.
§Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, B. 105/a/15.
this rival during the early days of his sojourn there, but they must be taken with the proverbial grain of salt in the light of Borup's later distinguished career. Trade rivals were notoriously ungenerous in their estimates of one another.

Borup's fort in 1830 was on the south side of the Rainy River, opposite the Hudson's Bay Company's post. There an American Fur Company post had been established in 1823 by William Morrison, whose chief claim to fame rests on his statement that he visited the true source of the Mississippi River, Lake Itasca, some thirty years before Henry R. Schoolcraft made the officially accepted discovery in 1832. As a matter of fact, probably neither man was the true "first" discoverer. As early as 1726 a French geographer wrote: "The source of the Mississippi River has been discovered. It is southwest of the Lake of the Assiniboine at the 48th degree of latitude and the 276th of longitude."

The American post on the Rainy River soon had subsidiary stations at Warroad, Vermilion Lake, Grand Marais, Grand Portage, Basswood Lake, Pembina, and elsewhere on the border. Competition with the Hudson's Bay Company became so keen that in 1833 a gentlemen's agreement was entered into by the rival companies.

One of the Hudson's Bay Company outposts of the Rainy Lake fort was Ash, or possibly Asp, House, a little above the mouth of Rainy River on the Minnesota side. Its site was six hours by canoe from the Lake of the Woods, in the reckoning of the day. It was begun in 1794, when one building was erected. The next year at least two more

*See La Motte de Cadillac's "Relation" about the "Sea of the West," in a manuscript volume, number 293, part 3, p. 441, in the Edward E. Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago. The passage quoted, which like the rest of the volume is in French, seems to be an anonymous editorial comment, probably by Guillaume Delisle. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries longitude was reckoned in a manner different from today. Delisle's own maps of the period of the "Relation" show the 276th degree not far west of Lake Itasca.
houses were built. In his diary, McKay describes the details of building, providing one of the most adequate records available of the steps followed in the construction of a fur-trading post. How long this fort continued is uncertain. Alexander Henry, the younger, mentions it in 1800 as "another old H. B. Co. establishment." In the spring of 1825 a company man was stationed there.⁸

Another outpost was located on Vermilion Lake. Most persons have assumed that this was the large body of water in northeastern Minnesota that still goes by that name. Yet old maps show another Vermilion Lake, now called Little Vermilion Lake, on the boundary between Namakan and Loon lakes. In 1823 there was a post on this smaller Vermilion Lake, and the chances are strong that it was there that the Hudson's Bay Company established its fort to meet the competition of the Northwest Company and the American Fur Company. As early as 1822 Dr. McLoughlin wrote of the Vermilion Lake post in the past tense: "Formerly there was a winter Post at Vermilion Lake." It must have been on American soil, for he adds that this is American territory and hence the company's opposition post was located on Basswood Lake "on our side." The latter post, he adds, was established in 1822. Its location is given on a manuscript map in the papers of David Thompson. Simon McGillivray, Jr., was the Basswood Lake trader in 1822–23; C. W. Bouck, in 1824–25.⁹

The diary that Donald McPherson kept at Rainy Lake for the season 1817–18 mentions on several occasions the


⁹John J. Bigsby, The Shoe and Canoe, 2:259, and map, p. 346 (London, 1850); Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B. 105/e/2, B. 105/e/6; map of "Lac des Bois Blanc[s]," July 9, 1823, in David Thompson's Diary, Department of Public Records and Archives of the Province of Ontario, Toronto. The Basswood Lake post was still occupied in 1841–42, according to E. H. Oliver, The Canadian Northwest, 822, 842, 858 (Ottawa, 1914).
post of Charles Giasson on the Lake of the Woods. As McPherson indicates that the route to Pembina passed Giasson's post, it is probable that this was the fort mentioned by Dr. McLoughlin in 1822-23, when he wrote: "In Lake of the Woods we used to keep one Post, one year on the South Side and the next on the North, but as the South side belongs to the Americans, we cannot go to our former place, War road. We must get as nigh the Americans as we can." During the same season the American trader Pierre Côté accused the Hudson's Bay Company men of trading on the south side of the line, particularly at Roseau Lake. The post report of 1824-25 states that David Thompson, who was then one of the commissioners surveying the international boundary line, told Dr. McLoughlin that "we had a right to build and form an establishment near the post of War Road . . . within a mile and a half of the Old House, formerly occupied by the late N W Company." On May 6, 1819, there is a reference to a Mr. Godin as clerk at Warroad, and the next season Bouck was there. The Rainy Lake journal of that season mentions much passing back and forth to Red River via the Warroad post. Dr. John J. Bigsby seems to mention the other Hudson's Bay Company post on Lake of the Woods when he writes that "We slept near Buffalo Head. . . . Within a few yards of our encamping-ground was a wintering-house of the Hudson's Bay Company." This was in the summer of 1823. The exact site is shown on Bigsby's map of the Lake of the Woods.10

The region between the Lake of the Woods and Turtle Mountain was tributary to another chief post, Pembina. Like Rainy Lake it had its outposts and substations — Lake Roseau, Red Lake, Grand Forks, Turtle River, Lake Traverse, and others. The first Hudson's Bay Company fort at

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10 Entries of January 12, 15, 1820, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B. 105/a/7. See also B. 105/a/5, B. 105/a/6, and B. 105/e/4; and Bigsby, Shoe and Canoe, 2:296, and map, p. 346.
or near Pembina seems to have been Thomas Miller's, established about 1800 on the east side of Red River. In 1812 the company built Fort Daer at Pembina. In the 1820's and 1830's there was an American fort at Pembina. "Inventory of Goods sent to the Big Fork of Red River—Sept. 18th 1829," reads an entry in a ledger kept at Lake Traverse from 1829 to 1831. The trader appears to have been David Aitken, who is known to have been at Pembina the following year. How long this post continued is uncertain, but probably not after 1833. From that year till 1847 an agreement existed between the Hudson’s Bay Company and the American Fur Company, whereby American competition along the Minnesota boundary line was almost completely wiped out. This agreement was made in the spring of 1833 and renewed periodically—in 1838, 1840, 1842, 1844, and 1846. On September 26, 1847, Simpson wrote as follows to Ramsay Crooks of the American Fur Company:

By that agreement the American Fur Company were bound to afford certain protection to the frontier trade of the Hudson’s Bay Company, but with every disposition on the part of the Am. Fur Company to fulfil their part of the agreement, that owing from a variety of circumstance is now found impracticable, the allowance [£300 per annum] usually made is therefore understood to be discontinued from and after the past season as was arranged between us verbally when I had the pleasure of seeing you at New York about 10 days ago.12

11 Grace Lee Nute, "Posts in the Minnesota Fur-trading Area, 1660-1855," ante, 11:366, 367. A reference to the Pembina post appears in a permit to sell whisky there and at other posts issued to William A. Aitken by Schoolcraft on August 2, 1824. This permit and the ledger mentioned in the text are in the Sibley Papers, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

12 This letter is among the American Fur Company Papers, in the possession of the New York Historical Society, New York City. The Minnesota Historical Society has a calendar of this large collection. Among the many letters from Sir George Simpson included among these papers is one written on May 14, 1844, in which he states: "We have been put to some expence and inconvenience, in the formation of an outpost from Fort William, at Lac d'orignal, for the protection of our trade from a small post established at that frontier by the Cleveland Company."
About 1845 the settler's frontier reached Minnesota, hitherto a fur-trader's, soldier's, and missionary's frontier. This fact and the financial failure of the American Fur Company in 1842 explain its inability to keep its pledge after some fifteen years of scrupulous fidelity to it. Hercules L. Dousman of Prairie du Chien, Norman W. Kittson, Henry H. Sibley, and Henry M. Rice appear to have been responsible in large part for the recommencement of competition between the American and the British traders about 1843, following a coalition of Dousman and Sibley with Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company at St. Louis in 1842. Joseph Rolette was at Pembina even earlier than 1843, but Kittson's arrival there in that year seems to have marked the beginning of active competition. When it became apparent that this was no sporadic outburst of activity, but a condition that might be expected to continue over a long period of time, the Hudson's Bay Company resolved on a strong fur-policing policy along the Canadian-American boundary by means of a "cordon of posts along the whole frontier from Fort William to Fort Ellice on the Assiniboine" with "large outfits of goods, & a strong complement of officers & men." 13

The man chosen to oppose the Americans, Henry Fisher, was himself an American. He was a brother of Dousman's wife, Jane Fisher, whose first husband had been Joseph Rolette, Sr. On February 11, 1846, Fisher recorded in his diary that he left the Red River settlement "with twelve men, to go to Pembina in the intention of establishing a Trading Post, with a Liscence from La Pointe to trade on the wis-

The latter firm was an American competitor of the American Fur Company, and its post was on Moose Lake not far from Fort William. A rather full discussion of the rivalry between the Hudson's Bay and American Fur companies in the 1820's is given in the International Joint Commission's Final Report on the Lake of the Woods Reference, 119-132.

13 Simpson to the company, June 24, 1848, in Simpson's Outward Letterbook, 1847-48, p. 681, Hudson's Bay Company Archives. After 1846 Dousman was succeeded in the Pembina trade by his cousin, B. W. Brisbois, and by Henry M. Rice.
He goes on with a description of how he built his "small House" of logs as well as a store "at the Fork of Penbina." The building of these structures required only four days. The fort was appropriately named Fort Defiance. Fisher found Kittson dull. "He is very quite and never speaks." "President Kittson" was his nickname.14

On March 19 Fisher left Joseph Brazeau in charge of the fort, and he himself prepared to go to Fort Ellice. In a letter of that date addressed to Brazeau from Pembina, Fisher writes:

Having committed to your Charge my Establishment at Penbina, I hereby authorise you to conduct my business there during my absence,—observing in your intercourse with the Indians all the conditions annexed to the American Licence which Empowers me to trade with them at Penbina in the Territory of Wisconsin. Of the Licence I will hand you a certified copy: and the conditions referred to are Shortly these: that you do not trade the Indians traps or medals or Guns nor supply them with spirituous Liquors.

Fisher's correspondence reveals that this letter was prepared for him by the Hudson's Bay Company factor at Fort Garry.

When Kittson charged that Fisher's license would not be good unless the latter got his trade goods from the United States, he accused Kittson of "not getting all his supplies from the United States that almost every week he was getting some supplies from Red River Settlement even he got Rum and gave it to Indians." Kittson denied the charges, but later entries in Fisher's diary seem to substantiate some of them. In letters written after Fisher's departure, Brazeau speaks of the Hudson's Bay Company post on the Lake of the Woods and its wealth of furs; lists the furs received from Roseau Lake and the goods sent there; and tells of Kittson's threat to "take a marten for each wolf that they

14 Fisher's Diary is among the Fisher Papers in the Archiepiscopal Archives at St. Boniface, Manitoba. The Minnesota Historical Society has a photographic copy.
[the Hudson's Bay Company] get off of the American lands," and of his warning to look out for "squawls next year." 15

The Hudson's Bay Company post at Pembina in 1849 was situated "about two hundred yards from the line on their territory"; it then consisted merely of a "small 'shanty,'" but there were "under erection very extensive buildings." In that year a United States military expedition under Major Samuel Woods arrived and examined the place with a view to establishing a military post there or elsewhere in the valley in order to control the trading situation and the buffalo hunts of British half-breeds on American territory. 16 Fort Abercrombie, farther up the valley, was erected a little later; and many years later Fort George H. Thomas, afterward Fort Pembina, was established at Pembina. 17

Many of the inhabitants of the Red River settlement found the Hudson's Bay Company's prices and regulations unattractive and smuggled their furs to Kittson or his men. A rather humorous narrative of such a smuggling party has been preserved in Peter Garrioch's papers. 18 The period

15 The letters quoted are in the Fisher Papers.
16 Samuel Woods, Pembina Settlement, 19 (31 Congress, 1 session, House Executive Documents, no. 51—serial 577). In addition to Woods's report of November 10, 1849, this document includes a letter of November 30, 1848, from Rice to J. E. Fletcher; a letter of Father Georges A. Belcourt, dated at Pembina, August 20, 1849; and other items that throw much light on British-American competition along the entire northern boundary of Minnesota. Belcourt refers to four American "posts of Red lake, of Reed lake, of Pembina, and at the source of Pembina river or Turtle Mountain"; Fletcher, in a letter of February 12, 1849, mentions "four trading posts on or near our northern boundary line"; and Rice's posts on Vermilion and Rainy lakes are noted. See p. 4, 37.
17 "Fort Pembina" file, 1870–1903, in Abandoned Military Reservations Papers, General Land Office, Washington. The fort was established on July 8, 1870, by General Orders no. 1; its name was changed on September 6, 1870, by order no. 55; and it was ordered sold on December 11, 1897, according to a letter from Thomas Ryan to the Commissioner of the General Land Office, September 13, 1897.
18 Peter Garrioch, "Seven Days' Experience of the Pleasures of Smuggling"; Garrioch's Diary, May 8, 9, 1846. Typewritten copies of these items are owned by Mr. Harold Knox of Winnipeg, who placed them at the disposal of the writer.
seems to have been May, 1846. Andrew McDermott and James Sinclair were the leaders of the smuggling element, which became very threatening in the end. Not only did the settlers want an opportunity to sell their furs immediately across the line, but more important, they wanted to continue the cart traffic that had grown to large proportions by 1849, when Woods's expedition met ninety-eight wooden carts en route to St. Paul. A test case of smuggling had occurred the previous spring. Guillaume Sayer and three other half-breeds were arraigned at that time before the court of Assiniboia charged with illegal traffic in furs. So electric was the atmosphere and so threatening were the settlers under the leadership of Louis Riel, the father of another rebel of the same name, that the judge felt it expedient to slip away unnoticed. Though the jury found Sayer guilty, he escaped punishment, and the half-breeds considered that they had won their objective, free trade. "Henceforth the company's fur monopoly in the Red River settlement was a thing of the past, and the creaking Red River carts continued to make their way over the level plains and down the valley of the Mississippi to St. Paul." 19

Other Hudson's Bay Company posts in the Red River Valley were numerous. In October and early November, 1812, John McLeod, with "Bastonnais" Pangman as his interpreter, built a post at Turtle River as an outpost of Pembina. It is located by Captain John Pope of the Woods expedition, who noted it as he passed. 20 In 1818 and 1819 Louis Bellair, or Bellain, was the company's trader at Red Lake, with a post probably on the west shore.


20 McLeod's Journal, which is in the Public Archives of Canada at Ottawa, M 201, was called to the writer's attention by Mr. William Douglas of Winnipeg. The Turtle River post is located in Pope's Field Notes, 1:11. A copy of these notes is in the Alfred J. Hill Papers, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.
He was drowned, and by February 17, 1820, Peter Powell was the trader there. Duncan Graham of the Hudson’s Bay Company had a post near the Wild Rice River prior to 1819, for on November 4 of that year John Bourke proceeded “along Riviere a Folle” and on November 5 he “pass’d the river and encamped opposite Mr. Graham’s old wintering place.” In 1849 Captain Pope noted the remains of an “English fort twenty years old” on the Red River above Pembina and just below and opposite the mouth of Black River; hence the fort was on the Minnesota side of the river. The same officer noted the remains of “an old English fort” just north of the mouth of the Red Lake River.\(^{21}\)

During the winter of 1819–20 Graham, Bourke, and Joseph Renville maintained a post for the Hudson’s Bay Company on or near Lake Traverse, and the following season Bourke and Renville were there.\(^{22}\) Dickson had maintained a post in the vicinity since about 1800, and as he seems to have been Bourke’s superior in the period from 1819 to 1821, it may be conjectured that Bourke’s post was near Dickson’s. That, from all reports, was on lot 4 in section 2 of township 125 N., range 49 W. There is some evidence, however, that Bourke’s post was on the height of land between Lake Traverse and Big Stone Lake.\(^{23}\)

By 1820 the arrangements between the company on one side and Renville and Graham on the other for a joint trade near Lake Traverse had become unsatisfactory. In that

\(^{21}\) Pritchett, _ante_, 5: 408; Bourke’s “Journal of the Transactions in the Sioux district,” 1819–20, in Hudson’s Bay Company Archives; Pope’s Field Notes, 1: 3, 2: 51, 16: 23, 24, in Hill Papers.


\(^{23}\) See Tohill, _Robert Dickson_, for a biography of the trader. His post is located by Nute, _ante_, 11: 379, and by James Colhoun in his diary of 1823, p. 117 and map, p. 113. Colhoun states that “Rainville established this trading post six years ago.” The Minnesota Historical Society has a copy of this diary.
year Bourke was given charge of the Sioux district, with Renville acting merely as a trader. Graham seems to have entered the service of the Northwest Company in 1820 and to have established a rival post on or near Lake Traverse. In 1821, the year of the union of the Hudson’s Bay and Northwest companies, Renville was put in charge at Lake Traverse with Joseph Jeffries as an accountant. Both men left the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1822, Renville to become the leader in a new Columbia Fur Company. The Hudson’s Bay Company, realizing that the trade of the Sioux district was carried on at a loss and that Selkirk and Dickson’s plans for the Red River Valley were impossible to carry through, withdrew the post in 1823.24

The underlying reason for the extension of the company’s trading ventures so far into American territory as Lake Traverse is closely identified with the story of Dickson’s career. After thirty years or so of independent trading in the Sioux countries of the Minnesota-Iowa-Dakota area, he entered the service of the Hudson’s Bay Company after the War of 1812, a conflict in which he led his Indians and voyageurs with distinction on the British side. By 1816 he was closely associated with Lord Selkirk. The reason is not far to seek. Dickson had been active during the war and was thereafter regarded with suspicion by the United States government. Hence, it was difficult for him to serve as an American trader. Selkirk had a grant of land from the Hudson’s Bay Company extending up the Red River to the height of land between Lake Traverse and Big Stone Lake. There was hope that this point of land jutting deep into American territory would remain British, though the surrounding country was American. Selkirk, representing the Hudson’s Bay Company, was engaged in bitter strife with the Northwest Company and was endeavoring, through his colony on the lower reaches of the Red River,

24 Reports, box 524/517, p. 31–33; Letterbook no. 620, p. 40; Simpson’s Reports, box 1, no. 588, p. 46–49, Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.
to thwart the aims of the Nor’Westers to capture the Athabasca and Pacific slope trade. His purpose was twofold: first, he must supply company men going to the contested areas with food, and cheap food must thus be produced in the interior instead of being imported at ruinous cost for freight; second, the Northwest Company would find a bar to its trade when a colony was planted directly athwart its line of communication from the Red River to the Missouri and the Saskatchewan, the area where pemmican was produced. Selkirk saw in Dickson the man he needed—a Britisher in sympathy with the Hudson’s Bay Company, acquainted with the area and its inhabitants, allied by marriage to the Sioux, possessed of half-breed children already prominent in the region, and an honest and capable businessman.

So, as the war closed, the plan was hatched for making the upper Red River Valley an agricultural colony under the direction of Dickson, who was to make it also the center of the fur trade for a large area. To that end he was to import all the Indians he could induce to move there and to employ many well-established fur traders. So Dickson spent the winter of 1816–17 at his home on the eastern shore of Lake Traverse maturing his plans. Goods were to be purchased from the Hudson’s Bay Company and furs were to be sold to it. Buffalo skins were to be secured and the wool from them woven into cloth in a factory established in the valley. An experimental farm, supported largely by Selkirk, would take the lead in the agricultural colony.

Proof that Dickson was in a measure successful is to be found in the diary kept by Bourke at Lake Traverse in 1820–21. It discloses that sixty or so of Little Crow’s band of Indians, also known as the “Gens du Lac,” formerly

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28 For an authoritative sketch of Selkirk’s role in the feud between the Northwest and Hudsons’ Bay companies, see Chester A. Martin’s introduction to George Simpson, *Journal of Occurrences in the Athabasca Department, 1820 and 1821* (London, 1938).

inhabitants of the Mendota region at the junction of the Minnesota and Mississippi, removed to the vicinity of Bourke’s post in 1817. He says of these Indians: “They are always ready for any thing but hunting and this they have no thought of particularly as they have an Idea that Col Dickson Graham and Rinville as their relations can support them.”

Bourke also shows that he and such other experienced traders as Powell, Graham, Renville, William Laidlaw, François and Narcisse Fréminier, and others were imported from posts as distant as Sault Ste. Marie to engage in the fur trade. Thus Bourke’s record disproves in a measure Dr. Louis A. Tohill’s conclusion:

On his way to Michilimackinac from Lake Traverse in the spring of 1817 Dickson spent some time in the vicinity of Prairie du Chien trying to persuade the Sioux, Sauk, Menominee, and the Chippewa to follow him to the Red River and settle there. Just how successful he was it is not possible to say, although it seems that comparatively few Indians were willing to leave their ancestral fires to go into a new and untried country. Nor does it seem that he was more successful in convincing his former associates of the advantages of the change. He did make arrangements with Lawe at Green Bay to take goods to the Minnesota and then pass on to trade at some small unnamed streams where furs abounded, according to Dickson’s information. On his way to his appointed station, which was probably on the headwaters of the Mississippi, Lawe was to supply Faribault and Renville with goods.

Cattle for the experimental farm were purchased in the United States and driven up to Lake Traverse. In his diary for March 14 and April 12, 1821, Bourke notes that Laidlaw was on his way toward Prairie du Chien “to meet the cattle expected from thence.” He was apprehensive that Colonel Josiah Snelling would not let him pass the new fort at the mouth of the Minnesota, and his fears were realized.

In 1817 Selkirk met the Indians of the lower Red River

27 Bourke’s “Journal,” November 2, 1820, in Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.
28 Tohill, Robert Dickson, 89, 93, 94.
Valley and obtained a lease of their lands from the mouth of the Red River southward to the Grand Forks and westward as far as the junction of the Muskrat and Assiniboine rivers. At Grand Forks was to be Dickson’s settlement of Indians and fur traders. The arrangement with the Indians brought loud protests from the Americans. The Indian agent at Prairie du Chien wrote thus on February 16, 1818:

What do you suppose, sir, has been the result of the passage through my agency, of this British nobleman? (Lord Selkirk.) Two entire bands, and part of a third, all Sioux, have deserted us and joined Dickson, who has distributed to them large quantities of Indian presents, together with flags, medals, etc. Knowing this, what must have been my feelings on hearing that his lordship had met with a favorable reception at St. Louis. The newspapers announcing his arrival and general Scottish appearance, all tend to discompose me; believing as I do, that he is plotting with his friend Dickson, our destruction — sharpening the savage scalping knife, and colonizing a tract of country, so remote as that of the Red river, for the purpose, no doubt, of monopolizing the fur and peltry trade of this river, the Missouri and their waters — a trade of the first importance to our western states and territories. A courier, who had arrived a few days since, confirms the belief that Dickson is endeavoring to undo what I have done, and secure to the British government the affections of the Sioux, and subject the Northwest Company to his lordship. . . .

Dickson, as I have before observed, is situated near the head of the St. Peter’s, to which place he transports his goods from Selkirk’s Red river establishment, in carts made for the purpose. The trip is performed in five days, sometimes less. He is directed to build a fort on the highest land between Lac du Travers, and Red river, which he supposes will be the established line between the two countries. This fort will be defended by twenty men, with two small pieces of artillery.

It may be that Dickson later altered his plan and made Pembina instead of Grand Forks the place for settlement. At any rate, Catholic missionaries were secured after nearly a century of neglect of this area on the part of the church, and the mission of St. François Xavier was established in

1818 at Pembina. There in the next four years, about Fort Daer, grew up a settlement of voyageurs, half-breeds, French-Canadian families imported by Lord Selkirk from Lower Canada, Swiss Protestant families attracted by the earl's propaganda in their native land, and others. A church and a school were established. A resident missionary kept anxious care of the morals of the community. Even a bishop was appointed for the Red River country and its neighborhood, the first evidence under the British regime that a Catholic hierarchy was to be allowed to develop in Canada. Dickson's and Powell's daughters attended the Catholic school at Pembina and entered the Catholic church. On May 21, 1819, Selkirk wrote Dickson that he was planning to purchase lands of the Sioux on Red River within the American boundary and needed his help.80

But Dickson and Selkirk had not reckoned with events and personalities that brought their cherished plans to naught. Congress passed an act in 1816 excluding foreigners from the fur trade. In 1818 a convention was agreed upon between the United States and England that set the long-disputed boundary line in the Red River Valley and westward to the Rocky Mountains at the forty-ninth parallel and made a large part of Lord Selkirk's land grant null and void. A military fort was established in 1819 at the junction of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers and an Indian agent was appointed for the area. The commander of the fort and the Indian agent, Lawrence Taliaferro, were more than conscientious in the performance of their duty of guarding the frontier against the Indians and British influence. The Earl of Selkirk died in 1820. Grasshoppers destroyed the crops in the Red River Valley in 1818 and 1821. The Northwest and the Hudson's Bay companies united in 1821. All these events conspired against the success of the Hudson's Bay Company's posts in the

Red River Valley, of the settlements at Grand Forks and Pembina, and of "Hayfield," the experimental farm, which was abandoned in 1822. Dickson himself died in 1823, just as an expedition of the United States army under Major Stephen A. Long started down the Red River Valley. Its purpose was, in part, to learn how many of the Hudson's Bay Company's men were still in the valley and what they were doing there; and to determine exactly where the forty-ninth parallel crossed the valley. The company withdrew its posts from American soil at Pembina and at Lake Traverse and concentrated its attention on the new posts to the east that have already been mentioned.

On the route to Pembina from the Lake of the Woods lay Roseau Lake, frequently called Reed Lake. Augustin Nolin, the Hudson's Bay company trader at Pembina, had a post there in 1830 under the direction of a man probably named Alexander Groundmaster. A relatively late establishment of the company was made there about 1846 as an outpost of Pembina. On February 17, 1846, Fisher recorded in his diary: "got four of my men Prepared to start tomorrow for Lac des Ros[0]." The entry for February 27 reads: "My men arrived from Lac des Roso every thing is quite and tranquill enough there." On March 4 Fisher himself went to Roseau Lake. John Coming, or Cummings, was evidently in charge there and he had three men with him. A man named La Rocque seems to have been his opponent. On March 5 Fisher writes that his men from Roseau Lake report "that Larocque has given liquor to the Indians on that account has got the Indians skins for before he tryed to get their furs he was refussed but as soon as he gave the Liquor he got the whole of what they had."

In 1848 Thomas McDermott was named postmaster at the Hudson's Bay Company fort at Roseau Lake, but he

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[^1]: Entry of February 1, 1831, in Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B. 105/a/15. The Roseau Lake post is located on a map in Parliamentary Papers Relative to the Exploration of the Country between Lake Superior and the Red River Settlement, 100 (London, 1859).
died on November 28. His successor for that year is not known. Kittson does not mention him in the detailed letters that he wrote to Sibley in 1848 and 1849, though he does speak of the richness of "Lac des Roseau and Lake of the Woods" for lynx pelts. Kittson has this to say of the situation at the three chief posts of the area, Pembina, Roseau Lake, and Turtle Mountain:

The H. B. C° gentry are drawing in their horns a little. When the gentlemen in Charge at present first came up he was to play the very D—l with me, but he has found out his mistake and has been candid enough to own to me that it is not such an easy job as he at first expected, and I shall try and make it a little more and more difficult. he is however a very fine man so far and I have no doubt of getting along with him without quarreling.\

In 1850, however, competition had so far relaxed that the Hudson's Bay Company removed its Roseau Lake post to Shoal Lake, an arm of the Lake of the Woods. With the victory of the free traders of Red River over the Hudson's Bay Company in 1849, it was obvious that the day of the company's posts in the Minnesota country was past, particularly as that year witnessed also the formation of Minnesota Territory, which extended beyond the Red River to the Missouri. Indeed, the day of all great fur-trading companies was past in Minnesota. Though trapping continued to be a prosperous business in many parts of the territory and the state for a number of years, and even to this day in a few places, the year 1850 may be regarded as the beginning of a new economic era in the Minnesota country.

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28 Minutes of Council, Northern Department, Norway House, June, 1848, p. 214, Hudson's Bay Company Archives; Kittson to Sibley, November 11, 1848, Sibley Papers.
29 William Sinclair to Simpson, February 1, 1850, in Simpson Inward Correspondence, Correspondence and Minutes of Council, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.